Summary

Peter Parker and Shuri are science bros for life. It's been a year since they first met, and with the second summer upon them, it's time for more crazy shenanigans. And what better place to start those shenanigans than with a wedding in Las Vegas?

**This is the sequel to The Adventures of Peter Parker and Shuri. You don't necessarily have to read it to understand what's going on, but it might help**

Notes

I'M BACK!!! I have sooooooo many plans and sooooo many new ideas to get all the characters I missed in the last book! I can't say it'll be another 70 parter, but it will definitely be big.
Still not using the major plot from IW, but I will pull dialogue.

Enjoy!!
Part 1

Peter Parker was having a craptastic first day of summer vacation.

It was bad enough that Ned was spending the first month of summer visiting family in California, but MJ was away at some artsy type camp too. Flash had been an absolute jerk right before school let out (not that it was anything new, but it was still annoying), and Yoshi had managed to chew apart May’s favorite pair of sandals. She had threatened to kick Yoshi’s “intergalactic butt back where it came from” if Peter didn’t house train her, but YouTube was a bit short in the “how to train your alien lizard” videos.

He wanted to escape to the Avengers Compound again this summer, but since Tony was in business and wedding planning mode, he had to wait at least until the middle of July. So, the night before, Peter had tried to bury his sorrows by going out in search of bad guys and came away with sore ribs, a black eye, and a bruised ego. Hey, evil car-stealing ninjas had skills that even he hadn’t developed yet. At least Peter had been able to stop them from stealing the community center’s vans.

Peter groaned as he shifted the ice pack off his sides and switched on the heating pad. He may have had super healing, but it still took time. Yoshi chirped as she wiggled around his desk and laid out on his windowsill in the bright, warm sun. Thankfully, May was traveling the next three days, or else she would have had a few choice words for him (one in particular that rhymed with “duck”).

The hair on Peter’s arms stood up as he heard the front door click open. He carefully sat up, and Yoshi lifted her head in the air. They looked at each other before standing up and tiptoeing over to his bedroom door. May was gone, and the footsteps on the other side of the door were too light to be hers. Plus, it sounded like they were rolling a heavy object across his hardwood floors.

Peter gripped the doorknob and nodded to Yoshi. She blinked back determinedly and crouched low as she prepared to attack. Peter gritted his teeth and waited until the footsteps stopped right in front of his door. He yanked the door open and barreled out into the hallway.

“ATTACK!” he screamed. Instead of slamming into the intruder, however, both he and Yoshi tumbled headfirst into the living room, having tripped on a rather large suitcase. Peter spasmed as his sore ribs complained about the contact with the thick material. He rolled onto his back and stared up, gasping for breath.

Shuri stood over him, cuddling Yoshi and giggling. “Nice job!” she teased. “You definitely took care of my suitcase!”

Peter’s face broke into a wide smile as he jumped up. Ignoring the pain, he tackled Shuri in a hug as Yoshi hopped down a safe distance away.

Peter pulled back and stared at Shuri. “What? How?” he asked, the words getting stuck in the back of his throat.

Shuri grinned. “T’Challa told me we couldn’t go back to the Compound this summer, so I called May and asked if I could visit here instead!” Her face fell and for a moment, she looked worried. “Is that okay? If not I can find somewhere else-”

Peter shook his head and hugged her again. “It’s perfect. This is going to be so awesome!”

They celebrated by digging all of the snacks out of Peter’s kitchen and preparing for a movie marathon. Peter scooped up handfuls of chips while Shuri channel surfed until she found one of the
Harry Potter movies. They ate and watched in silence, Peter still recovering from his wounds and Shuri getting over her jet lag. It was as if the teens had never been apart.

Shuri’s mind wandered all over the place until it stopped at Tony’s wedding. A thought struck her, and she turned to Peter.

“Hey,” she said, poking the side of his head, “we like Pepper, right?”

Peter swatted her hand away. “What do you mean?”

“Well, she’s marrying Tony—”

“Mr. Stark.”

Shuri rolled her eyes. “You really need to start calling him Tony, especially since he’s practically your dad.”

“He’s not my—” Peter sighed. “Just get to the point, would ya?”

Shuri shrugged. “We know Tony really well, but we don’t know Pepper. Is she nice? Does she have good intentions?”

“She’s worked for Mr. Stark for, like, ever,” Peter defended. “I’m pretty sure she’s a good one.”

“Yes, but how do we know?” Shuri asked. “We’ve never met her.”

“She did the GISHWES thing for us,” Peter reminded her. “But...okay,” he admitted, "so we’ve never met her in person."

Shuri’s eyes brightened and she grabbed Peter’s phone off the coffee table. “Since she’s basically your step-mother—”

“Would you stop with that?”

“-we really should get to know her.” Shuri dialed a number and put the phone on speaker.

Peter turned off the TV and leaned over. “You have her number memorized?”

Shuri blinked back at him. “You don’t?”

They waited patiently as the phone continued to ring.

Pepper Potts was used to fielding lots of important phone calls. Senators, business people, the usual. But, when she saw Peter Parker pop up on her caller ID (Tony had programmed his number in case of emergencies), she was pretty sure it was going to be one of her most important phone calls.

“Hi, Peter,” she said, shuffling through papers on her desk. “How are you?”

“Ummm,” a surprised Peter replied, “good?”

“Hi Pepper!” Shuri exclaimed. “We have a question for you.”
Pepper folded her hands under her chin and smiled. “Shoot.”

“Okay,” Shuri said, “Peter and I are super psyched you’re marrying Tony. And since your practically Peter’s step mom now-”

“How many times do I-” Peter tried to interrupt. “Ms. Potts, just to be clear, I know Mr. Stark isn’t my dad!”

“Just accept it already!” Shuri shot back.

Pepper stifled a giggle while the teens continued to argue about Peter’s parentage. She heard a thud on the other end, and Shuri protested loudly about being hit in the head with a pillow. Something else chirped in the background, and Pepper inferred that it was the lizard Tony had mentioned before.

“ANYWAY,” Peter said firmly, “we were wondering if you wanted to hang out.”

“So we can get to know you more,” Shuri added sweetly.

Pepper Potts was no fool. She knew exactly what Peter and Shuri were doing.

“Are you two,” she said dramatically, “trying to vet me for Tony?”

An awkward silence filled the line followed by a sudden burst of noise.

“No!” Peter exclaimed.

“We would never!”

“Uh huh,” Pepper chuckled. “Don’t worry, I think it’s sweet.”

That was certainly not the answer Peter and Shuri were expecting. “You do?” both teens asked.

“Yup. Tell you what, my afternoon meeting got cancelled. Want to meet in the city around 2?”

“Sure,” Peter replied.

“Sounds like a plan!” Shuri exclaimed.

Pepper smiled. “Great, I’ll text you the address. See you soon.” She disconnected the call and put the phone back on her desk. Her brow furrowed as she tried to think like a teenager. Where would they want to go?

She opened Google on her laptop and typed in a few ideas floating around in her head. She clicked on a link and her smile widened.

It was a bit out there, but she was pretty sure the teens were going to love it.
“It’s too young, isn’t it?” Pepper asked worriedly as Peter and Shuri stood with their mouths open in front of the largest Build a Bear they had ever seen. Pepper shook her head. “Definitely too young,” she muttered, mentally scolding herself.

Peter and Shuri looked at each other, grinned at Pepper and bolted into the store, shouting the whole way inside. Shuri had only ever heard of Build a Bear, and Peter hadn’t stepped foot inside the actual store since he was a toddler. Pepper stumbled in their leftover whirlwind and let out a huge sigh of relief. “Not too young,” she smiled. “Got it.”

When she walked inside, Peter and Shuri were bouncing all over the front wall of the store, looking at the different bear options. Shuri squealed as she pulled a gray and blue dinosaur from one of the bins.

“You can make a Velociraptor!” she exclaimed, holding it close to her chest.

Peter snatched up one from a Pokemon themed bin. “I choose you-” he held the unstuffed thing in his outstretched arm “-Eevee!”

“Nerd,” Shuri said, shaking her head. She turned to look at Pepper. “What are you going to make?

“Oh I wasn’t going to-”

“But you have to!” Peter insisted. “You can’t come to Build a Bear and not build anything!” Shuri nodded solemnly.

Pepper smirked and let her gaze wander over the different animals. She gasped when one in particular caught her attention. She walked over and carefully picked up an unstuffed snowy owl.

“Harry Potter,” they said in unison.

“I think I’ll give it to Tony,” Pepper replied, looking fondly at the owl. She headed over towards the fluffing machine as Peter and Shuri tried to contain their smiles. Pepper Potts clearly knew Tony Stark’s fandoms.

Check one for Pepper.

Pepper paused in front of the sound station and looked curiously at the teens. “Do you two want any sounds?”

Peter rocked on his feet. He knew sounds were more expensive, but he couldn’t pass up the opportunity to have his Eevee say, “I choose you!” Shuri, on the other hand, was smirking as she imagined all the ways she could scare T’Challa if she got a roar sound for her Velociraptor. Even if it was anatomically impossible for Velociraptors to roar like a T-Rex, she was willing to let it slide.

Pepper reached out and took one of the customizable sound speakers. “I’ll get one if you get one,” she said, wiggling the speaker at them.

Peter and Shuri smiled as they grabbed one of their own. They quickly customized their sounds and chose small, red hearts for the inside of their animals.
The teens let Pepper go first at the Fluff Me station, and they giggled as she furrowed her brow in concentration while she pressed the fluffing pedal. They all watched the owl’s body expand until it was just the right amount of fluffiness for Pepper. After she hugged it to make sure it was just right, the employee carefully placed her sound and heart inside and stitched the owl up.

Peter was giddy as he went next, carefully applying pressure to the pedal. He didn’t want to accidentally use his super strength to press too hard and send fluff flying everywhere. Shuri repeated the same process, a huge grin on her face as her Velociraptor came to life before her.

“We don’t have to do the bath if you don’t want to,” Pepper said as they continued onward.

“Of course we do!” Shuri gasped.

“We need the full experience,” Peter insisted, placing Eevee in the fake bathtub. "You know, for science!" He pressed the pedal underneath and tub and watched as virtual water began to coat Eevee. He grabbed fake soap and laughed as bubbles began to appear as well. Shuri and Pepper took their own spots under shower heads, and soon, they were silently getting their stuffed creations “clean”.

Peter held up Eevee and nodded, satisfied with his work. Pepper and Shuri followed him over to the Dress Me section, where clothes and accessories of all kinds filled up an entire wall. Pepper spotted what she wanted immediately. She pulled off a hanger with a purple robe, pointed hat, and purple and red scarf. There were silver and red stars all over the hat and robe, and instead of a B emblazoned on the crest of the robe, there was a B. The words “Wizard Academy” were stitched in a familiar font, and Pepper smiled.

Shuri handed her a pair of round, black glasses. “Don’t forget these!” she exclaimed.

Pepper nodded. “This is perfect!” She looked back up at the wall. “What are you two going to get?”

Peter let his eyes wander over hundreds of outfits and accessories. He held Eevee up to the wall and tried to think about what would look best. He landed on a slick, grey button down shirt with a black and blue tie. He pulled it off the hook and grabbed a pair of dress pants. He also found a classic Jeff cap and monocle in the accessories section.

“Dapper Eevee!” Shuri squealed as she saw Peter’s clothing choices. “I love it!”

“What about you?” he asked.

Shuri held up a Jedi Knight outfit and a blue lightsaber. “She’s going to be a Jedi!”

Pepper nodded approvingly. “Looks great! Ready to name them?”

Peter and Shuri nodded, and they walked over to the computers. Peter named his “Eevee” (because he was not a believer in giving his Pokemon nicknames), Shuri named her Velociraptor Blue, and Pepper named her owl Hedwig.

Before Peter and Shuri could even put money on the counter, Pepper handed over a credit card to the cashier.

She smiled warmly at the teens. “My treat!” They opened up their mouths to protest, but she shot them down with one of her famous stern looks.

Paying for their Build a Bears? Check two for Pepper.

“Fine,” Shuri conceded, crossing her arms, “but we’re taking you for a snack.”
“Oh my god,” Pepper gushed, her mouth full of cookie dough. “This is AMAZING!”

They were sitting in the bright sun in Washington Square Park, eating spoonfuls of cookie dough from a new cookie dough eatery nearby. Peter and Shuri eagerly dug into their own cups, relishing the sweetness dancing across their taste buds. They had been getting to know Pepper non-stop since they left Build a Bear, but now they were eating in silence.

After cleaning out his cup, Peter expertly tossed it into a nearby trash can. He sighed and collapsed back on the grass. “What kind of wedding are you guys going to have?” he asked.

Pepper hummed contentedly. “Probably a big one, knowing Tony.”

Shuri looked at Pepper. “You don’t want a big wedding?”

She shook her head. “It’s not that I don’t want a big wedding...I just want it to be small.” She grinned sheepishly as Shuri and Peter stared at her, their noses scrunched up in confusion. “I want the actual moment to be small, I guess.”

Peter scratched the top of his head. “So you wanna elope?”

“Elope?” Shuri asked.

“It’s when you get married really fast,” Peter explained. “You can do it at a courthouse.”

“Or Vegas,” Pepper added, a dreamy expression taking over. “Little chapel, maybe an Elvis, cruising down the strip after.”

Peter sat up and gave Shuri a knowing look. “That’s what you really want, huh?” he asked.

Pepper nodded. “I still want the big reception. And my dress. But the I dos?”

“You want those to yourself,” Shuri said.

Sentimental and kind? Pepper had officially hit a home run with the teens.

“Yeah.” Pepper watched as mischievous grins took over Peter and Shuri’s faces. “What?” she asked.

“What if,” Peter said, his expression bright and excited, “we could help you elope?”

Pepper raised her brows and tucked her hand under her chin, a playful grin on her face.

“I’m listening.”
“We need to go to Vegas!”

Tony looked up from the mess on his workbench to find Peter and Shuri panting in the doorway of his lab. He lifted up his protective eyewear.

“Why, hello, it’s nice to see you too!” he said in a fake enthusiastic voice. “Shuri, this is a surprise! How’s Wakanda these days? And Peter, you’ve grown! I’m fine, in case you were-”

Peter jogged over to the bench. “Hi, Mr. Stark, how have you been?”

Tony crossed his arms and smirked. “You mean since yesterday when you texted me?” He cleared off enough space so both Peter and Shuri could sit on top. DUM-E rolled over with two pairs of safety goggles and nearly poked out Shuri’s eyes while trying to put them on her.

“Now what’s this about Vegas?” Tony asked, going back to work.

Peter pulled out his phone and opened a webpage that he and Shuri had designed. “There’s this huge virtual reality tech conference in Vegas the day after tomorrow!”

Tony squinted at the print on the small screen as Peter and Shuri held their breath. They hoped it was good enough to fool the second biggest tech genius in the world. He stepped back and hunched over his workbench. “And I care about this why…?”

Shuri cleared her throat and cracked her knuckles. It was time to work her magic. “Well, virtual reality is an area that Stark Industries has yet to really explore for the mainstream consumer. This conference would be the perfect place to get ideas and start expanding your business.” She smiled sweetly as Tony stood back up and gazed intently at the two teens.

He pointed a finger at them. “Fine, I see how this could be relevant for me, but why should you come with?”

Peter blushed and cleared his throat as he scratched the back of his neck. “Well, uh, you see-”

“It’s also one of the biggest video game conferences on the West Coast,” a voice replied from behind them.

Everyone turned around to find Pepper Potts leaning against the door, a confident smile on her face.

“You want me to take you to Vegas for a video game conference?” Tony asked, turning back to the teens.

“And virtual reality business ventures!” Shuri insisted. “It’s a two-for-one deal!”

“We can pay for our registration,” Peter added. “And we’ll split a hotel room!”

Tony shook his head and waved them off. “I’m not even the least bit concerned about the money part, kid.”

Pepper walked over and wrapped her arms around Tony’s waist. “I’ll come with!” she exclaimed, squeezing him in a hug. “Think about how much fun Vegas would be for a few days,” she said softly.
And oh, boy, did Tony think about it.

He cleared his throat as a red hue climbed up his neck and into his cheeks. “Yup, conference sounds great!” He looked at Peter and Shuri. “I want verbal confirmation from both parental figures that you can go.”

Peter, Pepper, and Shuri tried not to let the horror show on their faces. This was definitely not part of the plan. But, to keep Tony from suspecting anything, they had to do it.

Peter gulped as he pulled out his phone and dialed Aunt May. He put it on speaker as his heart continued to pound in his chest.

“Hello?” his aunt asked.

“Hi Aunt May!” Peter said a little too enthusiastically. He decided his best move was to get straight to the point. “Can I go to Vegas for a video game conference?”

May laughed. “Whoa, Peter! I need you to slow down. Did you say Vegas?”

“Y-y-yeah. There’s a video game conference, and Shuri and I really want to go, and Mr. Stark said he’d—”

“Wait, you’d be going with Tony?” May asked, a hint of concern in her voice. “I don’t know if Vegas is such a good idea…”

Tony raised his brows, but Pepper covered his mouth before he could protest any more. She pointed to herself, and Peter took the hint.

“And Ms. Potts is going!” he added quickly.

“Tony’s fiance?” May hummed thoughtfully. “Okay, that’s fine. But no gambling, and absolutely NO drinking. I’ll be home the day after tomorrow so just leave some extra food and water for Yoshi. Oh! I want all the details too. Flight, hotel—”

“Yup, I’ll text it!” Peter said quickly. “Love you, bye—”

Tony escaped Pepper’s grasp and grabbed the phone out of Peter’s hands. “Hi, May, Tony here. You really don’t think I’m responsible enough to—” He was cut short as the phone clicked off. He looked at Peter incredulously. “She hung up on me!”

Peter gently patted Tony’s shoulder. “It’s okay, Mr. Stark.”

Tony looked at Pepper. “I’m responsible.”

She nodded, trying to hide her grin as she cupped his cheeks. “Of course you are.”

“Super responsible, in fact.”

“I know, honey.”

Meanwhile, Shuri already had T’Challa pulled up on her kimoyo beads and was wrapping up the conversation.

“No drinking!” T’Challa ordered. “And stay away from unseemly people.”

Shuri waved him off. “Yes, yes, brother. Chill!”
T'Challa scoffed. “Do not cause trouble while you are away.”

“Me?!” Shuri gasped, clutching a hand to her chest. “Never!”

“I mean it, Shuri.”

“I won’t!” she promised. She disconnected the call and gave Peter a high-five.

Tony smiled and started packing up his work bench. “Alright then…”

“...looks like we’re going to Vegas!”
Part 4

Chapter Notes

I am not responsible for your dental bills when you incur a million cavities from reading this chapter. :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

If it was socially acceptable to put teenagers on leashes, Tony Stark would have patented the design and made millions by now. He swore the number of grey hairs on his head doubled by the time they all got off the plane and bathed in the thick Vegas heat. The sun was already gone, and the night was alive with twinkling lights and zooming cars.

Peter and Shuri talked non-stop for the entire five hour flight. They had a lot to catch up on after being separated for three months. When Tony pointed out that they talked to each other almost every day, they stared at him as if he had committed treason. Apparently, there was a difference between talking over kimoyo beads and talking in person. Pepper could barely hide her smirk as the teens chastised Tony.

Now, they were walking around the strip in awe, staring up at the colorful hotels. People had to sidestep away from them to avoid being taken out by them. They kept stopping in the middle of the sidewalk to take selfies in front of the hotels. They almost forgot they had a mission to complete.

“So, where’s the check-in for this conference?” Tony asked, turning towards a massive white hotel.

“Not here!” Peter exclaimed quickly. “Down that way!” He pointed to a random hotel at the end of the strip.

Tony quirked his eyebrows. “I didn’t know the Luxor had the space to host such a massive conference.”

Before Peter or Shuri could flounder with an answer, Pepper smoothly stepped in. “It’s taking place at both the Luxor and Mandalay Bay since they’re connected. Plenty of space.” She smiled as the teens mouthed “thank you” while Tony led the way into the hotel, no longer questioning the conference.

If Vegas was a palace, the Bellagio was its king. The marble lobby was massive, and it just oozed class and elegance. A large multicolored glass sculpture hung from the center of the ceiling, and a small fountain stood proudly beneath it. Peter glanced down one of the hallways and spotted a literal garden, complete with rocks and large, fake fish. Shuri whistled under her breath. Americans knew how to deck out a place, that was for sure.

While Tony checked in, Pepper consulted the teens one more time about their plan. They agreed to meet back down in the lobby in twenty minutes to catch the fountain show, where Pepper planned on surprising Tony with the elopement. She bounced eagerly on her toes, and there was a sparkle in her eyes. She was excited, and it was contagious. Even though the flight had been long and the hour was late, Peter and Shuri were just as hyped up as she was.

Tony walked back over and tossed two keys to Peter. He caught them easily and handed one to
Shuri.

“You two are staying on the same floor, but we’re in different rooms.” He pointed to Pepper and wiggled his eyebrows. “I got us a compd Executive Parlor Suite,” he bragged.

Pepper rolled her eyes. “You know I don’t actually care what kind of room we stay in, right?” she asked, wrapping her arms around his neck.

He gave her a quick kiss. “And that’s what I love about you.”

Shuri leaned over to Peter. “This is the literal definition of the heart eyes emoji,” she whispered.

He nodded back as he cringed at Pepper and Tony’s sudden PDA. “Well, we’re going to drop our stuff off,” he said quickly. “See you soon!” He grabbed Shuri’s arm and dragged her away towards the elevators.

The elevator dropped them off at the 32nd floor, and Peter’s jaw dropped when he saw the room. Actually, it was rooms, plural.

“Oh my god,” Shuri gasped, dropping her bag to the floor with a loud thud.

The Bellagio Two Bedroom Suite was bigger than Peter’s apartment back in New York. The tile floor opened up to a wide living room with dark mahogany furniture and a huge window overlooking the Vegas strip. A plush, leather couch sat caddy-corner to a wet bar, which was fully stocked with both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks alike. On one side of the suite there was a bedroom with a full bathroom. Peter grinned as he recognized the familiar design of whirlpool jets in one of the tubs. There was another identical bathtub on the opposite side of the bathroom, plus a shower.

The bedroom itself was just as luxurious. A king-sized bed sat in the middle of the carpeted room, and Shuri quickly hopped on top. She giggled as she felt the soft cashmere blanket beneath her skin.

“There’s two rooms!” Peter shouted glumly from the other side of the suite.

Shuri lifted her head off the bed, already reading Peter’s mind. “Just drag the mattress in here!” she yelled back. She heard Peter grunt as he pulled the mattress across the suite. There was a loud crash as he banged into something, but soon, he positioned his mattress, blankets, and pillows on the floor next to Shuri’s bed. Meanwhile, she was scrolling through the TV’s movie options, which were basically endless.

“Do you have Hedwig?” Peter asked as he sprawled out on his makeshift bed. Shuri nodded and pointed back out the hall, prompting Peter to get up and bring her bag in the room.

“What if we binge Voltron?” Shuri asked, while Peter unzipped her bag and pulled out the Build a Bear owl. “Oooo, or make the most epic blanket fort ever!”

“We can pick something later,” Peter replied, tossing Hedwig at Shuri. “We’ve gotta get back downstairs.”

“Fine,” Shuri conceded, slipping Hedwig into the backpack Pepper had given her. “But we are so ordering ice cream in the middle of the night.”

“Duh!” Peter exclaimed, as if it was obvious. “It’ll be like Home Alone 2, except we’re in Vegas and not New York. And it’s summer, not winter.” Shuri just stared at him blankly. “Oh my god,” he gasped, “forget Voltron. We are definitely watching Home Alone tonight.”
They continued to argue the merits of a sci-fi cartoon show versus campy comedy as they headed back towards the lobby. Pepper and Tony were already waiting.

“Do you like the room?” Tony asked with a smile.

Peter nodded enthusiastically. “It’s amazing, Mr. Stark!” he exclaimed. “Thank you so much!”

“It’s epic!” Shuri added.

“Good,” Tony nodded. “Now, Pepper tells me you two want to see the fountain show.” He looped one arm through Pepper’s and held his other arm out like a game show host. “Shall we?”

Peter and Shuri practically skipped outside and headed towards the front of the hotel. The massive fountain was lit up underneath the water, and at the moment, the surface was calm and smooth. The teens ran right up to the front railing and eagerly leaned over to get a better look, Tony and Pepper following close behind. A crowd had already started to gather for the show, and they weren’t disappointed.

The white lights dimmed and were replaced with dark blue ones. A huge line of water suddenly shot up into the night sky, illuminated by bright lights. The crowd gasped as music swelled and underwater lights began to flicker in curvy patterns. Streams of water began to shoot up, matching a funky techno beat that sounded somewhat familiar to Peter and Shuri, but was well-known to Tony and Pepper.

No matter how hard I try.
You keep pushing me aside
And I can’t break through
There’s no talking to you

The thick blasts of water were quickly replaced with thin jets that wiggled up into the air. Some of the jets joined together in almost a Hershey kiss sort of shape while others disappeared, leaving small pockets of space. Tony felt his foot tap to the beat while Peter and Shuri marveled at the coding behind the show. The water jets leaned to the left and then to the right as the song moved into the chorus.

Do you believe in life after love
I can feel something inside me say
I really don’t think you’re strong enough

The water lowered down then shot up as one large sheet, quickly transforming into a circle. Thick jets exploded, and Peter felt the cool mist of the water tickle his skin. The lights flickered in a strobe-like pattern as the water kept traveling higher and higher with each pulse.
Pepper stared in awe at the show, while Tony was staring at her. As her face brightened with each burst of light, she gripped his hand. He remembered all of the reasons he fell in love with her.

Do you believe in life after love

I can feel something inside me say

I really don't think you're strong enough

As Cher continued to serenade them in the background, Pepper turned to Tony and cupped his cheeks. Shuri swatted Peter’s arm and motioned for him to get his phone out to start recording.

Pepper captured Tony’s lips in a kiss, completely taking his breath away. “Marry me, Tony Stark.” Pepper demanded with a smile.

Tony grinned back. “I am,” he replied.

She shook her head. “I mean now. Elope with me in Vegas.”

“You?” Tony asked, scrunching his brows. “But what about the wedding?”

“We can always do the big ceremony,” she reasoned. “But I want this to be just the two of us. You and me. No crowd of people.” She reached out her hand, and Shuri quickly placed Hedwig in her palms. Pepper got down on one knee and held Hedwig out to Tony. She gave her a quick squeeze, activating the sound box.

“Owl always love you,” the owl said in Pepper’s voice. Tony couldn’t help but laugh at everything. The cheesy 90s music, the owl, Pepper down on one knee. It was all so ridiculously perfect that he couldn’t help but say…

“Yes!” Tony reached down and lifted Pepper off her feet. He spun her around and gripped her in a tight hug. “Always, yes.”

“YES!” Peter and Shuri shouted, pumping their fists in the air. A few people in the crowd clapped politely before turning back to finish watching the show.

Tony pulled back and playfully glared at his fiance. “There’s no conference, is there?”

“Nope,” Pepper replied, without a hint of guilt in her voice.

“Of course not,” he chuckled. He turned to the teens. “And I’m guessing you two planned this whole thing?”

“Most of it,” Peter admitted. “It was Pepper’s idea though.”

Tony’s pride for Peter took over his heart as he gripped the teen’s shoulder in a silent thank you. “Okay,” Tony said, clapping his hands together. “What do we have to do to elope here?”

Shuri pulled out some papers from her backpack. “Well, we already have the marriage license paperwork filled out,” she said. “You just need to sign.”

“The marriage license office is open until midnight,” Peter added, “so you could get it tonight if you
“Hurry.”

“There’s a bunch of cool chapels around here,” Shuri continued. “You can get married by Elvis, or even Darth Vader!”

“Or you could go more traditional,” Peter said. “We made a list for you—”

Tony held up his hands, cutting both teens off. “Okay, clearly I need to come to you two if I ever wanna elope,” he joked. “Why don’t Pepper and I head over and get the license while you two go back to the hotel and sleep?”

Peter thought about protesting, but he remembered that he and Shuri were technically tagging along on their special day. “Okay,” he conceded. Shuri gave a small smile and nod as well.

Tony wrapped his arms around the teens’ shoulders as he walked them back to the hotel. “Tomorrow,” he promised, “we’ll get breakfast and go over that list of places you found. Then you can help us get everything else done. Sound good?”

The teens faces brightened. “Yeah!” they exclaimed.

Tony patted their shoulders and gently pushed them to the hotel. “Good!” he called. “Now get some sleep because tomorrow I’m getting married!”

Pepper shook her head, but the huge smile on her face said it all. “Night! Stay out of trouble!” she warned.

Peter gave her a thumbs up. “Don’t worry, we will!” He and Shuri disappeared into the hotel while Tony and Pepper went the opposite direction. Peter pulled out his phone and sent a quick text before turning his attention back to Shuri. “Holy cow, I can’t believe that worked!” he exclaimed.

Shuri nodded. “I know, right?! It’s going to be so epic!”

Peter smiled as the elevator climbed higher and higher.

“I can’t wait!”

Chapter End Notes

I tried really hard to describe the Bellagio water show for Cher’s Believe. You can check it out here if you want to see what the real thing looks like: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcTaxPR_Bp0&t=82s
Part 5

Chapter Notes

So in the last book, I was given the crown of "the sorry not sorry meme"...

This is one of those chapters :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony groaned as he woke up in a bed that was not in the Bellagio. It felt like there were tiny little jackhammers inside his skull having a massive rager, and even opening his eyes a crack caused a blinding pain behind his eyelids. He hadn’t been this hungover since his pre-Pepper days.

Someone shifted beside him, and he held back the urge to puke as he turned over. He let out a huge sigh of relief as he found Pepper slowly starting to wake up next to him. She looked almost as bad as he felt with dark circles under her eyes. He grimaced as he pulled his arm in front of his face and looked at his watch.

Only...there was no watch on his wrist.

“What the-?” he said, turning his head to the side. That was a mistake since he choked back the urge to vomit. He managed to hold down his nausea and look at the clock on the nightstand.

11:34am, June 16th.

“June 16th?!” he gasped. “That can’t be right!” If they arrived on Thursday the 14th, that meant they had lost a whole day!

“Babe,” he croaked, carefully forcing himself to sit up. “Babe, wake up.”

Pepper groaned and opened one eye, then two. She pulled the blanket over her head, as Tony finally got a good look at the room they were in.

It was the very definition of Motel 6. Cheap carpet, cotton sheets, and wallpaper that looked like it had seen better days. Tony had to hold back vomit as he spotted at least five mysterious stains on the floor.

“What the hell happened yesterday?” he whispered to himself. He gently pulled the blanket off Pepper’s head and coaxed her to sit up.

Pepper looked around the room groggily and became just as confused as Tony was. “What happened?” she asked.

Tony rubbed the back of his head. “I’m literally trying to figure that out right now.”

“Well what do you remember?”
Tony sighed. He could not remember a single thing past getting the marriage license the first night in Vegas.

The marriage license! They were supposed to get married yesterday!

He quickly looked down at his hands and found no ring on his left hand. So, did they not get married? Did they get married and he lost the ring? Tony squeezed his eyes shut and tried to remember, but his mind was a blank slate that held no answers.

“So, uh, sweetie,” he said nervously, “I’m not saying I can’t remember yesterday. But, uh, did we...you know...get married?”

Pepper stared at him incredulously. “Are you saying you can’t remember our wedding?!”

Tony grimaced at her increased volume. “No!” he insisted. “I’m just checking your memory!”

“Well of course I remember our.” Pepper stopped and put her head in her hands. “Oh my god…” She closed her eyes, opened them, and closed them again. “We...we did get married yesterday, didn’t we?”

“So you don’t remember!”

Pepper covered her mouth as her face turned a pale shade of green. “I can’t have this conversation right now.” She quickly got up out of bed and made a mad dash for the bathroom. Tony heard her puke into the toilet as he leaned back against the headboard.

The toilet flushed and Pepper stuck her head into the doorway. “Tony...” she asked slowly, “why is Thor naked in the bathtub with a baby tiger?”

Tony bolted up. “You just saw Thor naked?”

Pepper blinked slowly. “That...that’s seriously what you took from that sentence?”

Tony stood up and carefully walked over to the bathroom. Sure enough, when he peeked inside, Thor was laying in all his naked glory in the cheap bathtub. A baby tiger was sprawled out on his massive chest, its black and orange fur rising and falling with each breath it took.

“Okay,” Tony said, leaning against the doorway. “Okay, okay, okay.” He clasped his hands together and put them under his chin as he tried to think. “I have about four questions that come to mind right now.” He held up his fingers as he counted off, his volume rising with each one. “One: where the hell are we? Two: how the hell did we get here? Three: why the hell is Thor here? And four: why in the absolute hell is he laying NAKED in our bathroom with a BABY TIGER?!”

“All valid questions,” Pepper nodded calmly. “But you’re forgetting one pretty big one.”

“And that is?” Tony asked, gently rubbing his temples.

“Where the hell are the kids?”

Tony blinked, and the remaining color he had drained from his face. He looked to the one bedroom motel room, confirming that he, Pepper, and Thor were the only ones inside.

“Oh shit!”
You didn't see that coming? :P
First of all, I love each and every one of you! The comments you left had me DYING!

They’re in Vegas, friends! I couldn’t resist this little (and I promise, it’s a very small hangover reference) arc. I’ll be bringing back some old favorites and introducing some new ones too! Thanks for sticking with me.

As of right now, I have no other evil, totally unexpected cliffhangers planned. Yet. Give me time, I’m still writing :P

Enjoy!

Peter sighed contentedly as he slowly woke up on what felt like a cloud. God, he could get used to fancy mattresses and cashmere sheets. He opened his eyes and blinked up at the large blanket creating a tent above his head. Sunlight shone through the fabric, and Peter’s eyes widened as his stomach dropped.

“SHURI!” he yelled. “IT’S MORNING!”

He yanked the blankets away from his head as he got up in a panic. Sure enough, when he looked over the stretched out blanket fort to the nightstand, the clock read 11:34am, June 16th.

Shuri groaned and kicked out her feet, nearly knocking over one of the bowls of ice cream she and Peter had cleared out the night before.

“Shut up!” she exclaimed, burrowing herself under her section of the blanket fort. “It’s too early for this!”

Peter threw his pillows at her. “It’s after 11:30! In the morning!”

Shuri bolted up, her gaze frantic. “Morning?!” she screeched as the blanket wall slid off her face.

“That’s literally what I just said!” Peter shot back.

Shuri untangled herself from the covers and quickly dug out some clothes from her suitcase. “Did we miss the wedding? Oh my god, if we missed the wedding—”

Peter shook his head. “Just get changed and we’ll find Mr. Stark and Ms. Potts!”

Before he could reach the bathroom door, he and Shuri heard a loud thud come from the other side of the living room. Both teens froze and stared at the closed door in horror.

Peter gulped and glanced around the room, his gaze settling on a lamp. He carefully unplugged it and held it in front of him as Shuri armed herself with the empty ice cream bowls. She nodded as Peter gripped the door handle.

“AHHH!” they yelled, running into the living room. Peter had his lamp raised mid-strike when he
saw what had caused the noise.

Loki was draped over the edge of the couch, the top half of his torso collapsed on the floor. His eyes fluttered as he tried to lift himself up, but his shaky arms failed.

“Loki?!” the teens asked incredulously.

Loki slid the rest of the way off the couch, and dragged himself over to the coffee table. He pulled himself up to a kneeling position. He looked up at Peter and Shuri, his pale face tinted green and dark, heavy circles under his eyes.

“Bathroom,” he grimaced. “I need-ugh!” He covered his mouth as both Peter and Shuri pointed to the bathroom just behind him. Loki forced himself the rest of the way up and sprinted to the porcelain throne. His retching reached the living room, causing Peter and Shuri to gag as a reflex.

“Should we check on him?” Peter asked, covering his ears.

Shuri shook her head. “You can deal with that nonsense all you want.”

Peter decided it was best not to leave Loki alone, and carefully crept inside the bathroom, the lamp still clutched firmly in his hand. Loki leaned over the toilet bowl and emptied whatever contents remained in his stomach. Peter gingerly reached out the lamp and used it to pat Loki on the shoulder.

“There, there,” he tried to say comfortingly. “Get it all out.”

“Seriously?” Shuri hissed from the doorway. “That’s your solution?”

Peter turned back to glare at her. “I don’t see you doing anything!”

“Would both of you,” Loki groaned, pushing himself away from the toilet, “please stop talking?!” He whimpered and laid down on the tile floor, then sighed as his cheek made contact with the cool surface.

Peter and Shuri tiptoed back into the living room, trying to wrap their mind around what the heck was going on.

“Why is Loki here?” Shuri whispered. “And how did he get in our room?”

Peter shrugged and set the lamp down on the floor. “I have no clue!” He walked over and around the counter to the wet bar to get Loki some water. “We should probably call Mr. Stark’s-OH MY GOD!” Peter jumped in the air and scrambled backwards as he nearly tripped over a mysterious person.

Shuri rushed over and looked over the bar. “Is that?” she asked, her jaw dropping.

Peter carefully approached the figure lying prone on the hallway floor and poked him. “Doctor Strange?” he asked softly. “Are you alive?”

Strange moaned in response.

“Poke him again,” Shuri ordered, standing a safe distance away.

“What if he pukes too?” Peter asked.

“Well if he’s lying face down and he pukes, he’ll probably choke,” Shuri reasoned. “So you might want to move-”
Strange lifted his face up, startling both Peter and Shuri. “Would you two,” he rasped, “stop talking already?!?” He groaned as he pushed himself up on his elbows and turned on his side.

Shuri rolled her eyes. “Well, someone’s cranky.”

“Get out!” Strange yelled, pointing his finger towards the door.

“This is our room!” Peter protested. “You get out!”

Strange blinked. “Your room?” he asked. “Why am I in your apartment?”

Peter and Shuri looked at each other. “Uhhhh,” Peter said slowly, “you’re not?”

“You’re in Vegas,” Shuri finished.

Strange made the mistake of sitting up quickly, and he paid for it as he found himself hunched over the bar’s sink, puking his guts out. Shuri and Peter yelped in protest and ran into the empty bedroom, locking themselves in.

“When you two are done puking,” Peter yelled through the door, “we really need to talk about this!”

He and Shuri pressed their ears against the wood until there was silence on the other side.

“Can we have a civilized conversation now?” Shuri shouted. “Preferably without the vomit?!”

“Yes,” two voices replied in defeated tones from the other side.

They opened the door and cautiously walked back out into the living room. Strange was leaning against the side of the wet bar that faced the living room, his head in his hands, while Loki had made his way back to the couch. Peter headed behind the bar and grabbed four cups from the bar’s cabinets. He filled two with water from the sink and gave a full cup and an empty cup to the men.

“Sip and spit,” he ordered.

Loki smiled up at him wryly. “Since when did you become adept at dealing with hangovers?” he asked.

“It’s puke care 101,” Peter said, as if it was obvious. “You guys are puking so…”

“Is that what you’re calling this?” Shuri replied, crossing her arms. “A hangover?”

“What else could this possibly be?” Loki asked, sipping the water gently.

“How did you even get here?” Peter questioned.

Strange finally looked up. “Are we really in Vegas?”

“Vegas?” Loki asked, scrunching his nose. “Is it an alien planet?”

“It’s in America. On Earth,” Peter replied. “And yeah, you are.”

“In our hotel room,” Shuri added, giving Strange a pointed look.

Strange sipped his water and furrowed his brows. The motion made him grimace and he relaxed his face to avoid throwing up again. “Why are you two in Vegas?” he asked.

Peter’s eyes widened, suddenly remembering what had gotten him in a rush in the first place. “Mr.
Stark’s eloping!” he exclaimed. “Shuri, we’ve got to find them!” He ran his hands through his hair. “Man, I hope we didn’t miss it!”

Loki’s eyes flashed, a brief moment of recognition coming over his face. “Stark…” he said slowly. “Why-” He paused and clutched his hand over his mouth. He took a few deep breaths and sighed as the moment passed.

“You okay?” Shuri asked.

Loki nodded. “I can’t remember a thing,” he admitted. “And thinking makes me want to vomit.”

“You can think?” Strange muttered. Loki glared at him, but the teens rushed to his defense.

“Yeah?” Shuri argued with a smirk. “Why don’t you tell us how you got here then?”

As soon as Strange tried to access his memory banks, the nausea crashed into him, and he rushed back to the sink to throw up.

“Ha!” Loki chuckled. “Who’s all powerful now?”

“Loki!” Peter chastised. “C’mon!”

“Be nice, please!” Shuri begged.

“We’re kind of freaking out here,” Peter continued, “and you two are not helping!”

Loki finally saw the concern on the teens’ faces and sighed in resignation. “Fine, I’ll be civil,” he complied. “But I’m going to hate every second of it.”

Peter exhaled and tried to regroup. “Okay, I’m going to call Mr. Stark and figure all this out.” He retrieved his cell phone from the bedroom and called Tony’s cell number. He heard the Little Einsteins theme song trickle through from somewhere in the living room.

He poked his head out of the doorway. “Do you hear that?”

Shuri nodded and followed the noise to the front closet. She slowly opened the door and gasped as the Cloak of Levitation tumbled out onto the floor. It clutched three cell phones and two wallets in its fabric as it rolled around on the floor.

“Oh god,” she groaned, “don’t tell me you’re hungover too!”

The cloak rose up and shook itself off. It handed Shuri the cell phones and wallets before floating away to Strange. It tapped Strange on the shoulder and pointed to the water.

“Yes, I’m hungover,” Strange said. “Give me a chance to recover.” The cloak floated back out into the living room and settled on the couch across from Loki, who stared at it as if it were infected.

Shuri handed the phones to Peter. “Well, Tony and Pepper’s phones are both here.” She opened the wallets. “Same with the wallets.”

Peter held up the third phone. “Then whose is this?”

Loki motioned to the teens. “Give it here.” Shuri handed it to the Asgardian, and his eyes widened. “This is Thor’s,” he said, the shock evident in his voice.

“Thor’s here too?!” the teens exclaimed. They rushed around the hotel room, opening every door...
and cabinet, but Thor was nowhere to be found.

“You try calling Tony’s room, and I’ll knock on the door!” Shuri demanded, rushing out of the room.

Peter found the hotel phone by the huge window overlooking the strip and dialed Tony’s room. It rang and rang and rang, but no one ever picked up. Things were not looking good.

A few minutes later, Shuri came back in shaking her head. “No answer,” she said, shutting the door. “I could hear the phone ringing, but nothing moving inside.”

Strange cracked his neck and sipped some more water. “Okay,” he said as the teens settled onto the floor, defeat evident on their faces. “Tell us everything you remember from yesterday.”

“Can’t you two just use your magic to get your memory back?” Peter asked.

Strange shook his head. “He and I are in no state to be using magic right now,” he admitted.

Peter sighed as worry gnawed at his stomach. Where were Mr. Stark and Ms. Potts? And apparently Thor? Were they okay? Would they ever find-

Shuri gently patted his knee. “We’ll figure it out,” she promised.

Peter nodded and took a deep breath.

“Okay,” he said, “here’s what we remember from yesterday…”
A little more of the mystery will be solved! The good stuff will come in the next two chapters. Enjoy!

Also, thanks for all your comments and kudos! You all rock!

June 15th

Peter and Shuri did not, in fact, watch the *Home Alone* series because as soon as they got back to their hotel room, they both passed out on their beds.

When they woke up, they were well-rested and extremely hungry. Tony had texted Peter telling him to meet them down at the Cafe Bellagio.

“Is everything in Vegas this fancy?” Shuri asked in awe as they walked into the restaurant.

Peter shook his head. “I don’t think so, but this is definitely a Mr. Stark place.”

The oriental carpet matched the thick curtains hanging off the windows. Even the chairs had similar patterns on the fabric part. Peter saw Tony and Pepper waving from a table near the windows, and he pulled Shuri towards them. As they got closer, Shuri could see the massive Mediterranean-style pool outside. People were already swimming and sipping cocktails under the cabanas.

“Morning!” Pepper said brightly. “Did you guys sleep well?”

“Yup,” Peter nodded, his stomach rumbling in protest.

Tony smirked and handed Peter a menu. The teen felt his starving stomach drop as he looked at some of the prices of the food. Tony watched as Peter’s expression went from bliss to concern.

“Breakfast is on me,” he said, reading Peter’s mind. Before Peter could protest, he added, “Don’t worry, I’ll take it from your paycheck.”

Peter scrunched up his nose. “But you don’t...you don’t pay me, Mr. Stark.”

“I don’t?!” he gasped in mock-surprise. Tony kept up the exaggeration as he turned to Pepper. “Honey, we’ve got to change that.” He looked back at Peter. “Okay, consider me paying for your food as back pay from all your work at the Stark Internship.”

“But Mr. Stark, it’s not a real—”

Shuri kicked his ankle from under the table. “Thanks Tony!” she exclaimed, giving Peter a pointed look.

Peter got the message loud and clear. “Thanks Mr. Stark!”
Tony chuckled and shook his head.

Peter and Shuri both got omelettes, and they split a huge bananas foster-style waffle. Pepper stuck with classic French toast while Tony enjoyed his eggs benedict and smoked salmon platter.

Peter swallowed a big bite of waffle and wiped his mouth with his napkin. “Did you guys get the marriage license last night?”

Pepper nodded. “We just made the deadline, but we’ve got it!” Her smile was wide and bright, and the teens were really excited for her.

“So what’s the plan?” Shuri asked. “Did you pick a chapel too?”

“That one we haven’t done,” Tony replied, shaking his head. “We figured we would do a little bit of sightseeing first, and then Pepper and I can check out the chapels while you guys hang out at the pool.”

Peter’s eyes widened. “Can we check out the other hotels?”

“You can go into hotels that you aren’t staying in?” Shuri asked.

Pepper nodded. “Yes to both questions. Where did you want to start?”

Peter and Shuri wanted to see it all. After they finished eating, they started at the end of the strip closest to the Bellagio and just made their way down. They took selfies outside the Eiffel Tower, watched it rain inside an actual building in Planet Hollywood, and begged Tony for a gondola ride inside the Venetian.

Shuri and Peter were completely awestruck when they started the gondola ride inside the hotel in a man-made river. The water was deep enough to support the boat, and it glided effortlessly through the decorative halls. Pepper captured a bunch of pics of the teens staring and pointing in wonder as they traveled from inside the hotel to outside. The mouth of the “river” opened up to a large pool area outside. The sun shone brightly as Peter and Shuri sighed and relaxed in the boat.

When the gondola ride was over, Tony guided the teens back towards the opposite end of the strip towards the large MGM hotel. He had booked lunch at Wolfgang Puck’s infamous bar and grill. By the time they had satisfied their hunger, it was already mid-afternoon.

Tony squinted in the bright sunlight as they stood outside the MGM grand. Peter could hear shouts and cheers from the roller coaster across the street at New York New York. He decided he was most certainly going to ride that roller coaster before he left.

“Okay,” Tony said, checking his phone. “Pepper and I are going to check out those chapels you gave us.”

“Why don’t you guys hang out at the hotel?” Pepper suggested. “We’ll call you once we have everything set up.” She grinned and gripped Tony’s hand. “And by tonight, we’ll be married!”

Shuri gave them a thumbs up. “Sounds good!” She turned to Peter. “Pool?”

Peter nodded. “Pool.”

They waved goodbye and rushed back down to the Bellagio to change into their swimsuits. Before you could say “Yimbambe”, they were out lounging under one of the cabanas at the Mediterranean pool.
Shuri sighed as she let the sun soak into her skin while Peter swam lazily in the deep end. Her eyes blinked open and she grabbed one of the drink menus off a nearby table.

“Hey Peter!” she shouted. “Do you want-”

Present Day

“Hang on,” Loki interrupted impatiently. “What on earth does any of this have to do with us?”

Peter sighed and rolled his eyes. “Well, if you would let me finish …”

Strange waved his hand in a circular motion. “Can you just get to the point already? When did we get here?”

Now it was Shuri’s turn to roll her eyes. “Haven’t you been listening? You don’t show up in our story!”

“After we went to the pool,” Peter explained, “we came back to our room to build a blanket fort and watch movies until Mr. Stark and Ms. Potts called.”

“But they never did,” Shuri continued. “We fell asleep eating ice cream and watching Home Alone.”

“Which you would know,” Peter muttered, “if I could have finished the story.”

Strange sighed and buried his head in his hands. “Okay, what time did you come back to the room for your ice cream coma?”

Peter looked at Shuri. “Around 5?” he asked.

She nodded. “That sounds about right. I think we fell asleep during the second movie.”

Peter snapped his fingers. “That’s right! I remember falling asleep after the pigeon scene!”

Shuri smiled as she remembered the movie. “That was a funny part!”

“So,” Loki said, “somewhere between 5pm yesterday and 11:30am today, he and I wind up in your room.” He pointed to Strange.

Peter shook his head. “You weren’t here when we fell asleep.”

“Which was probably closer to 8,” Shuri said.

Loki looked to Doctor Strange. “That’s more than twelve hours of missing time.”

Strange just shook his head. “What the hell happened?”
Tony and Pepper were still standing in the doorway of the bathroom to the mysterious motel room when Thor groaned and began to stir.

“Ugh,” he moaned from the tub, “what the hell happened?” He blinked his eyes open and stared down at the tiger cub sleeping on his chest.

“Point Break!” Tony exclaimed, hysteria beginning to take over. “You’re up! That’s great because I’m over here having a bit of a mental break. Glad you could sleep in though!”

Thor blinked once, twice, then three times. He squinted his eyes, as if he were trying to figure out if Tony was really there. “Stark?” he asked in a raspy voice. He wrapped his arms under the tiger cub and slowly stood up.

“WHOA!” Pepper and Tony shouted as Thor showed off his birthday suit. Pepper covered her eyes and Tony put his hand over her face just in case she had any gaps in her fingers.

“Thor!” Tony yelled. “Clothes!”

Thor stared down at his naked body. “I seem to have misplaced them.”

“No shit!” Tony exclaimed. “Can you get a towel or something?!”

Thor stepped out of the tub and pulled a cheap towel off the rack across from the toilet. He tried to wrap it around his waist while holding the tiger, but he wasn’t having much luck. His movements were slow and clumsy, quite unusual for the Asgardian.

Tony groaned and pushed Pepper out into the bedroom. “Just come here!”

Thor followed Tony who sat on the edge of the bed and draped the towel over his legs. Tony carefully placed the tiger on the bed next to him.

“So… Thor said awkwardly. “It’s not that I’m not glad to see you, but...where am I?”

“We’re trying to figure that out ourselves,” Pepper replied. “Neither of us can remember last night.”

Thor furrowed his brow, trying to recall the previous night, but a huge wave of nausea hit him. He covered his mouth and bolted from the bed into the bathroom, leaving the towel scattered on the floor and Tony’s face as pink as Pepper’s. Tony yanked the blanket off the bed and tossed it into the bathroom while Thor finished puking.

The tiger cub yawned and stretched out across the bed as it began to slowly wake up. It let out a soft chuff as it rolled around and licked its paws. Tony sighed and slid down the wall while Pepper patted the top of his head. His heart thundered inside his chest as he tried to rationalize his thoughts and calm down.

“We’ll figure it out,” she promised. Her eyes brightened as she got an idea. “Why don’t I go to the concierge and get the number for the Bellagio? I can try calling the kids from in here.”

Tony looked up at his possible wife. “I doubt this place has a concierge,” he chuckled.

Pepper rolled her eyes and banged Tony’s head gently with her fist. “You know what I mean.”

“Careful!” Tony whimpered. “My guts still feel like they want to eject themselves from my body.”

Pepper grinned sheepishly. “Sorry!” She walked over to the room door and opened it, letting in a streak on sunlight. “I’ll be right back,” she promised. She shut the door behind her, leaving Tony
alone in the room with Thor and the tiger cub.

Tony stared at the adorable animal as it slowly walked all over the bed and sniffed the sheets. He heard the toilet flush and sink water run as Thor began to collect himself.

“I don’t suppose you know anything about what’s going on, do you?” he asked the cub.

It opened its mouth, and Tony half expected it to speak with how his day had been going…

…but it merely yawned at him in response.
Peter tossed every stomach medicine he had been able to purchase at the overpriced convenience store at Strange and Loki. The Asgardian had borrowed one of Peter's sweatshirts to look less conspicuous while Strange had folded his Cloak of Levitation carefully into Shuri's backpack.

"Mortal medicine?" Loki asked.

"Well, considering your magic isn’t working, this is our next best bet," Peter replied.

Loki sighed a quick “thanks” as he opened the container of Tums and downed a quarter of the tablets. Strange settled for chugging Pepto Bismol right from the bottle. He burped and grimaced as the chalky taste stuck to his tongue.

"Here you go!" Shuri announced walking over to the guys. She handed out pieces of toast and bananas. “This should help your stomachs.”

Strange and Loki took the food gratefully and took slow, careful bites. The food settled nicely in their stomachs, and the color was beginning to return to their cheeks.

"So what’s the plan?" Loki asked as he chewed his toast.

Peter looked at Shuri. “Can we ask T’Challa to hack into the surveillance cameras to figure out where they went?”

Shuri stared back as if Peter were nuts. “Are you kidding?! I’m still on probation after the whole space thing! If my brother finds out we lost Tony and Pepper-"

“We didn’t lose them!” Peter protested. “Technically, they lost us!”

“Which is just as bad,” Shuri shot back. “We have to do this on our own.” She hummed thoughtfully. “Maybe Suit Lady could help!"

Peter’s eyes widened. “Karen! You’re right!” He grabbed Shuri’s backpack and carefully opened the back pocket. He dug around for his web slingers, and gently coaxed the Cloak of Levitation back into the bottom of the bag before zipping it shut again. He attached the web slingers to his wrists and looked around.

“We can’t do this here,” he said. “Too many people.”

“We could go to the car,” Shuri suggested. “We might need to be driving anyway.”

Loki’s ears perked up. “What car?”

“Mr. Stark’s rental car,” Shuri replied.

Strange shook his head. “You two are not driving.”

Shuri crossed her arms. “Well you two aren’t in any position to drive.”

Strange opened his mouth to argue, but his stomach bubbled in protest. He took a deep breath and calmed down, his silence enough approval for the teens.

“Don’t worry,” Peter assured them, “I’m a great driver!”

“Seriously?!” Peter protested.

“No way!” Shuri pointed to Peter’s wrists. “Besides, you need to navigate.”

Peter sighed, knowing she was right. “Yeah, okay.”

They all stood up and started walking towards the parking garage. “Okay,” Shuri planned, “we should start with the list of chapels. Maybe Karen can access their security feeds.”

She kept talking, but something on one of the hotel’s large TV monitors caught Peter’s eye. He grabbed Shuri’s arm. “Shuri!”

“If we can figure out when they visited each chapel—”

Loki’s eyes wandered to the TV as well. His jaw dropped open, and he stopped in the middle of the hall. “Shuri!” he exclaimed.

Shuri kept on talking. “Then we can set up a timeline and figure out where they were last.”

“SHURI!” Strange, Loki, and Peter yelled.

“What?!”

They all pointed to the TV, and she turned around to get a better look.

BABY TIGER CUB GOES MISSING FROM VEGAS HOTEL

The picture above the headline was grainy, but Loki, Peter, and Shuri recognized Thor’s eyepatch instantly. Two blurrier figures could be seen off to the side, but Peter could recognize Tony and Pepper’s silhouettes anywhere.

“Dude,” Peter said, turning to Loki, “your brother has so much explaining to do.”

Meanwhile, upstairs, their hotel phone began to ring.

True to her word, Pepper returned ten minutes later. The tiger cub was wide awake now and curiously exploring every part of the motel room.

“Any luck?” Tony asked as Pepper quickly shut the door. The cub tumbled off the bed and banged its head on the door trying to escape.

She shook her head and reached down to pick up the cub. “No answer in their room or ours. And I can’t remember the kids’ cell numbers to call them.”

Tony sighed. “Oh god, May’s gonna kill me.”
Pepper swallowed. “So there’s something else you should know…”

“What?” Thor asked from the bathroom doorway. He had managed to fashion a sort of toga from the blanket Tony had tossed in the bathroom earlier.

“Well,” Pepper said, “when I went down to call the kids, I managed to figure out where we are.”

Tony’s expression brightened. “That’s great! We can call a cab and get out of here!”

“Tony, we’re in Arizona,” Pepper said bluntly.

Tony blinked. “You mean Arizona Street, right? Or Arizona Way? Not the actual…” His voice trailed off as he watched Pepper’s face. “The state?! We’re in Arizona, the state?!”

Thor cocked his head to the side. “Is this bad news?”

“Yeah, Point Break!” Tony exclaimed. “It means we’re in a whole different state than where we’re supposed to be!”

Pepper began rifling around the room. “Do you have our wallets?” she asked, lifting up the pillows.

Tony and Thor shook their heads.

“So, I have no clothes,” Thor said, “and you have no money?”

Pepper pinched the bridge of her nose. “Ugh, why can’t I remember last night?!”

“Or yesterday in general,” Tony scoffed. He clasped his hands together and rubbed his palms furiously. “Okay, here’s the plan: we get Thor some clothes, we eat, and we get the hell out of here.”

“And how do you plan on doing all of that with no money?” Pepper asked.

Tony stood up and gave her the first real grin of the day.

“I’m Iron Man!”

As soon as Shuri broke into Tony’s rental car, Peter hopped into the passenger side and slid down low so he could activate his suit. She pulled the cover off from under the steering wheel and spliced wires together. By the time Strange and Loki climbed in the back, the car was started, and the nanites had completely formed over Peter’s body. His vision went dark as his face mask covered his eyes, but it quickly lit up as Karen booted up her systems.

“Good afternoon, Peter!” Karen greeted him, calibrating his specs.

“Hey, Karen,” he said, greeting his AI. “Can you hack into security footage for me?”

“Hmmm, my protocols really aren’t meant for hacking,” Karen replied.

“Crap,” Peter whispered. He tapped his foot against the carpet as he silently cursed Mr. Stark for adding a morality clause to Karen’s code. “But what if it was for something really important? Like Mr. Stark being missing?”
Karen paused as Shuri typed in the address in the GPS for the tiger show that she had seen on TV. She put the car in drive and began making her way to their destination.

“I could make an exception, I suppose,” Karen finally replied. “But only to find Mr. Stark.”

Peter pumped his fist in the air. “Awesome! Can you look at security footage from-hey what’s the place called?” he asked Shuri.


“The Mirage Tiger Habitat,” Peter finished. “We need to figure out where Mr. Stark, Ms. Potts, and Thor went after they stole a tiger. If you start there, you might be able to trace their movements.”

“I just need a few minutes,” Karen said.

Peter deactivated his mask while Karen went to work. “She’s working on it,” he said. He looked cautiously over the dash as Shuri navigated through traffic. “Don’t speed or do anything to call us out. We don’t need to get pulled over.”

Shuri glared at him. “No backseat driving!” she ordered.

“Well you have a tendency to speed!”

Loki gripped the seat in front of him. “Focus on the road please!”

“You worry too much, Loki!” Shuri exclaimed. She braked easily and peered out the window. “Ooo, what’s that?”

The others turned and looked outside at an odd building with Hustler spelled out in neon letters. They weren’t lit up in the sunlight, but Peter could make out posters on the building with scantily clad women.

“Oh, um,” he stuttered, turning scarlet. “Doctor Strange can explain that one!” He burrowed himself in his seat, refusing to talk about naked women with his best friend.

Strange sighed at the teen’s embarrassment. “It’s a strip club.”

“Really?” Shuri asked, shocked. “It looks so normal!”

“Well what did you expect it to look like?” Strange replied, raising his brow.

“You know,” Shuri shrugged, “more naked, I guess.” She squinted at the building. “Let me take that back. It looks normal except for all the alcohol bottles all over the parking lot.”

Loki perked up at Shuri’s comment, his neurons firing in his brain as they tried to make a connection. “What?” He opened the window and leaned out to get a better look.

Sure enough, there were beer and liquor bottles scattered everywhere in the parking lot. Most of them were intact, but a few were smashed and scattered across the pavement. The glass glinted in the sunlight as an unsettling feeling came over Loki’s stomach.

“Someone had a rager,” Peter whistled.

Loki pushed himself back into the car and rolled the window up. “Hmmm,” he hummed.

The light turned green, but before Shuri could go forward, something slammed onto the hood of the
car with a loud BANG!

“AHHH!” she and Peter screamed, pushing themselves back in their seats.

A woman with dark skin and silver lines painted on her face looked into the car with a wild expression. Her brown hair was tied in a messy ponytail, and she wore some type of leather-looking armor. Her gaze locked onto Loki with ferocity.

“You!” she growled, pointing at him with a half-empty handle of vodka.

Loki paled and tried to climb over Doctor Strange. “I have to get out of this car!” he yelled.

The woman stalked over to Loki’s side of the car and yanked the door completely off its hinges.

Peter put his mask back on and tried to shoot his webs to immobilize her. “Leave him alone!” he shouted. He managed to attach the webs to her wrist which was currently wrapped around Loki’s throat. Strange was stuffed up against the window on his side of the car, unable to help the god.

The woman stared down at the web on her wrist and yanked hard. Peter slammed into his seat’s headrest and fell down to the floor in a daze.

Shuri stepped on the gas, careening through traffic. Unfortunately, the woman was still attached to Peter’s webs, which were still attached to a slightly unconscious Peter. The force of acceleration pulled her into the car on top of Loki and Strange, much to everyone’s chagrin. The door lay abandoned in the strip club parking lot as Shuri left it behind.

“You idiot!” the woman yelled as the car sped down the road. “This is all your fault!”

“Normally I'd agree with you!” Loki shouted back. “But I have no idea what you’re talking about this time!” He kicked at her head. “Now! Get! Off! Of! Me!”

Shuri managed to find a road that led out to a partial desert, and as soon as they were far enough away from civilization, she turned hard and slammed on the brakes, sending the woman and her bottle flying out of empty doorway.

“What,” Shuri screeched, “is going on?!”

“Do you want me to activate instant kill?” Karen asked Peter, causing the eyes on his face mask to turn red.

“N-no?” he half-asked, half-answered. “I told you no more Instant Kill!” He shook his head to clear his thoughts. “Loki!” The god turned to look at the teens. “Who is that?!”

Loki smirked as the woman rolled onto the dust-filled road. He stepped out of the car and straightened his clothes. Strange grunted as he unstuck himself from the seat and followed him outside. Not really knowing what else to do, Peter and Shuri quickly opened their own doors.

They half expected Loki to attack, so they were even more surprised when he reached out his hand and helped the mysterious woman stand up.

“Now,” Loki said with a glint in his eye, “are you quite done trying to kill me?”

The woman glared at Loki and downed the rest of the liquor bottle, never breaking eye contact. “Depends,” she replied with a burp once she finished, “on how much you decide to continue to piss me off.”
“Dude,” Shuri whispered, watching her in awe. “She is so freaking cool!”

Peter nodded. “I really hope she’s on our side.”

Loki turned to the teens and Strange to introduce the stranger.

“This, Midgardians, is a Valkyrie.”
So you're getting an early update because I am leaving at 1am for Myrtle Beach! I'll still post while I'm on vacation, but it probably won't be every day.

Enjoy this next twist!

Peter and Shuri watched in awe as Brunhilde devoured an entire plate filled with eggs, sausage, hashbrowns, and toast. She wore a scowl after the waiter said they didn’t serve alcohol, but she still ate nonetheless. The teens were squeezed into one side of the booth next to Doctor Strange, while Loki and Brunhilde cautiously shared the other side.

Loki and Strange had graduated to eating oatmeal, while Peter and Shuri munched on some french toast. Even though stopping for a late breakfast wasn’t part of the plan, Brunhilde didn’t give them a lot of room for negotiations. Plus, they were actually hungry.

The meal was silent except for the scraping of forks against plates. Loki seemed a bit scared by Brunhilde, and he was not up to full strength to argue with her yet. Strange still seemed to be questioning some of his life decisions as he stared into his bowl of oatmeal. The teens were faring pretty well considering they had misplaced their adult supervision in Las Vegas.

Shuri poured more syrup on her french toast and stabbed at the bread with her fork. “So,” she said, breaking the silence, “are you like a Valkyrie Valkyrie?”

Brunhilde glanced up at Shuri. “I haven’t done that for a while, but yeah,” she replied.

Shuri’s eyes sparkled. “I knew it!” She turned to Peter. “The Valkyries are an elite force of women who protect Asgard! Like the Dora Milaje!”

“That is so cool!” Peter gasped.

Brunhilde pointed her knife at the two teens and smiled. “I like them,” she said to Loki.

Loki smirked behind his glass of water. “They’re tolerable,” he said. Peter and Shuri crossed their arms and stared at Loki, knowing looks on their faces. “Fine,” Loki sighed, “they’re…”

“Adorable?” Shuri suggested.

“Brilliant?” Peter added.

“Friends,” Loki finished.

Peter and Shuri gasped, their eyes sparkling in delight. “Awww!” they cooed.

“We knew you loved us!” Shuri exclaimed.

Peter pulled out his phone. “Can you say that one more time?” he asked. “I wanna record it for research purposes.”
“No,” Loki replied. “And I believe we have more important things to discuss.” He turned to Brunhilde. “You remember last night?”

She nodded. “And how you screwed it all up.”

Loki sighed. “If I screwed it up, why am I in as bad a state as him?” he asked, pointing to Strange.

“Let’s do this logically,” Shuri interrupted. “How did you guys get here?”

Brunhilde swallowed and pushed her plate of food away. “Which one of you two is Peter?” she asked. Peter slowly raised his hand with a questioning look in his eyes. “Hey, I don’t assume,” she said. “Okay, so you texted Thor about a marriage. And Thor was all like, ‘Let’s go celebrate with them!’ So Heimdall sent us all here. I personally would have rather stayed home, but he bugged me until I said yes.’

“That does sound like my idiot brother,” Loki muttered.

“Okay, so you got here and found Mr. Stark and Ms. Potts?” Peter asked.

Brunhilde nodded. “They were at some weird building. I think they called it a chapel?”

Shuri nodded. “Sounds right.”

“So,” Brunhilde continued, “Thor insists on celebrating by taking everyone out to drinks. Then Tony mentions the Hustler, so we all go there.”

“Hang on,” Peter interrupts. “Mr. Stark was the one who suggested you go to a strip club?”

“Yeah,” Brunhilde replied, “although to be honest, it seemed to be more to get a reaction out of Thor and Loki.”

“Did it work?” Shuri asked with a grin.

“No! We’re Asgardians, not angels! We’ve seen, and shared, our fair share of naked body parts.”

Peter choked on his sip of water, while Shuri let out a surprised laugh. Strange glared at the warrior. “Thank you for that visual,” Strange said sarcastically.

“You’re welcome,” Brunhilde replied, smiling sweetly.

“Okay,” Peter coughed, “so you go to the strip club, and then?”

Brunhilde’s smile disappeared quickly as she turned to glare at Loki. “He happened.”

“But,” Shuri said gently, “what did he do?”

“Thor pulls out a flask of Asgardian mead and offers it to everyone,” Brunhilde continued. “He swears it’s a diluted version that Loki has been working on, but the container was wrong.”

Loki’s eyes widened as realization dawned on him. “Please tell me it wasn’t—”

“It was the green bottle.”

Loki groaned and put his head in his hands. “Oh my gods, that explains so much!” He rubbed his face in his palms, a look of regret holding steady in his eyes.
Peter and Shuri looked at each other then back at the Asgardians. “Um, what’s so bad about the green bottle?” Peter asked.

“I’ve been working on serums,” Loki explained. “Brunhilde goes out on missions for us, and having a little extra backup is never a bad thing. The one in the green bottle was meant for stealth missions where you need to incapacitate someone to get information. It causes a wicked hangover and whenever you try to remember what happened or use magic—”

“Your brain makes you want to vomit,” Strange finished, finally understanding his symptoms.

Loki nodded. “It’s mixed with Asgardian mead to make it less noticeable.”

“And I tried to warn you what Thor was doing,” Brunhilde said, “but you just drank the alcohol and got too busy flirting with the bartenders to listen!”

Loki grinned as he sipped his water. “I had important business to attend to,” he stated simply.

Brunhilde rolled her eyes. “Well, once those idiots started talking about stealing a tiger, I was out. I stayed at the strip club.”

“To flirt with the bartenders I suppose,” Strange shot back, aggressively spooning his oatmeal.

Brunhilde speared some hashbrowns and pointed the fork at him. “Among other things,” she winked.

“Sexy and strong,” Shuri breathed.

“A deadly combination,” Peter whispered.

Strange squinted at Brunhilde. “Did I come here with you?” he asked.

She shook her head. “You were already with the other Midgardians. I think you said you were looking for some sort of magical artifact.”

Strange rubbed his temples, but the nausea was still there as he tried to remember. “How long until your serum wears off?” he asked Loki.

Loki shrugged. “About 24 hours I think.” The others stared at him. “What?” he protested. “It’s not like I had the chance to test it!”

“Anyway,” Brunhilde continued, “I figured you’d come back eventually, but I was stuck in the strip club. All night. Because you idiots left me!”

Peter took a deep breath. “So if Mr. Stark, Ms. Potts, and Thor all drank the same stuff, they’re probably just as confused as you two were when you woke up in our hotel room.”

“Which we still don’t know how you got into, by the way,” Shuri added.

“Maybe some mysteries are better left unsolved,” Strange replied.

“Well listen,” Brunhilde said, “I say we figure out where the hell everyone is so the four of us can go back to Norway.”

Strange blinked. “While that is a tempting offer, I’m not going back to Norway with you,” he said.

“I wasn’t talking about you, was I?” Brunhilde quipped. “I meant the three Asgardians and Banner.”
“Banner?” Peter asked. “As in, Bruce Banner?”

Shuri gasped. “The Bruce Banner?!”

Loki and Strange practically dropped their spoons at Brunhilde’s revelation. She, meanwhile, continued eating her food as if she hadn’t released a huge bombshell on the rest of the table. She glanced up and watched as everyone stared at her with their jaws open.

“What?” she asked. “Do I have something on my face?”

Peter shook his head. “What makes you think Bruce Banner is here?”

“He came with us, obviously,” she replied.

“To Vegas,” Shuri said.

“Yes.” She glared at the others. “What’s going on? Isn’t he with Thor and your friends?”

Peter and Shuri thought back to the TV screen in the Bellagio and how there had only been two other figures next to Thor. Peter grinned weakly and tapped his web slingers to activate them. He leaned his head down and tried to be inconspicuous as he talked to Karen.

“Hey Karen? I’m gonna need you to update that search…”
Hey friends! So, I had zero WiFi at the beach this past week (which I was not expecting). Therefore, I couldn't update like I planned. BUT, I'm back, I had a great time, and I'm psyched to share the next part with you!

Also, I wrote the wedding!!! It's perfectly fluffy and I can't wait for y'all to read it (part 14 for anyone who's counting)!!

“I think I found what you’re looking for,” Karen said as everyone piled back into the car. Shuri waited to start it so they could figure out the lack of a back door situation until Peter found the other adults.

Peter activated the mask so it covered his face again and watched as Karen pulled up security footage and records. “You found them?!” he asked excitedly.

“I think so. I ran Mr. Stark and Ms. Pott’s names through hotel records after the time of the tiger theft, but the only reservation for them is under the Bellagio. However, I ran one of Thor’s old aliases.”

Peter cocked his head to the side. “Thor has an alias?”

“Donald Blake,” Loki grunted from the backseat, landing a nice elbow into Valkyrie’s side as she invaded his space. “He used to use Donald Blake.”

“Loki’s right,” Karen replied. “A Donald Blake checked into the Grand Canyon Motel last night, room 11. The address is in Arizona.”

“Karen found Mr. Stark and them!” Peter told the others. “They got all the way to Arizona!”

“How?!” Shuri yelped, her fingers hovering over the GPS. Peter just shrugged.

“What about Banner?” Strange asked.

“Um, Karen?”

“I heard him. I found Dr. Banner, and he’s much closer. But he might be a bit harder to get to.”

“Why?” Peter asked, his voice going up a few octaves.

Shuri poked Peter’s shoulder. “What’s she saying?” Peter waved her off.

“Well, Dr. Banner has been taken into police custody. He’s been booked for public intoxication. He’s currently being held at the Clark County Detention Center about seven minutes down the road. He’s using a fake ID, but the facial recognition I ran doesn’t lie.” Karen paused and gave Peter time to process the information. He blinked as she pulled up Bruce’s prison intake form inside his mask. It was definitely him alright.
“Peter?” Karen asked.

“Yeah?”

“There’s something else you should know…”

“I don’t like where this is going, Karen.”

“What?” Shuri asked. “You don’t like where what is going?”

“Dr. Banner has been a wanted person since the Sokovia incident,” Karen said. “His arrest record hasn’t gone on public servers yet, but once it does, the government will be there to get him. My best guess is you have about an hour.”

“Thanks Karen,” Peter said softly, making his mask disappear again.

Loki, Strange, Brunhild and Shuri stared at Peter expectantly. “Well?” Strange asked, leaning forward in the seat. “Where’s Dr. Banner?”

Peter ran through a bunch of scenarios in his head based off the money and resources they currently had at their disposal. He squeezed his eyes shut and tried to think as the others kept pestering him for more information.

“Dude!” Shuri exclaimed. “You feel like sharing with the rest of us?”

Peter took a deep breath. “So I’ve got some good news and some bad news,” he said.

“Oh gods,” Loki sighed.

“Good news is that Dr. Banner is about seven minutes away from here.”

Brunhilde grinned. “Brilliant!”

Peter turned around and faced the adults in the back seat. His expression was grim, but determined as he gave them a wry smile.

“The bad news is we’re going to have to break him out of jail.”

Peter may as well have told them the sky was falling with the way the others looked at him. Valkyrie cursed and leaned back in the seat, hanging one leg out of the door. Strange sighed and stared at his hands, willing some magic to come out of them. Loki leaned his elbows on his knees, resting his chin in his fingertips.

Shuri’s grip tightened on the wheel, but she gave a small grin similar to Peter’s. She held out her fist, and Peter returned the fist bump.

“Okay,” she said with a nod, “Peter and I will get Dr. Banner out-”

“Hang on!” Loki interrupted. “You two are not going anywhere near that jail!”

Shuri and Peter both grabbed the levers on the side of their seats and slammed their seat backs down all the way, much to the protest of Brunhilde and Strange’s knees. The teens glared at the adults.

“You definitely can’t go in,” Peter said, pointing at Loki. “This side of Earth is still kinda pissed about what happened in New York.”
“And you’re way too conspicuous,” Shuri told Valkyrie.

“We make the most sense,” Peter finished.

Strange raised his hand. “Um, yes, hi, still here. What about me?”

Shuri grinned. “You’re our distraction of course!”

“How?”

“Peter will break Dr. Banner out of the cell,” Shuri explained, “and I’ll erase his file from the system. We’ll figure out something for you to do by the time we get to the jail.”

“Loki, I know you’re still sick, but we need a new door for the car,” Peter said. “We’re never going to make it to Arizona like this.”

Loki smirked. “So I’ll break into a car while you lot are rescuing Banner.”

“NO!” Shuri and Peter exclaimed.

“No stealing!” Peter ordered.

“Just conjure a new door,” Shuri added.

Loki groaned and slammed back against his seat. “I was just starting to feel better too,” he mumbled.


Shuri pressed the push start and the car roared to life. She began driving down backroads to avoid drawing too much attention to the missing door.

“We should try calling Mr. Stark,” Peter said. He pulled out his phone and looked up the number for the Grand Canyon Motel. “Maybe they’re still in the hotel room.”

He put the phone on speaker, and everyone waited as it began to ring.

“Hello?” a voice asked on the other end.

“Hi!” Peter said brightly, using his best school voice. “May I please be connected to room 11?”

There was a pause and the old man suddenly started laughing. “Ha! What do you think this is, kid, the Bellagio?” He continued to laugh until it turned into a huge cough.

Shuri pursed her lips, but remained calm. “Is there anyway you can go to the room and put someone on the phone where you are?” she asked.

“Kid, I ain’t running a first class service.”

“Please!” Peter begged. “We really need to talk to them.”

“And why do you need to talk to the people in room 11 so bad, huh?” the old man asked.

“They’re my parents,” Peter shot back without hesitation. “I really need to talk to my mom and dad.”

Shuri squealed quietly in her seat, giving Peter multiple thumbs up, while Strange reached over and grabbed the wheel. Valkyrie grimaced as she pushed away from the open door into Loki as the car
swerved. Shuri shook Strange off and took control back.

“Fine,” the old man sighed. “Give me a minute.”

As soon as they heard him place the phone on the counter, Shuri could not contain her excitement. “YOU JUST DID THAT!”

Peter blushed fiercely. “It’s an emergency,” he tried to reason.

“Nope!” Shuri exclaimed. “You could have made up a million different lies! There was no hesitation on that one! Right guys?” she asked, turning around.

“KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE ROAD!” the adults yelled.

Tony and Pepper’s heads shot up as someone banged loudly on their motel room door. Thor was preoccupied playing with the baby tiger until the person knocked again.

“Do we answer?” Pepper whispered.

Before Tony could respond, a voice yelled from the other side. “Hey! I’ve got your kid on the phone!”

Tony looked over to Thor. “Hide!” he ordered. “Take the tiger with you!”

Thor quickly scooped up his toga and the tiger and slid back into the bathroom. The tiger made small whines of protest, and Pepper quickly shut the bathroom door as Tony opened the other one.

An old man with white hair and black aviators stood impatiently in the motel walkway. “I’ve got your son on the phone,” he said, immediately walking away.

Tony and Pepper turned to each other. “Peter!” they exclaimed.

They quickly followed the man across the hall, down some decrepit stairs and into the front office. Tony grabbed the phone off the counter and Pepper pressed her cheek against his so she could hear too.

“Peter?” Tony asked.

“Mr. Stark!” the teen yelped. “Holy crap-Shuri, it worked! Are you guys okay?”

Tony swallowed thickly as his heart rate finally calmed down for the first time all morning. “Kid, I am so glad to hear your voice,” he choked out.

“Peter, we’re fine,” Pepper said. “Are you and Shuri okay?”

“We’re fine!” Shuri replied. “Do you have Thor?”

Tony remembered the hidden guest in his bathroom. “Yeah, he’s fine. Where the hell is Reindeer Games?”

Loki coughed on the other end of the line.
“Loki, I swear to God,” Tony seethed, “I am going to kill you.”

“It wasn’t his fault this time!” Peter insisted. “Look, we don’t have time to explain it now, but we’re heading to Arizona. Karen figured out where you guys are.”

“We just need to make a pit stop and pick up Dr. Banner first,” Shuri added.

“Bruce?!” Pepper and Tony yelped.

“Yeah, that’s a long story too,” Strange said.

Tony pinched the bridge of his nose. “I’m just going to glaze over the fact that Strange is somehow with you for right now. How the hell are you getting to Arizona?” he asked.

Silence filled the line.

“Okay, so here’s the thing,” Peter finally said. “Everyone else is really hungover and-”

“No,” Tony replied. “Absolutely not.”

Pepper stole the phone from Tony. “Take a Lyft or a taxi to get us. Leave the car somewhere else.”

Tony motioned for Pepper to give him the phone. “What do you mean everyone is hungover?! Who’s driving right now?!”

“Mr. Stark, you’re breaking up!” Peter yelled. “We’ll see you in a few hours! Don’t leave the motel!”

“Peter Parker don’t you dare-”

The only sound in Tony and Pepper’s ears was the dial tone.

The old man chuckled as he turned the page of the newspaper he was reading. Tony hung up the phone and sucked in his cheeks. He tapped his fingers on the counter while Pepper tried to hide her grin.

“This is payback, isn’t it?” Tony finally asked. “For all the mayhem I caused as a kid.”

Pepper wrapped her arms around Tony’s neck and pulled him into a hug. “No, this isn’t payback. It’s just a very bizarre turn of events that none of us can remember.”

Tony sighed as he pulled back. “You always know the right things to say.”

“That’s why you love me,” she replied simply.

Just as Tony was about to go in for a kiss, the old man interrupted them. “Ugh, get a room. Oh, that’s right. You have one!”

Tony waved the guy off and laced his fingers through Pepper’s as they walked back to the hotel room. He glanced at a vending machine resting against the wall. “So, let’s use my skills and try and get breakfast while we wait for the kids, huh?” he asked. He pulled Pepper over to the vending machine and she kept watch while he fiddled with the paneling in the back.

“You know how ironic this is?” Pepper giggled as Tony disappeared behind the machine. “We’re waiting for the kids to rescue us?”
Tony scoffed, poking his head out. “Oh trust me, I see it.” He sighed. “I hope they get here okay.” He tinkered with the machine some more, and suddenly, bags of food began to fall from the shelves. Pepper quickly grabbed as many as she could while Tony slid out from behind the machine and picked up what she couldn’t.

They ran with their arms full of junk food, giggling like school kids, back to the motel room. Pepper smiled as he paused in front of the door. Tony quickly opened the door and tossed all of his food and Pepper’s into the room before closing it shut again. He turned around and placed his hands gently on her hips as he gave her an even gentler kiss. He pulled back quickly, the taste of morning breath intensified by the alcohol from last night.

“Oh god,” Pepper gasped, covering her mouth. “Adorable gesture but-”

“So disgusting.” Tony nodded. He shivered and tried to shake it off.

“Any chance you can use some of that charm to steal us some toothbrushes and toothpaste?” Pepper asked.

Tony gave her a cocky smirk and a wink as he opened the motel room door again.

“For you? Anything.”

Chapter End Notes

I JUST DID THAT AND I'M NOT APOLOGIZING!! :P :P
“Okay, does everyone know the plan?” Peter asked, unbuckling his seat belt.

Shuri nodded and handed Strange her backpack. “We’ve got this!”

Loki rolled his eyes as he got out of the car after Brunhilde and stared at the missing door. “Are you absolutely sure I can’t just get us a new car?” he asked.

Peter shook his head firmly. “Nope, you’ve gotta suck it up.”

Strange tumbled out of the car, clutching the backpack firmly in his hands. “I just want to make it known that I disapprove to being used like this.”

“Duly noted,” Shuri smirked. “And tough luck.” She smiled sweetly while Strange just rolled his eyes.

Peter hopped up and down and shrunk his suit back into his web slingers. “As soon as you disable the video cameras, I’ll get Dr. Banner,” he said to Shuri. They fist bumped one last time before following Strange into the police station.

“Be good!” Shuri called back to Brunhilde and Loki.

Brunhilde gave her a thumbs up while Loki closed his eyes and began to concentrate his magic on the door.

Strange let out an exasperated sigh as he realized he was, in fact, actually doing this. Peter and Shuri waited by the entrance as he walked over to the main room of the police station.

“Excuse me, ladies and gentleman!” Strange boomed unenthusiastically. Police officers peeked their heads over their cubicles and the chief stepped out of his office.

“That’s okay, officers,” the chief said, crossing his arms. “What kind of performance are you talking about?”

Strange smirked. “I am a master of the mystic arts!” he proclaimed.

“What?” another officer asked.

Strange sighed. “I’m a magician,” he replied monotonously. “You’ve won a free magic show.”

“Ohhhhh,” the collective group said.

Strange smiled. “I am a master of the mystic arts!” he proclaimed.

“What?” another officer asked.

Strange sighed. “I’m a magician,” he replied monotonously. “You’ve won a free magic show.”

“Unbelievable,” Strange muttered. He unzipped the backpack to get this over with as quickly as possible. “I now present to you…” He paused dramatically. “The Cloak of Levitation!”
He yanked the backpack down through the air and the cloak unfolded and floated. The officers’ jaws dropped open as the cloak twirled around and bowed to the crowd.

“Now’s our shot!” Shuri whispered, tugging Peter’s arm. They ducked low and snuck through the office to the server room. Shuri quickly hacked into the computer system and set the video feeds to a loop. She gave a thumbs up to Peter, who dashed back out of the office and down to the cells.

Almost all of the cells were empty, thankfully. Less explaining to do. Peter jogged to the end of the hall and found Bruce Banner lying across a bench. His skin was pale, yet had a green tinge to it. Peter gulped and hoped he was still hungover and not in the process of Hulking out.

Peter tapped his wrists and set his web slingers to freeze mode. He shot the webs into the lock of the cell door and waited. He watched as the metal on the door frosted over, and he heard a small pop from inside the locking mechanism. He yanked the door open and carefully tiptoed inside.

“Dr. Banner?” he said softly.

The scientist stirred on the bench, but showed no signs of waking up. Peter cursed under his breath. He needed to get out now.

“Dr. Banner!” he said more forcefully.

“Huh?” Bruce jolted awake and groaned at his nausea. He blinked a few times and stared up at Peter. “Who’re you?”

Peter tried to stay focused on the mission but here he was, meeting the Bruce Banner. “Dr. Banner, my name is Peter Parker and it is so nice to meet you, and I’m a huge fan of your work but we’ve really gotta go.” He dipped down and tried to loop his arm around Bruce’s shoulder, but the scientist yanked back.

“Whoa, kid,” Bruce mumbled, rubbing his face. “I’m not going with you.”

Peter blinked at him. “You can’t stay here!” he exclaimed. “You’re in jail!”

Bruce looked around and finally examined his surroundings. “How...how did I end up here?” he asked.

Peter clapped his hands together. “As much as I’d love to explain that Dr. Banner, we need to leave before the government knows you’re here and comes to arrest you.”

“That sounds...logical?” Bruce said questioningly. He took Peter’s hand and shakily stood up. “How did you even find me?” he asked as they carefully shuffled down the cell.

“That’s such a long story,” Peter replied. “But basically, you came to Las Vegas with Thor, Loki, and Brunhilde and wound up going on a bender thanks to some tricked out Asgardian mead Thor gave you.”

“Thor drugged me?” Bruce asked incredulously.

“Technically it was Loki’s serum inside the mead that drugged you, but he wasn’t planning on actually using it,” Peter explained. “At least, not on you guys anyway.”

Bruce stared at the teenager. “Hang on...are you the spider kid? The one that’s friends with Loki?”

“It’s Spiderman,” Peter muttered.
“Where’s Tony?” Bruce asked. “Is he with the rest of the Avengers?”

Peter wrapped his arm under Bruce and helped him walk to the edge of the cell. “Well, you see, the Avengers have kind of broken up. Didn’t Thor tell you?”

Bruce stared at Peter incredulously. “What? They broke up? Like the Beatles?”

Peter scrunched his nose. “Isn’t that a super old band? Aren’t they kind of dead?”

Bruce palmed his forehead and groaned. “Oh man, I cannot deal with this right now.” His skin started to turn green as the color traveled from his neck to his cheeks. His eyebrows grew bushy, and his muscles began to bulge. A low growl made its way out of his throat, and Peter froze.

“Aw crap!” the teen exclaimed. “Okay, Dr. Banner, I promise everything will be okay.” He paused and leaned Bruce against the wall as he stepped back. He held his hands out in front of him and took a deep breath. “Mr. Hulk,” Peter said calmly, “I really want to meet you, but we can’t do it here. Can I get Dr. Banner out please?”

Hulk grunted and nodded his head, and just as soon as the transformation had started, Bruce was back to his original self. He nodded and gratefully clapped Peter on the shoulder.

Peter gave him a thumbs up and breathed a huge sigh of relief as he looked around the corner. Strange was still mystifying the police officers with the Cloak of Levitation. Someone had started playing The Macarena on computer speakers, and the cloak was dancing all around the room. Strange, meanwhile, looked murderous.

“Coast is clear,” he whispered. “Let’s go.” They ducked low and met up with Shuri at the doorway of the server room.

“ Took you long enough!” she scolded. Her expression brightened when she saw Bruce. “Dr. Banner, it’s epic to meet you! I have much to discuss about your research.”

“Uhhh...thanks?” Bruce replied, looking between the two teens.

“Is his arrest record gone?” Peter asked.

Shuri nodded. “And the footage of Strange’s magic show will be erased soon. It’s like we were never here,” she said, giving them a thumbs up.

“You deleted my arrest record?!”

Peter and Shuri ignored him as they quickly led him to the front. Shuri pushed them out the door as she ran back inside to get Strange.

“Magician Strange!” she yelled, causing all eyes to turn to her. “We must get to our next show!”

Strange glared at her darkly for her use of the word “magician”, but he was more than ready to leave this hellhole. “Oh no, already?” he asked with mock sadness. He snapped his fingers, and the cloak glared at him. It crossed its fabric at being snapped at. “We need to leave,” he said through gritted teeth.

Shuri gulped as the officers stared at the cloak in confusion. If they realized something was wrong now, they were going to be so busted. Her eyes brightened as she came up with an idea. “Pretty please?” she asked the cloak nicely. It gave a small bow to Shuri before turning its "back" on Strange as it dove into the backpack. “What?” she asked Strange as he stared at her. “You have to be nice to
The police officers gave a thunderous applause as Shuri and Strange ran outside. Brunhilde was trying to drag an extremely sweaty and pale Loki into the backseat as Bruce climbed in the middle. Peter was buckling himself into the driver’s seat when Strange grabbed hold of Loki’s feet and shoved him the rest of the way in.

“How are we all supposed to fit?” Strange bellowed.

“You are not driving!” Shuri exclaimed to Peter.

“We literally have zero time to argue about it now!” he yelled back.

The adults managed to fit in by laying Loki across all their laps as Peter started the engine and gunned it out of the parking lot. Loki’s new door held strong as Peter scraped the sidewalk with his tires and sped down the road.

Shuri entered the address for the motel in the GPS, and the automated voice began to direct Peter. He gripped the steering wheel confidently as it led him away from the crowded city and out onto the highway.

Strange opened the backpack and the cloak floated out. Careful not to obstruct Peter’s view, it rolled up into a ball and lodged itself under Loki’s head. The god gently tapped the fabric in silent thanks.

“Can I have my backpack?” Shuri asked. Strange passed it to her, and she pulled out a bottle of water and some leftover Tums. “Here, Loki,” she said kindly.

Loki held out his hand as Shuri gave him some of the medicine. After he had chewed and swallowed, he carefully sipped the water. Soon, he laid his head back down and fell asleep.

“Is he going to be okay?” Bruce asked, taking some medicine for himself.

Brunhilde nodded. “His serum is supposed to wear off in 24 hours, and there’s only about 7 or 8 hours left. Once he sleeps it off he’ll be fine.” She nodded at the scientist. “Good to see you, Bruce.”

“Thanks.” Bruce looked over to Strange. “Have we met?”

“Probably, but seeing as I don’t remember any of it…” Strange trailed off. “Doctor Stephen Strange, Master of the Mystic Arts.”

“Like Harry Potter?” Bruce asked.

Strange opened his mouth to protest, but Shuri cut him off.

“He’s way better than Harry Potter,” she said. “He doesn’t even need a wand.”

“And he’s cooler too,” Peter added.

Strange let a small smile spread over his face at the teens’ words. “That’s...nice of you to say,” he said sincerely.

“Where are we going?” Bruce asked. “Back to Norway?”

Peter shook his head. “We’ve got to pick up Mr. Stark and the others in Arizona.” He turned to Shuri. “What are we going to do about the baby tiger?” he asked.
Bruce’s jaw opened and closed like a fish out of water. “What...how...huh?!" 

“Can I ask a stupid question?” Brunhilde pointed to the backseat. “How are we going to fit three more people in here? And a baby tiger?”

Peter’s eyes widened and he suddenly became super interested in the road in front of him. Shuri swallowed and chuckled lightly.

“Whoops,” she said.

“Loki is going to kill you,” Brunhilde smirked. “He should have just stolen a bigger car.”

“Think of it as a bonding experience?” Peter asked.

“Okay, wait,” Bruce interrupted. “Can someone please explain to me what the hell is going on? And why are we in Vegas?”

Shuri sighed as she turned around.

“Let’s catch you up from the beginning shall we?”
They managed to make it 30 miles in the cramped rental car before Strange made them pull off at an old car dealership. He used Tony’s credit card and haggled the owner to cheap price on an ancient Volkswagen Bus. It was a clunker on the outside, and its pale blue and green paint was chipping away. The inside, however, was decent. The very back consisted of a bench seat and two captain’s chairs. Another single seat rested against the right window facing the door. The driver and passenger seats in the front were made of a faux leather, and curtains covered the rear windows. Bruce made the executive decision to ditch the rental car, and no one put up an argument.

Since Strange was still in no real position to drive, Brunhilde had to take over to avoid suspicion from the car salesman. But since she drove her car like she drove her spaceship, Peter and Shuri were screaming for her to pull over before they careened off the road.

Bruce sat in silence in the middle of the floor as Shuri got back in the driver’s seat, still recovering from his hangover and the fact that he was back in America. Strange fell asleep in one of the captain’s chairs, his head resting on the window. Brunhilde took control of the single seat, stretching her legs out in the middle aisle in front of Bruce. Soon, she was snoring softly, no doubt sleeping off the buzz she had incurred from the Hustler. Loki, meanwhile, had been delicately placed on the very back bench seat, with the Cloak of Levitation covering his body like a blanket. He had stopped sweating and was now sleeping peacefully as the car drove on.

“How much longer do we have?” Shuri asked quietly. Since there was no more digital GPS system in the old car, Peter had his phone’s GPS resting on the dashboard.

“About an hour and a half,” he replied.

“So we’ll get there around 3,” Shuri hummed. “Do you think they’ll get married tonight?”

Peter shrugged. “Who knows.”

Bruce finally moved, stepping over Brunhilde’s legs to sit in the middle of Peter and Shuri’s seats. “Hey guys.”

“Hey,” the teens replied.

Bruce grinned sheepishly and rubbed the back of his neck. “Sorry I was a bit...you know…” He waved his hands around, causing them to giggle. “I apparently had a bit of a night.”

Peter pointed his thumb back at the others. “You and everyone else,” he grinned.

Bruce chuckled. “Tell me about it. So you’re Spiderman, huh? And you are?” he asked Shuri.

“I’m Shuri, Princess of Wakanda.”

“Wakanda? The country that used to have all the vibranium?”

“Oh, my friend,” Shuri smiled. “You have much to learn.”

They spent the majority of the rest of the car ride talking all things science, technology, and Hulk. Peter and Shuri were fascinated by Bruce’s research, and the scientist was shocked at how well they could keep up with his work. They were even spouting off ideas he had never really considered.
They were about ten minutes away when everyone started waking up. Loki groaned as he rolled off his seat and onto the floor. He rubbed his smarting forehead and glanced around at the car.

“Wha-?” he asked. “Whose car is this?”

“It’s ours,” Brunhilde replied with a yawn.

“Are you telling me you stole a car?!” Loki seethed. “After I used all my energy to make a new door?!”

Peter and Shuri gulped as Loki continued to rage. Strange stretched his arms above his head and looked back at Loki. “Calm down,” he told the god. “You overdid it on your magic and made a new car instead of just a door.”

Loki paused mid-yell. “I...I did?”

“He did?” Peter and Shuri asked. Strange glared at them, and they took the hint.

“I mean, yeah, you did!” Peter exclaimed. “Nice job, dude!”

“We’ve been meaning to say thanks, but you kinda passed out,” Shuri said.

Loki sighed and leaned back against the seat, apparently satisfied with the explanation. “Are we there yet?” he asked.

Peter looked at his GPS and grinned. “Yeah! It’s right over there!” He pointed ahead, and everyone clambered over the seats to get a look.

The shabby motel was literally smack dab in the middle of the Arizona desert. How Tony, Pepper, and Thor managed to make it there was half mystery, half miracle. Shuri parked the car in an empty spot, and everyone raced out of the car to stretch their legs. Peter looked around for any signs of room 11. Before he could go in search of the room, he heard two voices shout at him from behind.

“Peter! Shuri!”

The teens turned around and bolted as they saw Tony and Pepper emerge from one of the rooms. They looked much more put together than the others did, thanks to Tony’s ability to slick talk some free sample-sized toothpastes and soaps from the owner of the motel.

It was an epic reunion in the middle of the parking lot as Tony embraced the teens.

“Thank god!” Tony sighed, grabbing them in a tight hug. He released one of his arms long enough to bring Pepper in the group. “I am so glad to see you guys.”

“Us too, Mr. Stark,” Peter mumbled into his mentor’s shirt.

Strange and Loki rolled their eyes at the affection, while Brunhilde and Bruce smiled fondly. Thor chose that moment to saunter out of the hotel room wearing a very well put-together sheet toga. His broad arms cradled some mysterious lump under the fabric.

“Brother!” he exclaimed to Loki.

Loki held up his hands. “I had absolutely nothing to do with-” Loki was cut short as Thor pulled him into a hug, taking him completely by surprise. “Umm...I’m honored?” Loki said over Thor’s shoulder.
Thor pulled back and clapped his brother on the shoulder. “I’m just glad you’re alright.” His gaze brightened when he saw Bruce and Brunhilde. “And you two as well!”

Tony met Bruce’s eyes and grinned. “Brucie Bear!” He unraveled the group hug, but kept a firm grip around Peter and Shuri’s shoulders to keep them from disappearing again. “Long time no see!”

“Tell me about it,” Bruce replied. “What the hell happened to the Avengers? The kid told me you guys broke up?”

“Listen, it’s kind of a sore subject for me, and I think we’ve all dealt with enough today, huh?” Tony held out his hand, and Bruce gave it a firm shake before being pulled in for a hug. Peter and Shuri slipped under Tony’s arms as the OG science bros hugged it out.

“So adorable!” Shuri squealed. She walked over to Thor and gave him a hug. She shrieked as the bulge under the fabric moved. “What is that?!” Her eyes widened. “Is that the-?”

Thor put a finger to his lips and motioned her closer. He unwrapped some of the layers and revealed the small baby tiger cub. Shuri yanked Peter over and the two fawned over the small creature.

Tony pointed his finger at Thor. “That is going back where it came from.”

“But-” the teens started to protest.

“No buts,” Pepper said sternly. “We shouldn’t have taken it in the first place.”

“Why did you steal it?” Peter asked. “Better yet, how?!”

“Honey,” Pepper sighed, “I couldn’t even tell you.”

Brunhilde looked around the parking lot. Their large crowd had started to draw attention from the nosier people staying at the motel. “Perhaps we should take this conversation to the van?” she asked, cocking her head at the peeking neighbors.

“Do you need to get anything from the room?” Peter asked.

“Like your clothes?” Bruce said to Thor.

Thor blushed. “I lost my clothes sometime last night.”

“If I never step foot in that room again, it’ll be too soon,” Tony shuddered. “Let’s go.”

Pepper walked up to the van cautiously. “How did you guys get a van?” she asked, peering inside.

“Loki made it!” Shuri lied.

“He used all his energy, so be nice,” Peter warned.

Shuri tried to get back in the driver’s seat, but Loki lifted her up and deposited her in the back of the van. Before she could protest, Thor released the tiger cub, and soon, the teens were distracted by the cuteness. Strange sat in the driver’s seat and started the car.

“So are we heading back, then?” Brunhilde asked her companions.

“You really do care,” she smirked.

“He’ll never admit it,” Thor said, “but he is fond of them.”

“I’m right here you know,” Loki muttered.

The teens and the tiger stayed on the floor while the adults filed into the rest of the car seats. Pepper sat in the passenger seat while Tony collapsed into a captain’s chair to keep an eye on Peter and Shuri.

Pepper held her hand out to Strange. “We haven’t officially met yet,” she said. “Pepper Potts.”

Strange glanced over briefly as he shook her hand. “Doctor Stephen Strange.”

Pepper nodded. “I’ve heard a lot about you.” She paused as she watched the scenery pass by. “Listen, I’m sure you want to get back as much as everyone else, but can we make a quick pit stop?”

“Where did you have in mind?” Strange asked.

The others were so content in the back that they didn’t even notice the change in course until the car stopped about 15 minutes later.

Pepper turned around in her seat and grinned. “You guys definitely want to see this.”

Bruce opened the van door and everyone followed Pepper outside. Thor carefully pushed the tiger cub back inside before closing the door. When he turned around, he was aawestruck as the others.

“Oh my god!” Shuri gasped.

The Grand Canyon stretched out as far as their eyes could see. The sun was just beginning its descent in the sky, and the light illuminated the deep reds and browns of the rock. Dips and diverts covered the surface, and Peter could make out a small river flowing at the bottom.

“This is amazing!” Peter laughed. He took out his phone to snap some pictures, but paused. He quietly pocketed his phone, deciding to just enjoy and be part of the scenery.

“Gotta hand it to life,” Bruce said. “It always finds a way to make things extraordinary.”

Tony laced his fingers with Pepper’s, and she kissed his forehead. It was a serene, peaceful moment…

…until “Rock of Ages” began blaring from Peter’s back pocket. He jumped in the air as he quickly fumbled for Tony’s phone.

“I was holding it for safekeeping,” he explained, tossing it to Tony.

Tony slid the phone open and held it to his ear. “Hello?”

“Hi! Mr. Stark?” the voice on the other end said. “This is Denise from A Special Memory Wedding Chapel. How are you?”

Tony chuckled. “Oh, I’ve had quite the afternoon,” he replied.

“Well, I hope Vegas has been treating you well! Speaking of good things, we had a cancellation for tonight. Are you still interested in getting married here?”
“Uhh, hold please.” Tony pressed the phone against his chest and turned to Pepper. “Do you still want to get married?”

Pepper raised her brows. “To you, or in Vegas?”

“Both?”

“Yes,” she smiled.

Tony put the phone back to his ear. “What time would we need to be ready?” he asked.

“The wedding would start at 8, so the limousine will be at your hotel at 7:15 to pick you up,” Denise replied.

Tony did some mental math in his head as he figured out how much time he, Pepper, and the teens would need to get ready. “Can we get back to Vegas by 6:30?” he whispered.

“Yes,” Strange said confidently. “I can do it.”

“We’ll see you at 7:15,” Tony told Denise. He hung up the phone and turned to the others.

“What are we waiting for? Let’s go!”
It turned out, Strange was an even crazier driver than Brunhilde. He zoomed back to Vegas at speeds that shouldn’t have been possible for the old van, but somehow, he made it work. As soon as he pulled into the Bellagio’s parking garage though, the VW bus sputtered and died before he could take the key out of the ignition.

“Well,” he said, as the others clutched their seats in horror at the experience. “That was fun.”

“Get me out of this car,” Brunhilde gasped, yanking the door open. She tumbled out, with the others following her closely behind.

“Listen Stark,” Thor said, “as much as we want to support your wedding…” He trailed off and looked down at his toga and then to his brother.

Tony smiled and shook his hand. “I get it, Point Break.”

“Aww!” the teens cooed, giving Loki a group hug. He put up his usual fuss, but still wrapped his arms around them nonetheless.

“We’ll send you invitations to the big ceremony,” Pepper promised. She looked to Brunhilde, Bruce, and Strange. “All of you.”

“Brilliant!” the warrior replied.

Bruce raised his hand. “So I have a question...what are we going to do with the tiger?”

“You mean Tigger?” Peter asked.

“Christ, you named it?” Tony yelped.

Shuri waved them off. “Well it’s not like we have time to take it all the way back now. But,” she said, smiling sweetly, “I know just what we can do with it.” She held her hand out to Loki. “Paper and pen, please.”

Loki rolled his eyes, but easily conjured the simple materials, his body almost recovered from his exertion earlier. Shuri gave him a quick kiss on the cheek and then whirled him around so she could write on his back. Peter shot out a bit of webbing and handed it to Shuri to use as a makeshift collar. She wrapped it gently around the tiger’s neck and tucked the note inside.

“How do you open a portal?” she asked Strange.

He crossed his arms. “Where do you need to go?”

Loki placed his arm on her forehead and Strange’s without even being asked, and she pictured her
desired location in her mind.

Strange stepped back and nodded. He waved his arms and a golden light appeared. Shuri quickly urged the tiger cub through to the other side, and the circle dissolved into thin air.

“Where did you send the tiger?” Pepper asked curiously.

Shuri grinned. “Bucky’s been complaining about Peggy and Steve needing more companions, so now he’s got one!”

Bruce’s eyebrows shot up. “Bucky? As in Bucky Barnes? And what about—”

“Bucky’s not brainwashed anymore and he has two goats named Peggy and Steve,” Peter explained easily.

“We’ll catch up soon,” Tony assured his friend. “Lots of catching up to do.”

Bruce just shook his head and stepped back with the Asgardians. “I’ll take you up on that offer some day,” he replied.

Thor looked up. “Heimdall, we’re ready to come back!” he called. A bright flash of white light filled the garage, and once it cleared, the others had vanished.

“And with that,” Strange said, “I’ll be taking my leave. The magic artifact can wait for another time.” He waited for the Cloak of Levitation to come out of the van and created his own circle. He waved goodbye and stepped through.

A small silence filled the air as Peter, Shuri, Pepper and Tony adjusted to a lack of craziness in their lives.

“Well,” Tony smirked, “as much fun as that was, I’m ready for a wedding.”

“Me too,” Pepper replied.

“We’ve got to hurry,” Peter said, checking his phone. “The limo will be here soon.”

And with that, they all bolted back to their rooms to get ready.

Peter closed his eyes and took a deep breath as he gripped the tie around his neck. He opened them and calmly tried, for the sixth time, to get the knot right. May had insisted he pack a nice dress shirt and blazer when she had learned about his real reason for going to Vegas.

“You want to look nice for Tony’s special day,” she had told him. “Especially after all he’s done for you.” Peter couldn’t have agreed more, except his stupid tie wasn’t cooperating and she wasn’t here to fix it.

The limo ride to the chapel had been elegant, and thankfully, uneventful. Shuri went with Pepper to finish getting ready while Tony and Peter went to the other end of the chapel. Tony was squaring away the final details when Peter noticed his tie had come loose during the ride over.

“Need a hand?” a voice asked from behind.
Peter smiled as his mentor grabbed his shoulders and turned him around. Tony gripped the fabric and began weaving it expertly into a spiffy-looking knot. His own expensive tie fit perfectly with his black pinstripe suit.

“You nervous?” Tony asked.

Peter grinned sheepishly. “I’ve never been to a wedding before,” he admitted.

“It’s easy,” Tony winked, tightening the knot. “You’ve just gotta stand there. Pepper and I get to do all the hard work.” He straightened Peter’s tie and smiled before patting his chest. “And I think we’ve got it.”

Peter looked back into the mirror, relieved that his tie looked nice again. “Are you nervous?” he asked.

Tony shrugged. “A little. I’ve gotten close, you know? But I’ve never made it this far.” He wrapped his arm around Peter’s shoulders and steered the teen towards the chapel. “I think this is going to be the best—” He stopped dead in his tracks as he came face-to-face with someone blocking the hallway.

The man wore a white dress shirt under a black suit jacket. His navy and silver striped tie hung perfectly straight around his neck, and he gave Tony a playful smile.

“Mr. Stark,” the man said, “it’s good to see you.”

Tony paled, his jaw dropping open. He let go of Peter and walked over to the man as if in a dream. “Coulson? What? But you...how are you here?”

“It’s a long story,” Coulson chuckled.

“Been hearing that a lot today,” Tony replied incredulously.

Coulson reached out and gripped Tony’s hand in a firm shake. Tony yanked him forward into a hug. Tears pricked the corners of his eyes. “It’s really good to see you,” Tony whispered.

“Mr. Stark?” Peter asked curiously.

Tony pulled back and waved Peter over. “Peter Parker, Agent Coulson.”

“Phil Coulson,” the other man corrected as he shook Peter’s hand.

“No, I’m pretty sure your first name is Agent,” Tony shot back with a grin.

Suddenly, Shuri came rushing down the hall. “Peter! Tony! Pepper’s ready to—” She stopped mid-sentence. “Oh, hi!”

“Shuri, Agent Coulson,” Tony introduced.

“Phil. My first name is Phil,” Coulson sighed.

Peter leaned over to Shuri. “His first name is actually Agent,” he whispered, causing her to giggle and Tony to look down at him proudly.

Coulson squinted his eyes as he looked between Peter and Tony. With their dress clothes and brown hair, they almost looked like...he shook his head. He knew everything about Tony Stark. At least, he was pretty sure he did.
“Anyway,” Coulson said. “I’m actually here on business.”

“Of course you are!” Tony replied. “Even dead, you’re still working.”

“Dead?” Shuri asked. “Are you a zombie?”

Coulson smiled. “Not quite, Princess.”

Shuri gasped slightly, but Tony waved his hand. “He knows everything, don’t let it freak you out.”

“Anyway,” Coulson continued. “We got a tip that Bruce Banner had been arrested last night. We were able to find his picture on a police server. He was using a fake ID, of course, but the picture was unmistakable.”

“Oh really,” Tony hummed, while Peter and Shuri both gulped.

“But the thing is,” Coulson said, “when I got to the jail, he was gone. His arrest record was gone and the footage from the precinct had been erased.”

Tony gripped Peter and Shuri’s shoulders tightly. “Was it now?” he said forcefully. The teens tried to act natural but failed as Tony’s gaze bore into the back of their heads.

“You wouldn’t happen to know anything about it, would you?” Coulson asked, crossing his arms. “It seems oddly coincidental that you’re in Vegas the same time this all happened.”

Tony gave Coulson his best smile and released the teens. “Agent, I can honestly say I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

Coulson was no idiot, and Tony knew that. But for whatever reason, he let the issue drop. “Oh well,” Coulson sighed in pseudo-defeat. “Guess we’ll just have to mark this mission as a failure.”

Peter and Shuri sighed in relief. They were safe.

“Mr. Stark!” The group turned around as a woman in a black pant suit hurried towards them. “We’re ready for you and Ms. Potts!”

“Great!” Tony exclaimed. “Thanks, Denise.”

Denise looked down at the clipboard she was carrying. “One last thing...do you have a witness above the age of 18, or do you want to use one of our employees?”

Tony grabbed Coulson and pushed him forward. “As a matter of fact, I have a witness right here,” he grinned. “Agent Coulson is my guy.”

“Oh, I couldn’t,” Coulson protested.

“I insist! Plus,” Tony added, “it really is good to see you. Do this for me, would ya?”

And how could Coulson say no to that? “Lead the way,” he said to Denise.

She held out her arm and guided him towards the chapel. “Follow us, please, Mr. Stark!”

As soon as Coulson and Denise disappeared down the hall, Tony turned to the teens. “So when you said you had to ‘pick Bruce up’, you were breaking him out of jail?!”

“Umm, yes?” Peter replied.
Tony shook his head incredulously. “I have no idea whether to strangle you two or give you a freaking medal.”

“The latter?” Shuri suggested with a nervous chuckle.

Tony pointed at them. “We are definitely talking about this later.” The teens nodded vigorously, relieved to have dodged the bullet for now. Tony took a deep breath and exhaled heavily. He straightened his tie one last time, and Peter and Shuri gave him a thumbs up.

Tony cleared his throat, all ill feelings gone. “Okay guys…

...time for me to get married!”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so I haven’t watched Agents of SHIELD, but based on the research I did, Tony should not know that Coulson has been alive. Also, I know some insane stuff happened in the show with Coulson, but we’re going to ignore that for the sake of the story. Because COULSON!! :D

And yes, the tiger will definitely make an appearance again :)


THE WEDDING IS HERE!! Just a note, this is an elopement, not the bigger ceremony I have planned for later. So, if it seems simple, that's why. :D

As always, thanks for reading!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tony’s breath was stolen from his lungs when Pepper Potts walked into the chapel. The soft piano music suddenly swelled into a traditional rendition of “Here Comes the Bride”, causing Peter and Shuri to jump up from their pew. They held no cell phones or kimoyo beads, just expressions of awe. While Phil Coulson had his arm looped around Pepper’s to walk her down the aisle, Tony Stark had no eyes for anyone but her. She had been thrilled to learn that Coulson was still alive and tearfully insisted on he do her this honor.

Pepper wore the same blue dress from the gala, and Tony eyes misted as he recalled their first dance together. The silky material shone elegantly under the lights, and it flowed around her as she continued her walk. Her hair had been quickly styled in soft waves, and Tony couldn’t even tell she had been through hell in the past 24 hours.

She was perfect.

Tony folded his hands in front of him and gulped as Pepper finally reached the altar. Coulson kissed her on the cheek and squeezed her arm before taking his seat in the front row with Peter and Shuri. Off to the side, the chapel photographer was clicking away, capturing everything.

Tony held out his hand and helped Pepper up the small stair. She laced her fingers through his and smiled, and they both turned to the officiant.

The officiant smiled warmly and held out her hands. The music stopped, and Peter, Shuri, and Coulson sat down.

“We are gathered here today,” the officiant said, “to join in holy matrimony Tony Stark and Pepper Potts. We celebrate their time together thus far and send blessings on their time to come.” She leaned towards Tony and Pepper. “I understand you both have prepared vows for each other?”

Tony nodded and turned to Pepper, gripping her hands in his. He looked at Peter and Shuri and gave them a quick wink. He cleared his throat, and gave Pepper a playful smirk.

“I love you,” he said softly.

Pepper cupped her hands around Tony’s cheeks and stared deep into his eyes.

“I know.”

It took everything Peter and Shuri had to contain their excitement at the subtle Star Wars reference. Coulson just looked at them sweetly, the exchange going completely his head.
The officiant waited expectantly for Tony and Pepper to continue, but they turned back to her.

“We’re good,” Tony said, grinning.

If the officiant felt anything about their humorous vows, she hid it really well. Considering they were in Vegas though, Peter and Shuri figured she had seen her fair share of silly vows. She cleared her throat and things got serious.

“Do you, Tony Stark, take Pepper to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do you part?”

Tony looked Pepper directly in the eyes as he answered with a clear voice and zero hesitation. “I do.”

The officiant turned to Pepper. “And do you, Pepper Potts, take Tony to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do you part?”

Pepper gave Tony a watery smile, her dream coming to life before her very eyes. This is exactly how she wanted it.

“I do,” she replied as Tony wiped a stray tear from her cheek.

Tony and Pepper had decided to skip the rings for the big ceremony, so the officiant moved on to make the marriage official.

“And now, by the power vested in me by the State of Nevada, I hereby pronounce you husband and wife. You may now kiss.”

Tony and Pepper wasted no time as they quickly embraced and kissed. Tony cupped his hands around Pepper’s cheeks and then lowered them to her back as he dipped her down. Her heel caught on the edge of the step, and they nearly toppled over. Tony managed to pull her back up, and the two giggled like kids.

Denise came scurrying down the aisle holding a folder. While Tony and Pepper righted themselves, she motioned for Coulson to come up front. He scooted past Peter and Shuri to go sign the certificate of marriage. Denise took the certificate out and placed it on top of the folder for Coulson to sign. Once he finished, he stepped out of the way so the teens could get a picture of the happy couple.

“Send me that, would you?” Tony asked Peter as he put his phone down.

“Yeah, definitely,” he replied.

Pepper motioned for them to come up to the altar. “We need a picture with you two!”

“Oh we couldn’t,” Shuri protested. “It’s your day!”

But Coulson gripped their shoulders and pushed them gently forward. The teens hopped up and stood between Pepper and Tony. The wedding photographer snapped away for what seemed like forever. Finally, he peeked his head over the shutter.

“Just the lovely ladies now,” he instructed.

Tony and Peter stepped aside as Pepper and Shuri posed together.
“Okay, and now father and son!”

Peter blushed fiercely as Shuri giggled behind her hand. Coulson raised his eyebrows in confusion, and Pepper smiled sweetly at the boys. Tony, however, wasn’t fazed by the photographer’s choice of words at all. He hopped right up on the altar and motioned for Peter to join him. The teen came up and wrapped his arm around Tony’s back and smiled for the camera. After the second click, Peter felt his body relax, the photographer’s mishap pushed out of his mind. Once the picture taking stopped, Peter grinned up at Tony.

“That was so awesome, Mr. Stark,” he said.

Tony looked down at his young protégé. “You know, don’t you think we’ve known each other long enough now? And been through enough?”

“I uh,” Peter stuttered. “Well…yeah?”

Tony nodded. “So then don’t you think it’s about time you stop calling me Mr. Stark?”

Peter felt his stomach flip-flop. So maybe Tony didn’t mind that people thought he was his son! “Y-y-yeah,” Peter said nervously. “So, uh, what should I call you?”

“Tony,” Tony replied, his eyebrows rising at Peter’s question. “Why, what were you thinking?”

Peter gulped, realizing his thinking had been mistaken. “Tony too! Tony’s fine. Tony. Yup, I can call you…call you Tony.” Peter chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck. “Sounds good…Tony.”

“Right,” Tony said slowly. “You good, kid?”

“So good,” Peter replied, giving Tony a thumbs up.

Thankfully, Shuri, Coulson and Pepper interrupted before Peter could put his foot in his mouth any further.

“That was amazing!” Shuri exclaimed. “American weddings are so different from Wakandan ones!”

Coulson shook Tony’s hand. “Congratulations,” he said sincerely.

“We really do need to catch up,” Tony replied.

Coulson chuckled. “As much as I’d love to stay, I need to get back and explain how a Hulk went missing.”

“Alleged Hulk,” Peter corrected.

“That you know nothing about?” Coulson tried.

Peter shook his head vehemently. “Nope, nothing.”

“Zero,” Shuri added.

“Uh huh,” Coulson nodded. “Well, stay out of trouble. And really, congrats.” He waved at them as he walked out of the chapel and disappeared into the night.

Peter and Shuri turned around to find Tony and Pepper staring at them with their arms crossed.

Shuri chuckled nervously. “We’re all going to laugh about this one day,” she said.
“Totally!” Peter added. “I’m already laughing now.” He gave a weak laugh, but it wilted under Tony’s gaze.

“You two broke into a jail,” Tony seethed. “You could have been caught! What if Bruce had Hulked out? And we wouldn’t have been able to help!”

“Do you two have any idea how dangerous that could have been?” Pepper asked.

Peter looked Tony directly in the eye. “Look, Mr.-I mean Tony-Dr. Banner needed our help. And so did you.”

“We were just trying to do the right thing,” Shuri added.

Pepper knew Tony was a goner as soon as Peter said his first name. She watched her husband’s face flash from worried anger to a sort of…pride?

“Well,” Tony said slowly to the teens, “I guess we can’t really fault you for doing the right thing, can we? And besides,” he grinned, “it’s exactly what I would have done. Just don’t…don’t go making this a habit, okay? Keep using those powers for good.”

“Lawful good?” Peter asked, turning to Shuri.

“See, I always thought we were more of a chaotic good kinda group,” she replied.

“Getting off topic,” Pepper said teasingly. Because Tony was right, it’s exactly what he would have done. And they both know he probably would have blown something up trying to do it, so the teens earned bonus points for minimal destruction.

“Lawful good, chaotic good,” Tony said, “just…be good. Got it?”

The teens nodded enthusiastically while Pepper shook her head at how easily they had him wrapped around their fingers.

“Are you going to tell Aunt May?” Peter asked.

“Or T’Challa?” Shuri added.

Tony shuddered. “Absolutely not! T’Challa doesn’t scare me, but your aunt…” He paused as his body gave a nervous shake. “Nope, not telling her.”

Pepper gave them a playful smirk as she held Tony’s hand and began to lead everyone out of the chapel. “Besides,” she said with a wink,

“What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.”

Chapter End Notes

So, I’m going to spoil the next mini arc for you because reasons. Hawkeye is going to be making an appearance very soon! HOWEVER, as much as I love the MCU, Matt Fraction’s comic Hawkeye owns my heart. So, his character will be based off the comic, not the movie (and they are EXTREMELY different). So, just a heads up. :)
Check out this link for some insight into his character (you should also check out Lucky while you're at it):
http://marvel.wikia.com/wiki/Clint_Barton%27s_Apartment_Building
Good morning, Internet! Or good evening depending on where you are. Time zones never cease to confuse me. Anyway, here are some updates on life on the farm:

I was introduced to bananas this week. All I have to say is...why. Just...why.

The kids in my little community have been asking me why I’m so grumpy sometimes. I keep telling them this is just my face, but all that does is make them laugh. Then they show me pictures of a cat who scowls like it’s from Prohibition. I find this insulting. My hair is much nicer than the cat’s. Especially since I have two arms now, so the braids are getting better.

On that note, YouTube tutorials are a thing and I am, as the kids say, “here for them”.

On another note, I got conditioner in a care package, and I am a goddess now. Fear my majestic mane.

Strength training is going well. The kids have taught me a new technique to help me throw farther. I grip the object and as I throw it, I yell “YEET” really loudly. I’m still in the early stages of this new training, but the kids swear I’m throwing farther and more accurately. I think they’re right.

Peggy and Steve have been doing really well. Thanks to @goatluvers for the suggestion about teaching Steve how to swim. The little guy was terrified of not being able to see the bottom of the lake, but now he’s good. I have to be careful not to let him stay in in the water for too long...punk caught a cold and acted like a helpless child for a week.

Hindsight being 20/20, it really isn’t that comfortable to have a goat sleep in your bed. Even if he is cute and his snifflies make you want to ugly cry.

So...I have a new addition to the family. A Tigger. It’s like a tiger but smaller and spelled wrong. I have adopted the Tigger and he is now mine. It was a close call when I found out he didn’t like plums, but I can overlook this fact.

The poor thing has these huge paws that are way too big, so he trips all the time. He crashed into my sink and jumped because he scared himself when he felt the water dripping on his head.

I didn’t patch the hole in my ceiling because I’ve always wanted a skylight. Just an FYI.
Peggy and Steve are taking their responsibilities as siblings very seriously. After they found out he
scares easily, they like to sneak behind him and bleat really loudly. Some would say they're being
mean. Others would say they're doing their duty to toughen him up. I have remained undecided on
this issue.

Besides, I caught them letting the Tigger sleep on top of them during nap time. They can pretend all
they want, but I know the truth. Plus, I know how heavy he is, so it must be love.

All is well, and life is good.

Until next time!

JBB

Chapter End Notes

Based heavily off of this Tumblr post: http://messy-buns-and-paint-splatters.tumblr.com/post/173984244474/hellenhighwater-hellenhighwater-mewwitch
Part 15

Chapter Notes

New mini arc! Enjoy!

Tony and Pepper dropped the teens off at Peter’s apartment late the next evening. They had spent their last day in Vegas chilling by the pool and ordering non-alcoholic cocktails under Tony’s personal cabana. Pepper and Tony gave both teens hugs and promised to get lunch with them later in the week before heading off to spend their first night in New York as Mr. and Mrs. Stark.

When Peter and Shuri reached the apartment door, Aunt May was waiting with open arms and a whole bunch of food. Peter and Shuri alternated between shoving forkfuls of food in their mouths and telling stories about their adventure. While they left out some details (aka hangovers and jailbreaking the Hulk), they spared no expense as they described everything else from the trip.

By that point, the food was gone, but the teens weren’t done talking yet. They moved to the living room and sprawled across the couch. May was on one end with Peter laying in her lap. As he excitedly described the Bellagio fountain show, she ran her fingers through his hair like when he was younger. Shuri sat on the opposite end and faced aunt and nephew as Peter’s feet rested in front of her.

They spared no expense in details as they talked about the sights, the strip, and most importantly, the wedding. Peter even managed to spin the details of their impromptu Grand Canyon trip. Even though he didn’t like keeping secrets from his aunt, he was pretty sure he was saving Tony and Thor from early graves.

By the time Peter and Shuri were done, it was almost one in the morning, and they could barely keep their eyes open. The teens crashed in their respective beds, and by the time they woke up, May had gone to work. She left breakfast plates in the oven for them, and they eagerly scarfed down the food.

“So what do you want to do today?” Peter asked.

Shuri hummed thoughtfully. “Well, the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens are supposed to have some really good Pokestops,” she said. “How about we explore around there today?”

Peter looked out the kitchen window and saw the sun shining brightly outside. “Sure!” he nodded. “Looks like a great day for it!”

“We could walk most of the way,” Shuri suggested. “We might find more Pokemon before we even get there!”

The teens searched up the best routes to get to the gardens and decided to take the metro to Jamaica and walk the rest of the way. They quickly cleaned up their dishes and packed their backpacks before setting out on their latest adventure.

The subway was fairly empty since rush hour was over, and Peter made sure they got off at the correct stop. Queens wasn’t super different from Jamaica, so the teens were more focused on catching Pokemon than their surroundings. Peter managed to snag a Bellsprout that had higher stats
than the one he had caught before, and Shuri captured a local gym. They barely noticed that they had made their way into the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

Peter swiped out of Pokemon Go and opened his GPS. “Okay, so we should be good if we keep going straight,” he said, looking at the map. He stopped walking when he noticed Shuri wasn’t directly behind him. He whirled around and found her staring down an alleyway.

“Come here,” she said, waving him over. Peter jogged to the entrance and looked down with her. “Do you hear that?” she asked.

Peter leaned his head in and listened carefully. If he blocked out the noise enough, he could hear a faint rustling coming from behind the dumpster pressed up against the wall. He looked at Shuri and without talking, they both carefully tiptoed down the alley to investigate the noise. Before they could reach the mysterious trash can though, a flash of golden fur darted out.

Shuri was the first to recover from the shock. “Oh my gosh!” Shuri squealed. “Puppy!”

An adorable golden retriever trotted over to the teens, its entire backside wagging at its new visitors. It had a slice of pepperoni pizza in its mouth, and the teens realized it must have searched the trash can for that treasure. It leaned out on its front paws and lifted its butt into the air as Peter and Shuri both held out their hands. Not knowing which teen to go to first, the dog settled for rubbing up against both of them.

Peter knelt down and got a huge, wet kiss from the dog as it dropped the pizza slice on his knee. “Aren’t you so cute!” he cooed, scratching it behind its ears. He noticed the dog was missing its left eye, but other than that, it seemed to be in good health. The dog thumped its back leg on the ground in bliss, giving Shuri enough of a glimpse to know they were petting a male dog.

“I wonder who you belong to,” Shuri said, looking at its neck. She spotted a collar and felt around until she found a dog tag. “Aww, his name’s Lucky!”

“Hi Lucky!” Peter exclaimed. Lucky gave a short bark as if to say hello before burrowing his nose in Peter’s crotch.

Shuri laughed as she carefully pulled his head out and looked at the other side of the dog tag. “Peter look! It says, ‘Please return, my owner is probably ugly crying by now’.”

Peter chuckled. “No way, does it really?” He gently pulled Lucky’s head up and looked at the tag for himself. “That is awesome,” he declared.

Shuri furrowed her brow. “But there’s no address or phone number,” she said. “How are we supposed to return him without that?”

Before Peter could answer, a voice with a thick, Russian accent called to them from behind. “Bro! You found my dog!”

Peter and Shuri turned around to find three men blocking the entrance to the alley. They wore brownish red tracksuits with yellow stripes down the sides of their jackets and pants. The hair on Peter’s arms stood up straight as Lucky growled menacingly and tucked his tail under his body.

“Your dog?” Shuri asked calmly, not buying their ruse.

The man in the middle nodded, a wicked grin on his face. “Yeah, bro, that’s my dog!”

Shuri and Peter looked from Lucky to the men. Peter shook his head and wrapped his arms around
Lucky’s neck. “I don’t think so, man,” he said. He felt Shuri slowly unzip his backpack from behind.

The man’s smile held strong. “Are you calling me a liar?” he asked. He and his friends stepped closer to the teens and the dog.

“If this is your dog,” Shuri said, “then what’s her name?” Peter’s ears perked up at her incorrect pronoun use.

The tracksuit man rubbed his chin, his confident demeanor slipping. “Her name? Well...it’s uh...um…” He cleared his throat as he continued to stutter. “Her name is-”

“Telulah!” the man to his left interrupted.

The other two men faced their friend. “Telulah?!” the leader yelped. “What the hell kind of name is Telulah, bro?!”

“Bro, they asked what her name was! I didn’t hear you come up with anything, bro”

While the tracksuit guys were distracted, Shuri finished unzipping Peter’s backpack and pulled out his webslingers. She buried her face in Lucky’s fur. “It’s okay, boy,” she whispered, “we won’t let them take you.” Lucky whimpered in response.

Peter carefully knelt the rest of the way down and grabbed the abandoned piece of pizza from the ground. “You ready to run?” he whispered, never taking his eyes off the arguing men. Shuri nodded, and Peter turned to Lucky. “You’ve gotta lead us home, okay?” Lucky tried to bite at the pizza slice in response.

“Okay, you know what?” the tracksuit leader said. “This is enough.” He turned back to the teens. “Give us the dog, bro!” They stalked their way down the alley towards the teens and dog.

Peter’s reflexes were lightning fast as he threw the pizza slice into the leader’s face and jumped up to punch the other one. He got a solid hit right in the guy’s nose, and as he struggled to breathe, Peter shot out webbing, effectively sticking him to the brick wall.

“What the-” the main exclaimed. He tugged at the webbing. “What is this stuff, bro?”

Shuri, meanwhile, used her height to her advantage and connected a well-placed kick at the other sidekick’s crotch. The man howled in agony as he fell to his knees. The leader yanked the pizza off his face as Peter, Shuri, and Lucky ran out of the alleyway into the street.

“Lucky, go home!” Peter yelled. The dog barked and ran ahead, leading the teens down the street. Peter felt something whiz by his face, and when the brick exploded next to him, he came to a horrible realization. “THEY’VE GOT GUNS!”

Shuri yelped as a trashcan near her feet toppled over from the force of another bullet. She quickly glanced back and watched as the three men got into a shady looking van with other men wearing similar tracksuits. They all had their weapons drawn and continued to fire away. Her heart pounded in her chest as Lucky quickly turned down another street and away from the line of fire.

Peter and Shuri rounded the corner, but were dismayed to find that Lucky had disappeared completely. They looked around wildly, panicking as they heard the van rumble down the street.

Just when they had given up hope, Lucky peeked his head out of a decent crack in the alley wall. Peter helped Shuri through first then quickly followed them, their shoulders brushing roughly against the tight sides of the walls.
“Go, go, go, go, go!” Peter urged, trying not to trip over Shuri as he pushed forward.

“C’mon Lucky!” Shuri encouraged. “Good boy! Go faster!”

They all popped out of the alley into fresh air, and Lucky ran up the back staircase of an average looking brick apartment building. He pawed at the door until Shuri opened it, and they dashed inside. Peter shot his webs at the door, effectively sealing them in, and they ducked down under the window sill.

The van’s exhaust blew as it barreled past the front of the building and kept going. Shuri and Peter stayed low and they moved towards the front of the building to try and get a closer look. Lucky crawled on the ground behind them. The teens breathed a sigh of relief as the van disappeared around the corner. They sat on the floor in slight shock as Lucky licked his paws.

“What...was...that?” Peter panted, clutching his chest.

Shuri shook her head. “No idea,” she replied, her voice shaky.

Lucky’s ears perked up as something caught his interest. He got up and trotted towards the staircase at the end of the hall.

Peter glanced over at Shuri. “Should we follow him?” he asked.

Shuri took a deep breath and shrugged. “We’ve gotten this far, haven’t we?” She gave Peter and wry smile and held out her hand. He gripped it and they quickly stood up and bolted away from the windows and over to the stairs. Lucky had made it to the second floor by the time the teens caught up. He led them to apartment H and sat down patiently in front of the door.

Peter, deciding nothing could get more bizarre today, knocked on the door three times.
A very tired and beat up man answered the door. Two hearing aids poked out of both ears as he scratched his neck with a full pot of coffee. His spiky blonde hair was messed up at all angles, and strips of medical tape covered his face. Peter wasn’t sure whether to focus on the one going across his nose or the two above his left eyebrow. He had gauze wrapped around his right wrist and more tape around his fingers. His white shirt had a purple target in the middle, and there were holes peppered in the fabric.

“I’m not buying anything,” the man yawned, trying to close the door.

Before the teens could respond, Lucky barked at the man and ran in between his legs into the apartment.

The man gasped in surprise. “Lucky!” He left Peter and Shuri standing in his doorway as he chased after the dog. The teens shrugged at each other and walked inside.

If it was possible, the inside of the apartment was more of a mess than the man himself. Papers, takeout containers, and coffee mugs littered every available surface. Notes were plastered on the kitchen cabinets saying things like “Feed dog”, “Do dishes eventually”, “No seriously, feed dog”, and “Make more coffee”. The kitchen island had two barstools in front of it, but no one in their right mind would ever sit on them. One was missing a leg (out of three), and the other looked too short for the counter. A flat screen TV stood shakily on an entertainment center with tons of wires sticking out of the back. Some of the wires looked as if they had been cut cleanly in half. A set of stairs led up, and since there was no bed in the living room, Peter assumed there was one upstairs. At least, he hoped there was.

“What is this place?” Shuri whispered.

Peter shook his head. “I have no idea,” he replied. He shuddered at the mess, thinking about how Aunt May would go nuts in a place as messy as this. He watched as Lucky raced up the stairs, the man following closely behind.

“Excuse me!” Shuri shouted. “You really should put your phone number on his dog tags!”

The man poked his head out over the loft. “What?” he called down.

“The dog tag!” Peter said. “You need a phone number if you want someone to, you know, return the dog.”

The man scrunched his nose in confusion. “Dog tag? But I didn’t…” His eyes widened as he came to a realization and turned back towards Lucky. “Did the mean Katie give you a collar?” he cooed. Lucky barked in response.

“Hey listen,” Peter continued, “there’s something you should know…” His voice trailed off as his gaze wandered over to the other side of the loft. A punching bag hung in front of the windows, and two wooden people-shaped targets stood in the center. At least six arrows stuck out of them, and Peter spotted a bow hanging on the wall. He had seen that bow somewhere before...

He gasped and pointed at the man. “You’re from the airport! In Germany!” he exclaimed. “You’re
the bow and arrow guy!”

Shuri stared at Peter. “Bow and arrow guy?”

Peter nodded. “Yeah! Birdguy or something like that!”

“Hawkeye,” the man said, coming back down the stairs. “It’s Hawkeye. Or Clint Barton.” He looked up and down at Peter. “You were in Germany?”

“Yeah,” Peter replied. He held out his wrist and shot a web at the brick wall.

Clint’s eyes widened in recognition. “You’re that spider thing!” He pointed the coffee pot at Peter. “You were pretty annoying.” He looked at Shuri. “Who’re you?”

“Princess Shuri of Wakanda,” she replied. “My brother is the King T’Challa, the Black Panther.”

Clint shuddered. “Rude and scary.”

Peter pointed at the floor before Shuri could respond. “Hey, your coffee spilled.”

Clint looked down, and sure enough, some brown liquid had dribbled down onto the floor. “Aww, coffee, no,” Clint whined. He walked away, but made no move to clean up his mess. “Listen,” he called over his shoulder, “I don’t need any trouble with Stark or the government. Thanks for bringing my dog back, but you can leave now.”

“We’re not here to bother you,” Shuri promised. “We found Lucky in an alley, but then-”


“Um, no,” Shuri replied.

“Look, you really need to listen to us!” Peter insisted. “When we found Lucky there were these-”

He was interrupted yet again as someone pounded on the door. Clint sighed, placed the coffee pot heavily on the counter and went to open the door. A woman with dark skin and thick, natural curls stood in his doorway with her hands on her hips and a scowl on her face.

“Simone,” Clint said dryly.

“You need to fix the cable dish,” she demanded, skipping all greetings.


Simone tapped her foot against the hall floor. “Listen, Mr. Landlord. There is a problem with a dish in your building. Therefore it is your problem.”

“Landlord?” Peter whispered to Shuri. She seemed just as surprised as him that Clint had that much responsibility.

Clint took out his hearing aids and shrugged his shoulders. “I can’t hear you!” he exclaimed, signing the same phrase in ASL.

Simone wagged her finger at Clint. “Fix the damn dish, Clint! If I have to listen to Charlie complain about missing Doc Mcstuffins, I will personally deliver him here for you to babysit!” With that, she
whirled around and stormed back to her apartment.

Clint grinned as he shut the door and put his hearing aids back in. “Works every time,” he chuckled. He turned around to find Peter and Shuri staring at him incredulously. “Either of you two any good with technology?”

Shuri pinched the bridge of her nose. “If we help you fix the cable, will you please let us finish our story about Lucky?”

Clint grabbed the coffee pot off the counter and took a long gulp. “Yeah, alright,” he said, wiping his mouth. “C’mon.”

The teens followed Clint out of his apartment and up another flight of stairs. He opened a window that led out to the fire escape where the cable dish stood…

…with an arrow sticking right through the middle of it.

“Okay, I know this looks bad,” Clint said, as the teens glared at him. “But you can fix it, right?”

“Dude,” Peter said, “there’s an arrow sticking out of the dish!”

“But...you can fix it, right?” Clint repeated.

Shuri rolled her eyes and gently pushed Clint out of the way. “Let me look.” She yanked the arrow out and leaned over the fire escape to get a better look. She leaned back over and pulled a tablet out of her backpack. She handed it to Peter, and he quickly removed his shoes and socks and hopped over the railing.

“Whoa!” Clint exclaimed. “Careful!”

Peter grinned as his feet stuck to the railing. “I’m Spiderman,” he said. He aimed the tablet over the dish and scanned it. He could see the damage more clearly. “Okay, we need to reattach some paneling that got loose when the arrow hit it,” he determined. He gave Shuri back the tablet and carefully pushed things back in place.

“Did that fix it?” Clint asked as Peter climbed back over the railing.

Peter scoffed. “Dude, no!”

“It had an arrow sticking out of it,” Shuri added. “Sure, we fixed the paneling, but you still have torn wires!”

Clint groaned. “Simone is going to kill me.”

Shuri hummed thoughtfully. “Maybe if we…” Her voice trailed off and her expression brightened. “I’ll be right back!” She jumped through the window back into the apartment building, leaving Clint and Peter alone on the fire escape.

“So you’re with Stark,” Clint said, after a moment of silence.

“Well, I’m not with him,” Peter replied. “I mean, he’s kind of my mentor, and yeah, I was with him in Germany. But not like that! More of like a business relationship, I guess. Not that we aren’t close! I just-”

Clint laughed and held up his hands. “Kid, chill. Listen, that whole thing was tense.”
Peter nodded. “Tell me about it.” He paused, thinking about what to say next. “So, uh, Tony and Bucky are kind of cool now,” he said.

Clint raised his eyebrows. “Really?”

“Yeah,” Peter replied. “I mean, they’ve still got stuff to work out, but they’re getting there.”

“What about Cap?” Clint asked.

Peter shook his head. “I don’t think he’s seen Captain America since...you know...” He looked up at Clint. “You don’t know where he is, do you?”

“Not my place to say,” Clint said gently. “So you and Stark are close?”

“They’re practically father and son at this point!” Shuri replied, climbing back out the window. She had a handful of wires that looked suspiciously like the ones sticking out of Clint’s TV.

Peter blushed. “This again?”

Shuri rested a hand on his shoulders. “It is my duty, as one of your best friends, to point these things out until you both just admit it!”

Peter sighed, ignoring Clint’s silent laughter. “What do you want me to do with those?”

Shuri scoffed. “I can handle this one.” She took a small black pen out of her backpack and carefully climbed over the railing, hooking her feet through the bars. She pulled out the frayed, arrow-damaged wires, and tossed them on the fire escape. Peter and Clint watched as she linked the new wires in and clicked the pen. A red-hot laser shot out of the tip, cauterizing the wires and sealing the connection.

“Dude!” Peter exclaimed. “You’ve had a laser this whole time?!”

Shuri shrugged. “I always carry one with me. Besides, there’s more where that came from. We just went to Vegas before I could show you.”

“What?!”

“Now hang on,” Clint interrupted. “Is the cable fixed or not?”

Shuri nodded. “I replaced the wires with similar ones found in your TV-”

“Hey!”

“And with the panels back in place,” Shuri continued, “it should be good as new.” Peter helped her back over the railing, and the three of them headed back inside.

“Now can we finish talking?” Peter asked as Clint closed the window.

“Yeah alright,” Clint said. He watched as Peter and Shuri’s expressions went from calm to fearful in a matter of seconds. “You guys okay?”

“So you know how we said we found Lucky in an alley?” Peter asked.

“Yeah…”

“Well,” Shuri gulped, “there were these men there, and they tried to take him.”
“And they had guns,” Peter added.

Clint’s stomach dropped. “Who were they?”

Peter and Shuri pointed out the window, and Clint turned around to find a van roll lazily down the street. It stopped, and three men in red and yellow tracksuits hopped out.

“Them!” the teens exclaimed. They watched in horror as the men walked up to the front of the building and stood outside, patiently waiting.

Clint turned back to the teens. “Okay, I know this looks bad,” he said…

“...but I have a plan.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so since none of this lines up with the comic's timeline, we're going to assume Kate Bishop was in California but is now back in NYC. She isn't going to be making an appearance in this story though. I just didn't know how else Lucky would get back lol.
Part 17

Chapter Notes

So, you're getting some major action in this chapter! Enjoy! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Who are those guys?” Peter asked as Clint pulled his bow off the wall and yanked arrows out of the wooden targets.

Clint grimaced. “Tracksuit Draculas.”

Shuri’s jaw dropped. “Are they actual vampires?!”

“What?” Clint asked. “No! Vampires don’t exist!”

Peter held up his hands. “Listen, man, we’ve met a wizard and aliens. Vampires are the least ridiculous thing we could encounter right now.”

Clint pondered this then shrugged. “Okay, fair enough. But they’re not real vampires. Just greedy crooks who care more about money than people.”

Shuri wrinkled her nose. “Why did they want Lucky?”

Clint smirked proudly. “Well, I kind of dismantled their entire operation by taking out their leaders. The leftovers probably want revenge.”

“And you’re not the least bit concerned about this?” Peter asked.

Clint shook his head. “Nah, they’re a nuisance, but nothing I can’t handle.”

Shuri looked around at the messy apartment and Clint’s numerous injuries. “Can’t handle it, my ass,” she muttered to herself. She looked up at Clint. “So what’s your plan?”

“I beat them up until they get annoyed and leave,” he said.

“But…does that really solve the problem?” Peter asked. “Won’t they come back?”

Clint shrugged. “Probably.”

“How can we help?” Shuri asked.

Clint pointed to the couch. “You two aren’t helping with anything. You’re staying right here.”

“What?!” Peter exclaimed. “You can’t just expect us to do nothing!”

“Oh yes I can,” Clint replied. “I’m pretty sure Stark would be pissed if you came home looking like Swiss Cheese thanks to some bullets.” He double checked his gear and headed towards the door. “I’ll be back soon. Don’t leave.” And with that, he closed the door behind him.

Peter and Shuri glanced at each other and then at the now-empty apartment.
“We’re not...we’re not actually going to stay here, right?” Peter asked.

Shuri scoffed. “Of course not!”

Both teens shrugged off their backpacks and began to get decked out in gear. Peter activated his webslingers and felt the nanites form across his body as his Spiderman suit came to life. Meanwhile, Shuri took out two panther heads from her own pack and stuck her hands through holes in the back. She pounded them together, and they came to life, their eyes lighting up. She smirked at Peter's shocked expression.

"Told you I brought more,” she said.

“Epic!” Peter exclaimed, giving Shuri a thumbs up. “Okay,” he strategized, “since I’ve got more body armor, I’ll get close while you attack from a distance.”

“Got it,” Shuri nodded.

They quickly bolted out of the apartment and down the staircase. As soon as they burst outside, Peter shot his webs out and connected with the overhang of the building across the street from Clint’s. He swung and kicked two Tracksuit Dracula members before they even knew what hit them.

Clint released an arrow and it went right through the sleeve of another guy’s tracksuit, pinning him to the truck. Clint jumped and flipped in the air, punching him in the face and glared at the teens. “I thought I told you to STAY INSIDE!”

Shuri blasted at one of the Tracksuit Draculas coming out of the passenger side of the van. “We’re not defenseless!” she yelled.

Peter hopped on top of the van and punched the driver’s side window until it shattered. He yanked out the driver and tossed him into the street before coming back down. He shot a web at the pinned guy’s hands, effectively sticking him to the car permanently.

Suddenly, the two men that Peter had taken out began to stand back up and set their sights on Shuri. Clint tried to run over to her, but was blocked by the driver, who had recovered from Peter’s throw. Peter’s eyes widened as he ran over to protect her.

But Shuri is not one who needs protection. She managed to get off a blast from her panther lasers before nailing a roundhouse kick to one’s chest. Peter jumped in the air and shot a ricochet web off Clint’s building. It bounced off the brick and landed directly in the other Dracula’s eyes. Shuri took him down with one final kick and watched in satisfaction as the two men writhed around on the street.

Peter held out his fist and without thinking, Shuri bumped it with her own. Her panther laser activated, blasting Peter across the street by accident.

“Whoa!” he yelled, as he sailed through the air. He flew into a trash can with a metallic CLANG! His suit absorbed most of the shock, but he still groaned as he tried to get up.

“Peter!” Shuri yelped, running across the street to help. She took off one of the lasers and gently pulled Peter up. “I’m so sorry! Are you okay?”

Peter nodded and gave her a weary thumbs up. “All good,” he rasped, still trying to catch his breath.

They heard shouting and turned towards the sound. With the teens momentarily out of the picture, Clint was being swarmed by the remaining Tracksuit Draculas. His arrows stuck out of the van, but
he had no more left to fire. He held his own in the hand-to-hand combat, but for every punch he threw, two or three more were coming back at him. The driver of the van landed a solid punch at Clint’s face, rendering the former Avenger unconscious.

“CLINT!” the teens shouted as he crumpled to the ground.

Peter and Shuri saw red, and without thinking, they both yelled as they ran to attack. Peter shot a web lasso and captured the driver. He continued running past and used his momentum to swing the guy down the street. He landed on a parked car, completely shattering the windows and windshield.

“Bro!” one of them yelled hysterically. “This ain’t worth it!”

Before Shuri could even fire another shot, the remaining men scrambled to the van. They hopped in any opening they could find and quickly started the engine. Smoke churned from the tires as the van squealed down the street, one guy still pinned to the outside. It stopped in front of the smashed car and someone pulled the unconscious man inside before barrelling off again.

Shuri and Peter panted, their adrenaline in full force. They walked over to Clint and carefully hoisted him up after picking up his bow. They put one of his arms over each of their shoulders and practically dragged him back into the apartment building. As soon as they stepped inside Clint’s apartment, Peter and Shuri dropped him on the kitchen floor before going over and collapsing on the couch.

“Holy cow,” Peter whispered, deactivating his suit.

Shuri gently took off her lasers and slid down the couch until her head reached the seat cushions. “Tell me about it,” she replied.

“I thought I told you,” Clint groaned, pushing himself up on his elbows, “to stay here!”

Peter sat up. “In case you didn’t notice, you were a bit outnumbered.”

“And unconscious,” Shuri added.

Clint shook his head. “And unconscious,” he mimicked. He gently touched his face and winced as he grazed his eye, which was now turning purplish thanks to one of the Tracksuit Dracula’s punches. A new cut had formed on his cheek, and blood was slowly trickling down and getting on his shirt collar. The gauze on his wrist had been torn to shreds, and he was going to need some more medical tape on his face.

Shuri sighed and got up. “Where’s your first aid kit?” she asked.

“Bathroom,” Clint said, pointing upstairs.

She jogged up the steps as Peter walked over to the kitchen bar. He heard Shuri shriek as she opened a cabinet upstairs. She ran back down as fast as lightning looking like she had seen a ghost.

“There is something living under your cabinet!” she exclaimed, pointing the first aid kit at Clint.

“Probably,” Clint replied, as if that was the most normal thing in the world.

Shuri grimaced as Peter took the kit from her hands and pulled out the medical tape and gauze. Like a child, Clint held out his wrist as Peter patched him up. Shuri found a semi-clean towel and ran it under warm water. Once Peter was done, she helped Clint clean off his face and put tape over his new wounds.
“Listen,” Clint said grudgingly, “thank you. For you know...helping out.”

“You mean saving you?” Shuri smirked.

“Tomato tomahto,” Clint said.

Peter and Shuri finished up, and she went back upstairs to return the first aid kit back to the bathroom. Clint cleared his throat and looked at Peter.

“Listen, kid, that thing you’re looking for? It’s in Scotland.”

Peter stared at Clint with a confused expression on his face, but then his eyes widened. “Really?” he asked.

Clint nodded. “I don’t know where exactly, but…” He sighed. “This whole fight is stupid. They weren’t both wrong, but they’re not both right. Maybe you can help them realize that?”

Peter considered the responsibility and nodded firmly. “I can try,” he replied.

Clint smiled as Shuri came back downstairs. “Well, kids, while this has been fun, I’m going to pass out in my bed for the foreseeable future so…” He gestured towards the door.

Peter and Shuri grinned as they grabbed their backpacks. “Try not to get any more injuries,” Shuri directed.

Clint saluted her. “Aye aye captain!”

The teens waved and shut the door behind them. Peter was silent as they made their way down the stairs and outside. There was no sign of the van or the Tracksuit Draculas.

Shuri looked over at Peter. “You okay?” she asked.

Peter stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, an idea already forming in his head.

“I want to go to Scotland.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey peeps! So, I know this is a short Clint arc (please don't be mad), but he is definitely coming back in the future! Maybe he'll even wind up in Scotland ;)
Y’all, I started watching Agents of SHIELD, and I am freaking hooked! Can I just say that I am 100% here for protective Papa Coulson?! 

Shuri blinked at Peter’s sudden request. “Why...why do you want to go to Scotland?” she asked as they continued to walk down the sidewalk.

“That’s where Captain America is,” he replied.

“What? How do you know?”

“Clint told me.” Peter looked at Shuri curiously. “You didn’t know?” It wasn’t an accusation, just a question.

Shuri shook her head. “That is T’Challa’s mess. I haven’t seen Steve Rogers since he dropped Bucky off, and T’Challa is smart enough to leave any information about him off our servers.”

Peter believed her. Shuri knew about Bucky, but she hadn’t kept it from him or Tony out of malice. She really was just trying to help him get better. And now that Peter knew more about the former assassin, his worldview had changed a bit.

“So...why now?” Shuri asked, breaking the silence.

Peter shrugged. “I mean, Tony and Bucky are kind of better.” Shuri raised her brow. “I said kind of, not perfect!” Peter clarified. “So maybe...maybe he and Captain Rogers can get better too.”

“It would make things easier,” Shuri admitted. “Plus things have calmed down since the whole Germany thing.”

“Exactly,” Peter said. “So we go to Scotland, find Captain Rogers, and try to get him to talk to Tony.”

“But,” Shuri said gently, “what if Tony isn’t ready to talk to him?”

Peter sighed. “Then we tell Captain Rogers he’s an ass and needs to apologize and leave it at that.”

“You want to go all the way to Scotland to call Captain America an ass?” Shuri asked with a laugh.

“Maybe,” Peter grinned. “Serves him right for dropping a shipping container over my head.”

Shuri smirked. “So he beat you?”

“No! He just had the upper hand at one point!”

“Uh huh, sure.”

“Seriously! I stole his shield, so technically I beat him.”
“Was this before or after he dropped the shipping container?” Shuri smirked.

“Shut up,” Peter muttered.

Shuri held up her hands. “Okay, say we somehow get to Scotland. How do we find him? Do you know where he is exactly?”

Peter shook his head. “Clint didn’t know.”

“Dude,” Shuri said slowly, “Scotland is an entire country. It’s not that little!”

“Hey,” Peter defended, “I never said my plan was perfect!”

Before Shuri could sass him back, her kimoyo beads buzzed on her wrist. She held up a finger to Peter as she pulled T’Challa’s image up over her wrist.

“Brother!” she exclaimed. “How are you?”

T’Challa smiled warmly at his sister. “I’m well. How was Vegas?”

Shuri smiled widely. “It was amazing! I can’t wait to tell you about it!”

“Well,” T’Challa said, “what if you could tell me tomorrow?”

Shuri’s smile dropped. “Brother, I don’t have to come home already, do I? I barely just got here and—”

T’Challa laughed. “No, no! You don’t have to come home! I have some business to attend to in San Francisco, and I thought I would stop in New York on my way there. That is, if you and Peter want to come with me.”

Peter nodded enthusiastically. “Yes!” he mouthed. “Tell him yes!”

Shuri ignored Peter and eyed her brother suspiciously. “Do we have to sit in boring business meetings with you?”

“No.”

“Do we have to stay in the hotel the whole time?”

“I’m renting a house. And, no.”

“Then what’s the catch?”

“Shuri,” T’Challa grinned, “there is no catch. Why should Stark be the only one to take you two on trips, hmm? Maybe it’s my turn.”

Shuri pretended to think about it for a few seconds. “Well, when you put it like that...okay! How long are we staying?”

“Two days, three at the most,” T’Challa replied.

Shuri turned to Peter. “We’ve got to do laundry,” she said.


Shuri gave T’Challa a thumbs up. “We’ll be waiting for you tomorrow!”
“Sounds good. Peter, double check with your aunt, okay?”

“Yup,” Peter replied. “I’m sure it’ll be fine.”

Shuri said goodbye and disconnected the call. Peter grabbed her shoulders and gave them an excited shake.

“San Francisco!” he yelped. “This is the best news ever!”

Shuri pried herself from Peter’s grasp. “What has gotten into you?!”

“Ned!” he exclaimed. “Ned is in San Francisco for his family reunion! We can bring him back and get him to come to Scotland with us!”

“Which we still haven’t figured out how we’re getting there,” she pointed out.

Peter waved her off. “Details, details.”

“Important details you goof!”

Peter’s expression brightened. “You know who’s really good with details?” he asked.

Shuri thought for a moment and then gasped.

“MJ!”

If MJ was surprised to find Peter and Shuri climbing through her dorm room window at art camp, she didn’t show it. She merely pulled out her headphones and paused the show she was watching as they tumbled on her floor.

“’Sup losers?” she asked. “Miss me that much already?”

Shuri responded by wrapping MJ up in a bear hug, while Peter’s foot caught on the wooden desk chair, making him face plant again.

“It’s so good to see you!” Shuri squealed. “How’s camp? Tell me everything!”

MJ shrugged nonchalantly. “It’s over in two days, but it’s been good!” She reached over Peter to grab her sketchbook off the desk. She handed it to Shuri with a proud smile. “Want to see what I’ve been working on?”

Shuri nodded as she took the book from MJ’s hands and began rifling through the pages. People, landscapes, and objects graced the pages in magnificent detail. “Wow,” she gasped, “these are amazing!”

MJ nodded as she grabbed Peter’s hand and pulled him up from the floor. “My shadows are way better now.” She paused and looked between her two friends. “Soooo...not that I’m not glad you’re here but...why are you here?”

Shuri and Peter took turns recounting Tony and Pepper’s wedding, the events from Clint’s that afternoon, and explained Peter’s plan to get to Scotland. By the time they were finished, the sun was
beginning to set, and their stomachs grumbled. MJ pulled out her snack stash, and the three of them munched on chips and cookies.

MJ laughed as she grabbed her fourth cookie from the bag. “You’re...you’re actually trying to find Captain America?!”

Peter held a finger to his lips. “Shhh! Not so loud!”

“Sorry, sorry,” MJ said. “But seriously?”

Peter nodded. “Don’t you think it’s about time everyone figured their crap out?”

“Well, sure,” MJ replied, “but what makes you think you can fix it?”

“I mean, he is practically Tony’s son at this point,” Shuri said.

“What?!” MJ exclaimed.

Shuri grabbed MJ’s arm. “Oh, I have so much to tell you.”

MJ scrunched her nose and considered everything they had said. “Alright, I’ll come with. Will your brother mind?”

Shuri shook her head. “I doubt it, but I’ll call him on our way back to Peter’s.”

“Are you sure you don’t mind missing the last day of camp?” Peter asked.


Peter pumped his fist in the air.

“First stop Ned, next stop, Scotland!”
Traveling with T’Challa was like traveling with the epitome of style. Tony Stark was flashy, but T’Challa...T’Challa was just cool.

He showed up at JFK airport in his sleek, black jet, very similar to the one they had taken to California the previous year. When Peter, MJ and Shuri left the private terminal to hop on board, it was clear that the jet had gone through some serious upgrades. They enjoyed the four hour flight (made much shorter thanks to Shuri’s tech) chilling out in brown leather reclining seats with the latest season of Voltron to keep them occupied. T’Challa navigated the jet with ease, and when they finally arrived in San Francisco, his Wakandan garb didn’t even have any wrinkles.

Their temporary home was just as efficient, not that the teens planned on spending much time there. The dark mahogany wood paneling gave the interior a sleek style, and their room overlooked the bay. After they had tossed their suitcases on their beds and changed, they went downstairs where T’Challa had prepared a small snack for them.

“So,” T’Challa said as the teens dipped their apples in peanut butter, “I need to go to a few meetings, but you know the ground rules, right?”

Shuri nodded. “No drinking, no drugs, no trouble,” she spouted off.

T’Challa nodded. “When I get back tonight, we can walk to the Golden Gate Bridge if you’d like.”

Peter’s eyes widened. “That sounds awesome!”

“Where is Ned again?” T’Challa asked.

MJ pulled out her phone. “He’s at his grandmom’s house on the other side of town.” She looked at Peter and Shuri. “We definitely need to take a cable car, and the green line would take us right where we need to go. I would get some great sketches.”

Shuri grinned. “So old fashioned!”


T’Challa grinned as the teens began to banter back and forth about the merits of old versus new in modern society. He had forgotten how much he had missed the teens since last summer. He coughed lightly to get their attention.

“Well however you get there, just get there safely,” he ordered.

All three teens gave him a salute.

“Aye, aye, captain!”
Riding a cable car was a unique experience. The stop right near the rented house was practically empty, and since rush hour was over, the next cable car to stop by wasn’t too crowded. Peter and Shuri opted to hang on the outside while MJ stuck to a seat to sketch the scenery as it passed by.

What the teens didn’t realize was that the cable car didn’t exactly have specific stops like the metro system in NYC. So, when it kept rolling right past the street they needed, MJ quickly ran to the conductor and asked to be let off at the next stop. Thankfully, the weather wasn’t too hot, so the short backtrack wasn’t painful.

“Do you think Ned is going to be surprised to see us?” Shuri asked.

“Considering we didn’t tell him we’d be in town? I’d say so,” MJ replied with a smirk.

“But,” Peter added hastily, “I bet he’ll be psyched.”

They followed the directions on MJ’s phone to a long street full of multi-colored townhouses. Each house had three floors with a rounded curve to the second floor. The pointed roofs and raised balconies almost made them look like a castle turret. They stopped outside of a yellow house with teal shutters and trim.

Peter led the way to the front door and knocked. They could hear bustling activity behind the door and music coming from the backyard. Apparently Ned’s family reunion was still going strong.

An elderly woman with Ned’s eyes answered the door. She wore her hair up in a bun and a vibrant dress made of a silky blue fabric.

“Yes?” she asked kindly.

“Um, h-hi,” Peter stuttered. “We’re friends of Ned’s and we were in the area and wanted to say hi.”

It sounded silly once he said it out loud, and he wondered if she would believe two New Yorkers and a Wakandan were really just “in the area”.

Thankfully, the woman broke out into a huge smile and ushered the teens inside. A thick smell of spices and meat hung in the air as she led them through the narrow hallway. “Friends of Ned! How wonderful!” she exclaimed. “I am Ned’s grandmother. Call me Lola.”

She paused in the kitchen by a huge table full of food. It was covered with plates of pork, noodles, rice, vegetables and more.

“Eat!” she insisted. “We have plenty of food!”

Peter shook his head. “Oh, we couldn’t!”

Lola gestured again towards the table. “I insist,” she replied firmly.

Well who could say no to that?

By the time Lola was satisfied with the amount of food they had taken, Peter, Shuri, and MJ had their plates filled to the brim. Lola finally led them to the backyard where Ned was playing horseshoes with some younger kids, most likely his cousins. Ned was mid-throw when he saw his best friends standing on his grandmother’s steps. His shock caused the horseshoe to leave his hand at an awkward angle, and the heavy metal object nearly took out an older man’s head.

“Ned!” the man exclaimed. “Watch it!”
But Ned didn’t hear him. “Dude!” he yelled, pointing to Peter. He looked over to MJ and Shuri. “Dude!” he yelled again. He ran over and gave them all a backbreaking hug just as they had managed to rest their plates on the balcony railing.

“Hey, man!” Peter said, clapping Ned on the back. Ned pulled back and they quickly did their secret handshake.

“Boys,” Shuri said with a smile. “You never change, do you?”

Ned’s smile nearly split his face in half. “You’re not in Wakanda!”

“Astute observation, my friend,” Shuri smirked.

MJ gestured to herself. “What am I? Chopped liver?”

Ned shook his head. “Nah, more like fried liver.” He ducked as MJ swiped at his head. “How was art camp?”

“Pretty good,” MJ replied, a proud smile on her face. “How’s the family?”

“Oh it’s been very...familial,” Ned said, raising his brows.

“Think you can sneak away for a bit?” Peter asked. “We’ve got so much to catch you up on.

“And a mission,” Shuri added. “We’ve got a mission too.”

Ned’s eyes widened, and he pumped his fist in the air. “Ohhh I knew it! I knew you guys had to be here for a reason!” He looked around at his family members, who had all gone back to their respective games and conversations. “Let’s go to the front porch.”

Peter, Shuri, and MJ grabbed their plates and followed Ned back through the house out onto the front porch. MJ and Shuri called dibs on the porch swing, while Ned and Peter pulled up some chairs with puffy cushions.

“Tell me everything!” Ned demanded.

Peter and Shuri took turns describing the trip to Vegas and their foiree into Brooklyn. Ned’s jaw continued to drop with each new detail they added, and by the time they got to their Scotland plan, he practically had to pick it off the wooden floorboards.

“So...you want to go to Scotland...to find Captain America?” Ned asked. His eyes widened. “Are you going to steal his shield again?!”

“No!” Peter exclaimed. “We’re trying to get him and Tony to talk!”

Ned scrunched his nose. “Since when did you start calling Mr. Stark ‘Tony’?” he asked.

Shuri giggled. “You should have heard it when he said Tony and Pepper were his parents!”

“You said WHAT?” Ned and MJ yelped at the same time.

Peter’s face turned scarlet. “Look, it was an emergency!” he insisted. “I know they’re not actually my parents!”

“Well May’s not actually my aunt, but I think of her as my aunt,” Ned said.
“Yeah, but you spend so much time at my place!” Peter interjected. “You’re practically family anyway!”

“You spend a lot of time with Tony,” MJ said. “You lived with him for almost an entire summer, remember?”

“And he is your mentor,” Shuri added.

Peter held up his hands. “Look, we are way off topic.” He turned to Ned. “Are you in on Scotland?”

Ned hummed thoughtfully. “I mean, I don’t think my parents would mind if I left early…” He held up a finger. “Give me two minutes.” He quickly stood up and jogged back inside.

“Parental figure,” MJ sang under her breath while Shuri roared with laughter.

Before Peter could argue, Ned came back outside much faster than anticipated. He gave his friends a thumbs up. “Good news! I can go!”

“Really?” MJ asked incredulously. “Just like that?”

Ned grinned. “Well, I may have name dropped T’Challa a bit,” he admitted. “And I told them we’d be helping him with political stuff. That looks epic on a college resume. They bought it hook, line, and sinker.” He fist bumped Peter proudly.

“Okay, so between Ned and Shuri, we should be able to narrow down the Captain Rogers’ location,” Peter said, the beginnings of a plan forming in his mind. “MJ and I can start thinking tactically.”

The others nodded. “Sounds good,” Ned replied. “I can have my stuff packed in no time.” The teens quickly finished their food and went inside. Peter, Shuri, and MJ said hi to Ned’s parents and thanked his grandmother profusely for welcoming them into her home. When Ned came downstairs with his bag, it took fifteen more minutes for him to say goodbye to his family. His grandmother gave him one final kiss and hug, and then the teens were out the door.

Since Ned’s bag was bulky, and more people filled the streets, they decided to walk back to the other house. Ned and Shuri were already brainstorming ways they could hack satellites and GPS signals. Peter, meanwhile, was lost in thought as he took in the scenery around him.

San Francisco had people, but it was nowhere near as congested as NYC. There was also a constant breeze thanks to the nearby bay. Other than that, there were plenty of similarities. Grassy sidewalks, bustling cars, people with cell phones glued to their ears, giant ants roaming the sidewalk…

Peter did a double take and stopped dead, causing MJ to bump into him. He ignored her groans of protest and bolted across the street. He crouched down low and peered into the bushes. Sure enough, an ant stared back at him. But it wasn’t a normal ant. Normal ants were not the size of golden retrievers.

“Parker!” Shuri yelled as they ran to catch up. “What the-”

“Shh!” Peter hissed. He motioned for them to come closer and he pulled back the bushes. MJ and Shuri gasped, while Ned paled and shrieked, falling down against the pavement.

“Hi little guy,” MJ cooed, trying to coax it out.

“T-t-that is no-not little,” Ned stuttered. He looked around wildly as if searching for an explanation.
He stared at an empty parallel parking spot, closed his eyes, and took a deep breath. When he opened them again, he watched as a blue van seemed to grow right out of the ground into the space.

“How did it get here?” Peter asked.

“Get here?!” Shuri exclaimed. “Aren’t you the least bit concerned with its size?!”

“Guys,” Ned said as the van door opened.

“Maybe it’s a rare breed?” MJ suggested. The ant, now a bit bolder, had poked its head out of the bushes and into the sunlight.

“Guys!” Ned said more urgently. He poked Peter, Shuri, and MJ incessantly. “GUYS!”

“What?!” the others yelled, turning around.

A dark shadow loomed over Ned, and the teens looked up. An elderly man with salt and pepper hair, round glasses, and a goatee stared down at them, his arms crossed against his chest. He held a wheel-shaped case in his left hand. The ant, sensing the man’s presence, made an odd clicking noise before burrowing back underneath the bushes and disappearing from sight.

“Well?” the man asked. “Are you just going to sit there, or are you going to help me catch my ant?”

Chapter End Notes

So, Ned is Filipino is the movie, which is why his grandmother is called Lola. Apparently, it’s pretty normal for Filipino kids to call their grandmothers "Lola" so I thought I’d incorporate that into the story. ;)

Also, SURPRISE!! Did you see that coming? ;)

Part 20

Chapter Notes

So, context for you...this takes place AFTER Ant Man and the Wasp. Obviously, we're going to pretend the whole end credit scene from that movie never happened :P

ALSO! Are any of you going to be attending Flame Con in NYC in the middle of August? I'm going and I'm SO EXCITED! Let me know if you are! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Y-y-you-your ant?” Ned spluttered.

The ant in question was now out of the bushes and running through the house’s backyard. The man cursed under his breath and rushed around the kids.

“Yes, my ant!” the man yelled. “What other ant could I possibly be talking about!” He quickly turned around and aimed a remote at the blue van. In seconds, it disappeared until it was the size of a Matchbox car.

“What the hell?!” MJ yelled.

“Woah!” Peter and Shuri gasped.

The man pointed at Ned. “Grab that, would ya?” He looked back towards the ant. “I’m gonna kill Lang,” he muttered. He looked back at Ned, who was still rooted to his spot on the sidewalk. “Well, what are you waiting for?!”

Ned scrambled up and went over to the car. His hand hovered over it as if he were afraid his grip would crush it. He looked back at the man, who at this point, had lost all his patience. “Do I-”

“JUST GRAB IT!”

Ned yelped and picked up the car, practically tossing it back to the man. He opened the wheel-shaped case and placed it inside before clicking it shut. Then, he ran down the backyard. “Let’s go!” he yelled over his shoulder.

The teens looked at each other.

“Do we…?” MJ asked, even though she was already heading towards the man and the ant.

“I mean, weird is kind of our speciality,” Shuri replied, following hot on her heels.

Ned grabbed his suitcase. “He just shrunk a VAN!”

Peter grinned. “Right?! How cool was that?!"

The backyard opened up wider, and the ant was already on the other side of the chain link fence, thanks to a hole it had burrowed under. The man was trying to climb over the fence as the ant made a left turn and went down the street.
Peter put all his focus into running, and with one solid jump, he landed on the other side of the fence effortlessly. He glanced back at the others. MJ was already at the top of the fence, and she quickly joined him on the other side.

“Ned! Shuri!” Peter shouted. “Go back and cut it off at the next street corner!” Without waiting for a response, he and MJ went running.

People on the sidewalk screamed as the ant scurried between their legs. Some brave souls had taken out their cell phones and were even recording. Peter had no idea who the man was or what he was doing, but the teen was pretty sure he wouldn’t want this footage on the Internet.

“That’s my dog in the spider costume!” he shouted quickly. “Stop him!”

“Good thinking!” MJ panted.

They were almost at the end of the street, and they could see Shuri and Ned turning the corner. Ned tossed his suitcase on the ground, blocking the exit to the street. Peter quickly hopped off the curb before the ant could turn the other way. It had nowhere to go.

“STOP!” Peter yelled at the top of his lungs.

Surprisingly, the ant did stop. The teens managed to trap it in a square, and it looked around wildly for an escape route.

“Hey you!” a voice yelled.

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned turned to find a male and female police officer running over to them.

“Oh crap,” Shuri gasped, still trying to catch her breath.

“What is going on?” the male officer exclaimed. “What the heck is that thing!”

“My dog!” Peter said quickly. “We dressed up my dog—”

“In an ant costume!” contributed Ned.

“But he got spooked,” Peter continued, “and bolted.”

“It’s because the eyeholes aren’t big enough!” Shuri pretended to scold. “I told you he couldn’t see!”

“Loser,” MJ added for effect.

The officers looked at the ant warily. “That thing is a dog?” the female officer asked. The teens nodded, but they still did not look convinced. Peter realized he was going to have to prove it.

“Hey...um...Fido,” he said, looking down at his “pet”. To his shock, the ant actually looked up at him. “Sit?” he asked, crossing his fingers behind his back.

The ant looked down at the ground, back up at Peter, and slowly lowered its rear end to the ground. It blinked at Peter expectantly.

“Lay down!” Shuri tried. But, the ant didn’t move.

“Fido,” Peter said firmly, “lay down.”

Fido slid its front legs out until it was laying spread eagle on the sidewalk.
“Holy shit,” Shuri whispered. The officers looked at her. “I mean, holy shit!” She gave Peter and wide, fake smile and fist bumped his shoulder. “His training has gotten so much better!”

The male officer shook his head. “Listen, kid, put that thing on a leash and get him home.”

Peter nodded. “Yes, sir!” He looked down to Fido. “Come on, boy!”

The ant followed Peter obediently as he and the others walked back the way Shuri and Ned had come. They stuck to their square formation so there was little room for the ant to go.

“Well’s the old guy?” Peter hissed.

“His pants got stuck at the top of the fence,” Shuri replied. “He told us to go and that he’d catch up.”

“Are we not going to talk about the fact that Peter can talk to ANTS?!” Ned exclaimed.

“I cannot!” Peter protested.

“Dude,” MJ said, “it listened when you told it to sit and lay down.”

“Didn’t listen to Shuri,” Ned added.

“Do you think it’s a because of your...you know...special abilities?” Shuri asked, looking around cautiously.

“Can we focus on one thing at a time?” Peter muttered. They got to the other end of the corner, but there was no sign of the man. Just as they were about to reach the corner, the blue van popped up out of nowhere.

“AHHH!” the teens screamed, jumping back.

The side door slid open, and the man gestured to them wildly. “Get in!” he exclaimed.

“Guys,” Ned whispered, shaking his head. “This is how kids die. By old guys and vans!”

“Exactly, he’s old!” MJ yelped. “What’s he going to do to four of us?”

“Kidnapped,” Ned said. “We’re gonna get kidnapped!”

“We need answers,” Shuri reasoned. “And he seems to have them.”

“But he could be dangerous!” Peter protested.

“So what, we give the ant to him and leave?” Shuri asked.

The man coughed, stopping all conversation between the teens. “If you four are done being so blatantly obvious, please get in the goddamn van!”

“Hank, seriously?” a voice said from the front. “They’re kids, be nice.”

A beautiful woman with long, dark hair peered around the driver’s side seat and waved to the teens. She wore a tank top, and her arm muscles flexed impressively as she gripped the steering wheel. Ned and Peter both gulped audibly.

“Let’s get in the van,” Ned said dreamily.

“Yup, in the van!” Peter exclaimed. He led the way, letting Fido in first. He and Ned hopped in next
and fought for the passenger seat. Ned tried to block Peter with his suitcase until Hank yanked them both back on the floor.

MJ and Shuri rolled their eyes. “Boys,” they muttered. As they followed their friends, they caught the woman’s eye, and she chuckled and gave them a wink.

Peter and Ned sat right behind the front seats while Shuri and MJ scooted towards the back. Fido plopped down between the two groups, its head resting near Peter’s feet. Peter reached out and gently patted its head, causing Fido to chirp and wriggle about.

After they all finally got in the van, Hank shut the door, and the woman sped away. Peter looked around in awe at all of the tech surrounding him. The left side of the van was lined with a shelf and different computer monitors. Wires, tools, and more were scattered near the back door. Ned reached out to touch a large square box with a handle coming out the top, but Hank slapped his hand away.

“Don’t touch!” he ordered. “Anything!”

MJ raised her hand, even though Hank’s head was turned. “Um, excuse me?” she called out. “Are we being kidnapped?”

“What?” Hank asked incredulously. He took Ned’s suitcase and sat on top of it, facing the teens. “No!”

“So you can stop and let us out?” Shuri asked.

“Wel...no.”

“So we’re being kidnapped,” Peter clarified.

“I knew it!” Ned yelled. “I told you this was a bad idea!”

“Would you stop?!” Hank exclaimed. “You’re not being kidnapped, but you can’t leave yet. You’re in...limbo. And you,” he said, pointing to Fido, “are in so much trouble!”

“Who are you?” MJ asked. “And why do you have a giant ant?”

“Let’s start from the beginning, shall we?” the woman asked, glancing back at the teens. “My name is Hope Van Dyne, and this is my father Hank Pym.” Hank waved unenthusiastically at them.

Shuri gasped. “Hank Pym?!” She grabbed Peter’s shoulder and began shaking them. “Hank Pym!” she repeated excitedly.

“What’s so cool about Hank Pym?” MJ asked.

Peter wracked his brain, trying to figure out why he knew that name so well. Suddenly, all of the dots connected. “Oh my god!” he exclaimed, pointing to Hank.

“You made the Ant Man suit!”

Chapter End Notes

In the comics, Spiderman can talk to spiders, so I extrapolated and made it so our Peter
Parker can talk to insects. Including ants. Because why not.
Hey friends! So, some of you mentioned that Ant Man and the Wasp hadn't come out yet where you live. So, I rewrote the next few parts to keep that in mind. There won't be any spoilers, and everything that references the movies can be found in the trailers or the clips Marvel released online.

Also, just as a reference, all of this stuff takes place AFTER Ant Man and the Wasp. We'll just be missing a few characters to avoid spoilers. :)

Hank Pym stared at Peter, a shocked expression on his face. “And you know this because…?” he asked, leaning forward.

Peter gulped. “Well, uh, I was in Germany-”

“Don’t mention Germany!” Hope said sharply from the front seat.

Hank scoffed. “Of course!” he exclaimed. “Germany! Why I…” He continued to mumble to himself as he got off Ned’s suitcase and sat in the passenger seat. He turned back around and glared at Peter. “Why were you in Germany?”

“Well, I’ve got powers too,” Peter replied. “Tony Stark recruited me-”

“Definitely don’t mention Tony Stark!” Hope yelped while Hank went on another mumbled rager.

“Stark! That no good-”

“HEY!” the teens yelled.

“Watch it,” Shuri said menacingly.

“You may not like him, but he means a lot to us,” Peter added, narrowing his eyes.

Hank held up his hands. “Fine. We’ll agree to disagree on that one.”

Peter scooted closer to the front of the van. “Look, your suit is amazing! It just has some tactical disadvantages when it’s bigger. Especially with the legs.” He smirked as he remembered the epic takedown at the airport. “Hang on,” he said suddenly. “Where is Ant Man?”

“He’s the reason we’re in this predicament,” Hank said.

“What, the giant ant?” MJ asked.

“It was an accident,” Hope defended, ignoring MJ. “Besides, you could say this is your fault too.”

“Can someone PLEASE explain what’s going on?” Ned asked. “And why Fido is so freaking huge?!”

Hank and Hope looked back at the teens. “Fido?” Hank asked.
“It’s the ant’s name,” Shuri explained.

“You named my ant...Fido?”

“Look,” Peter said, “there were police! I had to think of something!”

“So you named my Paratrechina longicornis, FIDO?” Hank screeched.

Shuri looked appalled. “Paratechina longicornis? The ant that conducts electricity?!”

“He does what now?” Ned asked.

“He’s fine,” Hank assured them.

“Well, technically,” Hope corrected, “without the earpiece…”

“Okay, WAIT!” MJ yelled. The car went dead silent. “We are in the back of a van with two complete strangers! And an ant the size of my neighbor’s dog! That apparently can conduct electricity! We would like some answers NOW!” Her gaze was fierce as she bore an invisible hole into the back of Hank’s seat.

The car lurched to a stop as Hope pulled over on the side of the road. She turned it off and climbed into the back with the teens and Fido.

“Okay, fair enough,” she said gently. “I’ll explain everything, then you can ask questions. Sound good?” The teens nodded at her. Hope took a deep breath as she began to tell the story.

“So, we have special earpieces that help us communicate with the ants that translates brain waves into electromagnetic waves. They basically do what we tell them to do, which makes them really useful around our lab. Scott Lang is the guy in the Ant Man suit. I believe you two have already met,” she said to Peter, who nodded. “Okay, so we made some of our ants larger to help us carry heavy materials around in the lab for our new project. Hank was working on upgrading all of our earpieces so they would be more efficient. It was only supposed to take a few minutes. Scott was wearing his suit, but the regulator had been malfunctioning.”

“The regulator is what controls his size, right?” Peter asked, thinking about how Scott had gone super tiny to super huge in Germany.

Hope nodded. “Exactly. Well, Scott’s suit malfunctioned while Hank was upgrading the earpieces, and he...well he…”

“He sat on them,” Hank said dryly. “All of them.”

Ned let out a small snicker. “So you put all of your earpieces in one basket?” he asked. Hope bit back a smile, but Hank glared at Ned. “Sorry, sir;” he mumbled.

“Once the earpieces were offline,” Hope continued, “we lost control of the ants. Five managed to escape before we shrunk the lab and trapped the others inside.”

“I’m sorry,” MJ interrupted. “Shrunk your lab?”

Hope pointed to the small square building with the handle sticking out of the top.

“Cool,” Shuri whispered.

Peter looked from Fido to Hope. “So you lost five huge ants?” he asked.
“Four,” Hope corrected. “We’ve got one here.”

“Scott was chasing two towards a park,” Hank added. “And he had one of his friends going after the other two.”

Ned slapped Peter’s arm. “Dude, you should totally use your powers to help!”

Hank and Hope looked at each other. “What powers?” they asked simultaneously.

“Peter can talk to ants,” Ned said.

“No I can’t!” Peter yelped. “It was just a coincidence! Fido doesn’t actually…” He trailed off as the ant perked its head up and gazed at Peter curiously.

Hope’s eyes widened. “Hank…”

“My god,” Hank mumbled. “Tell it to do something.”

Peter sighed. “Fido, high five.” He held his hand out, and much to his shock, Fido lifted one of his legs and placed the tip in Peter’s palm. “Um, roll over?” Fido dropped on its back and tried to roll over, but it knocked into Shuri and Ned. “It’s okay, stop!” Peter commanded. Fido stopped and looked at Peter expectantly. “Good boy!” Peter praised.

Hank stared at Peter. “What kind of powers did you say you had again?” he asked slowly.

“I got bitten by a radioactive spider, so I basically have spider powers,” Peter explained. “I didn’t think I could actually, like, talk to insects or arachnids though.”

Hank pointed to Peter. “We need to run tests.”

“No!” Hope said sharply. “What we need to do is round up the ants and make new earpieces.”

“But-”

“No buts! He’s a kid! He doesn’t need you testing him.”

Peter swallowed thickly. He had no desire to be poked or prodded. “Look,” he said, “we’ll help you get the ants back, but we’ve gotta meet someone at the Golden Gate Bridge in a couple hours.”

“Totally, fine,” Hope said before Hank could protest. “We’ll make sure you get there.” She got back into the driver’s seat and started the van back up. Soon, they were cruising along the road towards Scott’s location.

“Don’t worry, dude,” MJ whispered, nudging his shoulder. “We wouldn’t let them experiment on you.”

Peter grinned. “Aww, you do care!”

When they got to Buena Vista Park, Peter ordered Fido to stay in the car, and they rushed inside. Thankfully, there was a ton of trees and foliage, so they weren’t exposed out in the open.
“This way,” Hank directed, pointing to the left.

But, they really didn’t need his directions because they could hear a man shouting in the distance.

“NO! BAD ANT! STAY STILL!”

“Oh god,” Hope groaned. “I told you we should have gone after these guys!”

When they got to the end of the trail, they saw Scott Lang trying to corral two ants. But, whereas Fido was a light brown, these ants were almost pitch black with thick hair all over their bodies. Two menacing pincers hung off their heads.

“Tell me those aren’t…” Shuri gasped.

“What?” Ned asked.

Scott heard the commotion from behind and quickly looked back. “You seriously had to give me the BULLET ANTS, Hank?!” he yelled.

“Bullet ants?” MJ gulped.

Shuri nodded. “They have the most painful sting according to the Schmidt sting index,” she said. “And at that size...the toxins would be way more potent. It could kill you, easily.”

The ant on his left clicked angrily and feigned lunging at Scott. He yelped and practically fell on his butt, scooting back in the dirt. “Aww, C’MON ALBERT ANTSTEIN! I thought we were buddies!” Albert did not seem amused.

“Albert Antstein?” Peter looked to Hank. “Seriously?”

“Get them to come over here,” Hank said, reaching into his pocket.

“WHAT?!”

“Just trust me!”

Peter whistled. “Hey! Albert Antstein and...what’s the other one’s name?”


“Bro,” Shuri smirked.

Peter just shook his head. “Fine. Albert Antstein and Thomas Antison! Get over here!”

For a second, neither ant moved, and Peter thought it didn’t work. Suddenly, both ants took off running, leaping around Scott and heading right towards the teens. Peter felt his stomach drop as they got closer and closer. Ned, MJ, and Shuri all screamed, when suddenly…

Peter watched two small disks fly into the air and land directly on the ants’ foreheads. They shrunk back down until they were just two dots in the soil. The teens quickly moved towards Scott, but the ants wanted to keep following Peter.

“No!” Peter exclaimed. “You’re free! Go away!”

The two small ants quickly turned around and ran towards the park entrance. Peter sank to the ground in relief.
Scott, meanwhile, started screaming at Hank. “YOU’RE TELLING ME YOU HAD THOSE THINGS THE WHOLE TIME?!”

Hank waved him off. “Details.”

“DETAILS?! THEY COULD HAVE KILLED ME!”

“Eh, it builds character.”

“Hang on,” Shuri asked, “why didn’t you use those things on Fido?”

“Because,” Hank said, “I only have two, and these were the only two bullet ants to escape the lab.”

“Which is why,” Scott seethed, “you should have given them to me!” He looked at Hope. “Are you going to say anything here?”

Hope held up her hands. “Nope. Did Luis catch the last two ants?”

Scott nodded, still glaring at Hank, who had taken a great interest in a nearby tree. “Yeah, he got them. He’s meeting us at the…” He stopped, finally taking in the fact that four teenagers were standing in front of him. “He’s meeting us at the place…with the thing…”

“Dude, we clearly know,” MJ smirked, gesturing to herself and her friends. “No need to be all vague.”

“Actually,” Hope smirked, “you already know this one.” She pointed at Peter.

Scott raised his brows as he looked Peter over. “I do?”

Peter held out his hand. “Peter Parker. We met at the, um, airport,” he said, trying to avoid the word ‘Germany’.

Scott wrinkled his nose. “Airport? Oh, OH! The airport!” He gave an exaggerated wink and shook Peter’s hand. “Which one were you?”

“Spiderman.”

Scott’s eyes widened. “I remember you! You did the things with the webs! That was so cool!”

“You’re not mad?” Peter asked, shocked.

Scott shook his head. “Nah, it was pretty awesome. Even though you sided with Stark.” Hank coughed. “Right,” Scott said, “no mentioning Stark. Why are you in San Francisco?”

“We’re here with her brother,” Peter replied, pointing to Shuri. “King T’Challa.”

Scott nodded thoughtfully. “Ohhhh, the Black Panther guy. Tell him I said hi! And no hard feelings.” All Peter could do was nod.

“Well,” Shuri said slowly, “as exciting as this has been, we really need to go.”

“Are you sure we can’t test your powers out?” Hank asked Peter. “We could learn so much-”

“Hank, enough,” Hope said sternly. “One problem at a time.”

Hank sighed. “Fine. We can give you a ride back.”
MJ pulled out her phone and quickly tapped on the screen. “Actually,” she said, “we’re not too far from where we need to be. We can just walk.”

“You sure?” Scott asked.

The teens nodded quickly, ready to create some distance between their new acquaintances. “We’re good,” Peter said. “Have fun figuring all this stuff out.”

Scott saluted him. “Well Spiderman, until we fight again!” Hope shoved his shoulder. “I mean,” he said, his voice taking on a more authoritative tone, “hopefully we NEVER fight again. Because fighting is bad. And teenagers should not be fighting. Stay in school.” He grinned at Hope. “Better?”

She rolled her eyes. “Let’s go.”

“If you change your mind…” Hank said.

“HANK!”


Ned gave him a thumbs up. “No problem dude.”

Shuri and MJ waved goodbye as the adults headed back to their van.

Once they were out of sight, Peter let out a huge exhale. “Well that was-”

“Weird,” MJ said.

“Interesting,” Shuri added.

“Insane!” Ned exclaimed. “Dude, huge ants! And you can talk to ants!” He crossed his arms and looked at Peter suspiciously. “When I asked if you could summon a horde of spiders, you said no.”

Peter shook his head. “Well, I didn’t actually test that theory out,” he admitted. “That was so crazy though.” He started walking on the path, and the others followed him. “But, like, so cool at the same time.”

“Crazy and cool is just another day for us,” Shuri said, nudging his shoulder.

Peter grinned at her.

“You’ve got that right.”
Chapter Notes

Tony normally gets all of the good heart-to-hearts, so I felt like T'Challa deserved something too. Plus, he is The Best (TM) big bro :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The group dropped Ned’s bag off at the house and met T’Challa at a gorgeous restaurant not far from the south side of the Golden Gate Bridge. The Commissary looked like a rustic Spanish-style home, but it stretched across a huge plot of land. T’Challa had managed to get a table for all five of them, despite the crowded dining room. Being a king did sometimes have its perks.

After stuffing themselves with fish, chicken, and short ribs, the teens couldn’t resist filling their dessert stomachs with the restaurant’s famous chocolate churros. While they ate, Ned caught T’Challa and his friends up on his adventures from the summer so far.

“Did you guys do anything interesting today after you picked Ned up?” T’Challa asked.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ looked at each other warily.

“Well,” Shuri said, “we helped somebody catch their missing pets today.”

“Really?” T’Challa asked. “That was nice of you.”

Ned nodded. “Yeah, the owner was super weird.”

“Definitely a little loco,” MJ added, waving her finger around in a circle near her ear.

Peter just gave a small smile as he continued to attack his churro. He had been thinking all through dinner, and his quietness did not go unnoticed by T’Challa.

After the king paid the bill, they all walked towards the Golden Gate Bridge.

“I’m sooooo stuffed,” Shuri complained as she hopped up onto the bridge’s walkway.

“Then a walk will do you well,” T’Challa smirked.

“Ugh, sleep would do me well,” MJ groaned.

“It’s only 1.7 miles,” T’Challa said.

“Round trip?” Ned asked hopefully.

T’Challa shook his head. “Each way.”

“What?!”

Despite their complaining, Shuri, MJ, and Ned walked ahead as T’Challa hung back with Peter. T’Challa looked out over the water.
“Beautiful, isn’t it?” he asked.

“Wakanda is way prettier than this,” Peter replied.

T’Challa smiled. “True, but America does have its nice qualities. There are no bridges like this in Wakanda.”

“Fair enough,” Peter admitted, glancing out at the horizon. Since it was summer, the daylight lasted longer, but the sky was beginning to take on an orange hue as the sun prepared to sleep for the night.

“You’ve been awfully quiet since dinner,” T’Challa noted. “Is everything okay?”

Peter thought for a moment before answering. “How did you know about your powers? Like, what kind of powers you have?”

T’Challa looked up at the sky. “Well,” he said, “a lot of it comes from the legend that has been passed down from generations. It’s not exactly a secret.”

“Do you ever test yourself for your powers?” Peter asked.

“Sure,” T’Challa replied. “Physical tests are part of the routine. It’s what helps Shuri design my technology. So it compliments my powers.” He glanced at Peter. “Has something happened with your abilities?”

Peter shrugged. “Not really,” he admitted. “I guess I just realized I’ve never actually done a lot of tests on my actual powers.”

T’Challa hummed thoughtfully. “And you came to this conclusion today? Doing normal sightseeing stuff?” He looked at Peter slyly. “And rescuing ants?”

Peter looked up sharply. “How did you…?”

“There was a local news report about large ants roaming the streets,” T’Challa said. “Apparently, someone dressed up their dogs and let them get loose without their leashes.” He smirked. “At least, that is what they say.”

Peter cleared his throat. “Well, uh, we technically didn’t lie…”

T’Challa chuckled. “I’m not angry. I worry about you four, but I trust you to be safe. For the most part. Besides, you all seem to attract craziness. Considering who lives out this way, I’m not completely surprised that you ran into each other.”

Peter sighed with relief. “Oh! Scott Lang says hi. And there’s no hard feelings.”

“Lang is an interesting character,” T’Challa admitted. “He was quite a challenge.” He paused and leaned against the railing. “Listen, Peter, if you have questions about your powers, maybe you should talk to Tony. He’s been helping you since the beginning and might have more answers than I do.”

Peter took a deep breath, inhaling the salty ocean air. “Okay,” he nodded. “Thanks.”

“T’Challa!”

Peter and T’Challa turned to find MJ, Ned, and Shuri waving at them. Peter jogged over to his friends while T’Challa lazily caught up.
“Yes?” he asked.

Shuri pointed down the bridge. “Can you see what that sign says?”

T’Challa squinted his eyes and stared at the neon orange diamond sitting off the side of the walkway. “I think it says ‘Road Work Ahead’.”

“Ah, yeah, I sure hope it does!” all four teens exclaimed without any hesitation. They erupted into giggles, clutching their still full stomachs. T’Challa, meanwhile, just rolled his eyes.

“Why…” he said softly. “What did I do to deserve this torture?”

Shuri wrapped her arms around her brother. “Awww, you know you love us.”

“The moment is fleeting,” T’Challa said. He pointed over the water. “Look, there it goes. The moment is gone.”

But he was smiling nonetheless.

Peter couldn’t sleep.

After walking across the Golden Gate Bridge and back again, he should have been as tired as his friends considering the epic jet lag they were experiencing. But he kept replaying the conversation with T’Challa over and over in his head about his powers. He sighed, accepting that sleep wasn’t coming any time soon. His fingers tapped against his chest until he couldn’t take the restlessness anymore. He grabbed his phone off the charger and carefully tiptoed out on the balcony.

The sky was pitch black, but the moon shone brightly over the distant water. Peter watched the calm, glassy surface as a slight breeze ruffled his hair. He took a deep breath and dialed a number he knew by heart.

Tony Stark answered on the third ring. “Hullo?” he said sleepily.

Peter cursed himself for forgetting about the time difference. It was almost 3am New York time. “I’m so sorry Tony!” he exclaimed. “I didn’t mean to wake you up!”

“Peter?” Tony asked. Peter heard rustling in the background. “You’re good, kid, I’m up. Just working in my lab.”

“You sure?”

“Positive,” Tony replied. “What’s going on?”

Peter swallowed thickly. “How come...how come you’ve never tested me?”

Tony yawned on the other line. “I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Well, we’ve tested my suit. A lot. And made upgrades to it. But we’ve never tested...me. My powers. How come?”

“Cause you’re still a kid,” Tony exhaled. “You don’t need to be poked and prodded right now.” He
paused, and for a moment, the two were silent. “What’s on your mind?” Tony asked gently.

“I can talk to ants,” Peter said. “They listen to what I tell them to do. And I had no idea that I could even do that. And it’s making me wonder how much I don’t know about my powers.”

“You can talk to ants?” Tony asked incredulously. “How did you figure that out?”

So Peter told him everything. About Hank Pym, the huge ants, and meeting Scott Lang. Tony waited patiently on the other end of the line until Peter was done with his story.

“Hank Pym, huh?” Tony said. “Heard he’s a bit of a nut. My father didn’t have too high an opinion of him.”

“If it makes you feel better,” Peter said, “he didn’t seem to care for you very much either.”

Tony chuckled. “That doesn’t surprise me. So Pym offered to run tests on you for the whole talking to ants thing?” Tony asked.

“Yeah,” Peter replied.

Tony thought for a few moments and then took a deep breath. “Listen, Peter, if you want to run tests when you come back, that’s fine. We can do blood tests, strength tests, endurance tests, whatever you want without the suit.”

“Yeah?” Peter asked hopefully. “You don’t mind?”

“Of course not,” Tony replied. “Now, as for talking to ants, I can test you to figure out why that’s happening. But-and as much as I hate to admit this-I’m not the expert on all that. I love a good neuroscience problem, but Hank Pym does have a bit more experience with that stuff.” He pretended to gag. “Ugh, I just said something nice about Pym. Now I’ve gotta go disinfect my mouth.”

Peter let out a short laugh. “So you think I should let him test me?”

“I think you need to do what feels right to you. If that means getting answers from Pym right now, sure. I’m not crazy about him, but he can be a good scientist. If that means waiting until you come back to New York, that’s fine too.”

Peter nodded, even though Tony couldn’t see him. “Okay,” he finally said. “Thanks Tony.”

“Of course,” Tony replied. “Let me know how it goes? And kick his ass if he annoys you.” Peter shouldn’t have been shocked that Tony seemed to read his mind, but his mentor’s accuracy still managed to surprise him.


“Night Peter.”

“Night Tony.”

Tony ended the phone call and flopped back down against his soft pillow. He groaned and tossed the cell phone on his night stand.

Pepper pulled the covers off of her head and smirked at her husband. “You were awake working in the lab, huh?” she asked cheekily.

“He would’ve felt bad,” Tony mumbled, his eyes drooping. “Jus’ a little white lie.” He turned on his
side and pulled Pepper close to him, breathing in the scent of her hair and wrapping his arm around her waist.

Pepper smiled as Tony’s breathing evened out as he fell back asleep in seconds. She laced her fingers through his and squeezed gently.

“You’re a good man, Tony Stark,” she whispered as he snored lightly against her neck.

“And someday soon you’re going to be a great father.”

Chapter End Notes

:D ;)
Hey, friends! On Sunday I’m leaving for a family camp through my church. It’s in the woods and has absolutely no cell service or wifi. So, I won’t be updating for a week after Sunday’s chapter (I’m going to post early in the morning before I leave b/c it’s Luis’ chapter, and I can’t wait for you to read it).

Also, as for the lovely little cliffhanger at the end of last night’s chapter, you will get answers to that in chapter 27. Be warned...there will be lots of tooth-rotting fluff. Make your dentist appointments now lol.

When Scott Lang opened his front door the next morning, he was not expecting to see four grinning teenagers at his doorstep. But, it didn’t mean he wasn’t happy to see them.

“Hey!” he exclaimed, opening the door wide so they could come inside. “You came back! Wait, how did you find me?”

Ned raised his hand. “I hacked around until I found your address. It didn’t take long.”

Scott raised his brows, impressed with the information. “Well that’s-” He got cut off as a loud cymbal crashed from the other room. Intense drumming quickly filled the house.

“What IS THAT?” Shuri shouted over the noise.

Scott covered his ears and ran to the back hall. “CHARLIE!” he yelled. “ENOUGH!”

Peter, Ned, Shuri, and MJ followed him and found another huge ant sitting at an electric drum set.

“What the hell?!” MJ yelped. “Your ant plays drums?!”

Scott nodded and unplugged the cord from the wall. The sound was quickly muted, and Charlie looked down at the drums sadly.

“Charlie, we’ve talked about this,” Scott lectured. “We don’t need to keep playing anymore. Go wake Cassie up please. If your banging didn’t already do it that is!”

Charlie scooted off his stool and scurried upstairs. MJ and Ned flattened themselves against the wall to give him a wide berth.

“You can talk to the ants again?” Peter asked.

Scott pointed to his ear. “Yeah, Hank fixed the ear pieces last night, thank god. Charlie is pretty tame on his own, but he was starting to get into everything.” He peeked around the corner. “Do me a favor and don’t go into the kitchen.”

He disappeared back into the living room, and as soon as he was gone, the group dashed around the corner. The kitchen looked like the scene from a cafeteria food fight. Bags of chips and pretzels were spilled all over the ground, and cabinets had their contents dragged across the floor.
“An ant did this?” Shuri whispered.

Peter picked up on a footsteps from the hall. “Quick! He’s coming!”

They managed to sneak back around before Scott noticed anything amiss. Except now he wasn’t alone. A little girl stood next to him, her brown hair pulled back with a headband. She stared at them curiously.

“Are these your new partners, Daddy?” she asked, looking up at Scott.

Scott shook his head. “No, Cassie, they’re just my friends. This is...uh…” He looked guiltily to the teens. “I actually don’t know your names,” he admitted sheepishly. “Except for him.” He pointed to Peter.

“I’m Shuri,” Shuri said.

“Ned.”

“MJ.”

Cassie stared curiously. “How can you be friends with them if you don’t know their names?”

“It’s a long story Peanut,” Scott replied quickly. “We’ve gotta go, your mom and Paxton will be here soon.” He waved the quad over. “C’mon, let’s wait outside and then I can take you to Hank’s lab. That’s where you want to go, right?”


As they walked to the front of the house, Cassie smiled proudly. “My daddy is the best magician in the whole world!” she proclaimed proudly.

“I don’t know about that one, kid,” MJ replied. “We know a pretty cool magician too.”

“He’s actually a Master of the Mystic Arts,” Shuri corrected.

Cassie shook her head. “Daddy is better, trust me.” She opened the door and stepped out onto the front stoop. “Show them!”

Scott held out his empty, open palm and smirked as he flicked his wrist. An ace of spades suddenly appeared in his hand. He turned the card over with his fingertips and snapped his wrist again. Suddenly, the card was gone.

Shuri’s eyes widened. “What!!”

Scott reached out and placed his hand behind Ned’s head. When he pulled it back out again, the ace of spades was back in his hand. Ned felt the back of his head suspiciously for more cards.

“Do it again,” MJ commanded, while Peter gaped at Scott with wide eyes.

So, for the next ten minutes, Scott entertained all five kids with his magic tricks. The older ones kept trying to figure out his secret, but Scott wasn’t giving anything away.

A car pulled up just as Scott was finishing up another trick. He had Peter pick a card from the deck. He showed his friends the ten of diamonds before placing it back in the deck. Scott shuffled the cards and fanned them out.
“Pick a card,” he told Peter.

Peter reached out and chose a random card from the left side of the pile.

“Is that your card?” Scott asked.

Peter held up a seven of clubs and shook his head. “Nope.”

“Aww, man!” Scott groaned, looking dejected.

“Mommy!” Cassie exclaimed, running towards a woman with red. A man with coiffed brown hair followed her over to Scott.

“Hi Maggie. Paxton,” Scott said, waving at the two.

Maggie looked at the four teens, who were also waving. “Friends of yours?” she asked Scott.


Paxton looked at Scott suspiciously. “They don’t have anything to do with the large ant sighting from yesterday, do they?” he asked.

“You mean the dressed up dogs?” Shuri asked.

MJ whistled. “Those costumes were epic!”

Paxton blinked at them. “That’s how your gonna play it?”

Ned shrugged. “Play what?”

“Everyone knows ants are tiny,” Peter added.

“Uh huh,” Paxton replied slowly. He shook his head. “Just stay out of trouble, please!” he begged Scott. “You just got your bracelet off, remember?”

Scott whistled. “Oh trust me, I remember.” He knelt down and gave Cassie a big hug. “See you soon, Peanut,” he promised.

“Bye, Daddy!” she called as she began walking back to Maggie’s car.

“Oh, Paxton!” Scott yelled. “Hang on, you took something of mine!” He ran over to the other man and pulled something out of his jacket pocket. He held up a ten of diamonds. “Peter, was this your card?”

“What? How? Huh?!” Peter exclaimed, running over to Scott and grabbing the card. “How did you…?”

“No way!” Shuri yelped. She took the card from Peter’s hand and examined it for any sort of trick.

“Dude,” MJ whistled appreciatively.

“He wasn’t even near him!” Ned exclaimed. “How the heck?”

Cassie smiled up at Peter, who was still dumbfounded. “Told you!”

Maggie just shook her head while Paxton yanked out his pocket, trying to figure out how the card had gotten in there. “How does he do that?” Peter heard him whisper as he walked back to the car.
Scott grinned mischievously as Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned continued to fawn over the card.

“You guys ready to go?”

Scott drove the teens just outside the city limits to a winding road in the woods. He parked in front of a huge square building that had no business being plopped in the middle of a grove of trees.

“Hang on,” Shuri said, stepping out of the car. “Is that...the model from the car?”

“That wasn’t a model,” Scott replied. He shut his door and led the way inside the building. “Hank can shrink it down and take it wherever he needs to go.”

“Cool,” breathed Ned.

Scott expertly navigated his way through the colossal building until they came to Hank’s lab. He was hunched over a table while Hope was standing in the middle of what looked to be a huge tube. But what surprised the teens the most was the ants.

At least fifteen ants were working efficiently moving pieces of equipment from one part of the lab to another. Some scurried up the scaffolding around the tube while others worked together on the floor. Thankfully, Peter couldn’t see any bullet ants nearby.

“Hey Hank!” Scott exclaimed, opening the large glass door into the lab. “Look who came back!”

Hank glanced up and then did a double take as he saw Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ. He broke into a wide smile and held out his arms. “You changed your minds! Hope! Come here a second!”

Hope stepped out of the tube and smiled warmly at the teens. “Hello!” she said brightly as she walked over. “You came back!”

“Hi,” they said shyly.

“So,” Hank said to Peter, “can I run those tests on you?”

Peter shuffled his feet nervously. “What kinds of tests were you thinking?” he asked.

Hank hummed thoughtfully. “I want to analyze your brain and brain waves. I’ve been thinking about it all night, and that might explain a lot. We could also look at your blood.” Peter balked at the idea of needles, something that did not go unnoticed by Hank. “Or we can just stick to your brain.”

Peter looked at his friends, who were smiling in support.

“Whatever you wanna do, man,” MJ said.

“We’ve got your back,” Ned added.

Shuri grinned. “I can use whatever research we do to help improve your tech.” She looked sternly at Hank. “I do expect to get copies of all the data you collect today.”

Hope bit back a smile as Hank floundered at Shuri’s direct request. “Well, uh, of course! I can give you the files.”
She smiled sweetly at him. “Awesome!”

Peter cleared his throat. “Everything sounds good. But no blood test.” He thought of his conversation with Tony from the night before. “I want to save that for when I get back to New York.”

Hank nodded and rubbed his hands together.

“Perfect! Let’s get started.”
Peter had lived the last two years of his life thinking that Tony Stark, T’Challa, and Shuri were the only ones with incredible technology and labs. However, he was pleasantly surprised to learn that Hank Pym could easily keep up with them.

First, his lab was impressive. As he gave a tour of the lab and prepared for Peter’s tests, they learned that the tube Hope was standing in was actually a portal to the quantum realm. Hope briefly explained the mechanics of the quantum realm. The Pyms were using the large model to create a smaller, more portable scale.

“Holy cow,” Shuri whispered to Peter. “And I thought going into space was cool.”

“What’s the purpose of the quantum realm?” MJ asked.

“Purpose?” Hank repeated. “It’s not that it has a purpose. It exists, but we have no clear understanding of it. That’s why we research.”

“Is it dangerous?” Ned questioned.

Hope nodded. “Sure. There’s tons of microorganisms that exist in the very base levels of the quantum realm.”

“Plus,” Scott added, “you lose all sense of time and reality down there. If you’re not careful, you can forget you even exist.”

Peter raised his brow at all this information. “Wow,” was all he could say.

“Wow is right,” Scott replied with a smile. Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned decided they liked Scott. Sure, he had been on the opposing side in Peter’s fight, but he was nice. And, he was an adult that didn’t quite act like an adult. Not that they knew anybody else like that.

Hank stopped in front of a lab bench and pulled out a container. He sat it on top of the bench and took out a large hat made of wires and electrodes.

“So,” he explained, “I’m going to hook this up to a monitor and we’re going to put it on your head. As you try and communicate with the ants, it’ll pick up your brain waves. Sound good?”

Peter nodded, and Scott helped Hank put the cap over his head. Hank connected the wires to a flat screen monitor he pulled out from some corner of the room, and soon, the machine was alive and buzzing. Ned, Shuri, and MJ stood off to the side.

“Bring one of the ants in here,” Hank ordered Scott. “Do you mind looking for a few more insects outside?” he asked Hope.

Hope shook her head. “Not at all,” she replied. She quickly left the lab and disappeared down the hall.

Scott came back in with a light brown ant trailing behind. “I present to you Alexander HamiltANT,” he said proudly.
Hank rolled his eyes while the teens giggled uncontrollably. “I swear to God,” he muttered.

Peter felt his shoulders loosen as Scott winked at him. He took a deep breath and smiled back at the superhero.

“Okay,” Hank said, tapping the monitor, “I want you to tell the ant-”


“-Alexander HamiltANT,” Hank said through gritted teeth, “to go up to the counter and pull the box off.”

“Out loud or in my head?” he asked.

“We’ll try out loud first,” Hank decided.

Peter nodded. “Please take the box off the counter,” he told Alexander HamiltANT.

With only a moment’s hesitation, the ant walked right over to the lab bench and stood up on its hind legs. It pulled the open box down with ease.

“Oh my god,” Hank whispered. He turned to MJ, Shuri, and Ned. “Can you record this?”

MJ pulled out her phone while Ned and Shuri looked at the monitor. “Try telling it to put it back,” Shuri said slowly. “But don’t talk.” Hank was so amazed by the results that he didn’t even get mad at Shuri for taking over his test.

Peter closed his eyes and focused. “Please put the box back,” he thought.

“Are you seeing this?” he heard Shuri whisper to Ned.

“Those spikes are crazy!” his friend replied.

When Peter opened his eyes, Alexander HamiltANT was just hopping off the counter, the box placed neatly in the middle.

“Cool,” he gasped, feeling quite proud of himself.

Hope had come back in the lab with a jar full of other bugs. Her hand covered in mouth in awe as she carefully passed the jar to MJ’s free hand.

“You up for more?” Scott asked.

Peter nodded. “Let’s do this,” he replied confidently.

Almost two hours passed before Hank called it quits on the tests. A thin layer of sweat coated Peter’s body, and he eagerly gulped down three bottles of water that Scott passed to him from a small mini fridge. Ned handed him some granola bars he had swiped from the rental house earlier that morning.

Shuri and Hank were pouring over the print out sheets of data while MJ played back some of the videos she had taken. At one point, Ned had gotten to wear the earpieces and electrode cap to
provide some baseline data. He was thrilled to be controlling the ants, and he even got one to try and do the Cupid Shuffle across the lab floor. Scott and Hope had cracked up, while Hank seemed to question his life choices.

Hope had collected a spider, centipede, and ladybug from the woods outside. She used the same disks that shrunk the bullet ants to make the bugs larger. Peter had been able to give commands to every single one. The spider seemed the most responsive to the commands, following them faster than the ants had. It was as if it had known what Peter was going to think before he thought it. The centipede and ladybug also responded, but nowhere near as quickly. He got a few laughs in trying to get the centipede to follow MJ and Shuri around the lab. Only when they threatened to zap his brain did he back off.

Finally, Hank had used a small machine to take scans of Peter’s brain while he was making commands and while he was just resting.

Peter sighed and leaned back in the chair. He couldn’t wait to tell Tony about what he had been able to do.

“Okay,” Hank finally said. “I think I’ve got some answers for you.”

Peter sat back up, and the teens listened eagerly as Hank began to explain his theory.

He held up one of the earpieces. “This uses electromagnetic waves to communicate with the ants,” he explained. “Those waves stimulate the ants’ olfactory nerve center. Their sense of smell, if you will. Your brain waves match the waves that Ned created when he used the earpiece. But, yours are stronger, and you obviously weren’t using the tech. Somehow, your brain is creating these strong electromagnetic waves on its own and sending them out.”

Peter’s eyes widened. “Is that safe?” he asked.

Hank pulled out some of the scans Hope had taken. “Your brain looks entirely normal,” he observed, showing Peter the pictures. “No growths, no abnormalities.”

“But he’s only been using his insect speak powers for less than a day,” MJ noted. “Could it have long term effects?”

Hank hummed thoughtfully. “I wouldn’t be a good scientist if I said it wasn’t possible for negative effects to occur over prolonged use.” He looked at the scans again. “However, I put you through the ringer today, kid. You would expect some type of change if it was an extremely negative effect.” He pointed to the lit up areas of Peter’s brain from when he had been giving commands. “Based on how our brains work, these results are consistent with the pulses you’ve been putting out.”

“So,” Ned said, “he’s normal for being...not normal?”

Hank smirked. “Exactly.”

Peter felt a weight lift off his chest. Just having this knowledge was enough to put his mind at ease.

“Do you still have the spider that bit you?” Hope asked. Peter shook his head.

Hank sighed. “Well, it would have been interesting to see what kind of radiation was in the spider. Oh well. But,” he added, holding up his finger, “that explains why the spider responded so well compared to the others. Your brain is probably hardwired to talk to them the most. Spiders and ants belong to different branches of the animal kingdom, so you would think your abilities would only work on one but not the other. But clearly, that’s not the case.”
Shuri’s eyes glistened as she squealed. “We are going to have so much fun with your powers! Just imagine the look on T’Challa’s face when—” Hank raised his brow at her, and she calmed down and adopted a serious tone. “I mean, we will use these powers responsibly, of course.” But, when Hank’s back was turned, she gave Peter and thumbs up and a wink.

“Well hey,” Scott said, clapping Peter’s shoulder. “You learned a lot about yourself today, huh?”

Peter nodded and turned to his friends. “I can talk to insects! And spiders!” he exclaimed with a huge smile.

“Right?!?” Ned whooped. “How epic is that?!”

Shuri was already making notes. “We can incorporate something in your suit to help direct the waves! Imagine the potential in battles!”

MJ waved her phone at Peter. “I’ll make sure I send these to you so you can show Tony when we get back,” she promised.

Peter held his hand out to Hank. “Thanks for doing all this,” he said sincerely. “I really appreciate it.”

Hank gave Peter his first genuine smile and returned the handshake. “Of course,” he replied. “It’s for my benefit too, to be honest. I can use this data to help me with my own research.” He rummaged through one of his lab bench drawers and pulled out a flash drive. He quickly copied all of the scans and brain wave files over and tossed the small device to Peter.

“Thanks,” Peter repeated.

“No problem,” Hank replied. He leaned closer to Peter. “Now, I know you want to do your own tests back in New York. If I were to run more tests on you, I would definitely get some blood samples to see how the radiation affected your cells.” He stepped back and shrugged. “But that’s just an opinion of an old man.”

“Sounds like a good opinion to me,” Peter said with a smile. He made a mental note to get Tony to do exactly what Hank had said when he got home.

Shuri looked hopefully at the quantum realm tube. “Are you sure we can’t explore that before we—”

“NO!” all of the adults yelled emphatically.

Shuri rolled her eyes. “Fine,” she grumbled.

Scott laughed and clapped his hands together. “Let me drive you back,” he said.

Peter, Shuri, Ned and MJ waved goodbye to Hank and Hope before following Scott back outside to his car.

“SHOTGUN!” Shuri shouted, rushing over to the passenger side door.

“Hey!” Peter exclaimed, running after her, trying to push her out of the way. She managed to land a good poke in the ribs right where he was ticklish, and he jolted away with a laugh.

“Not fair!” Ned cried.

Shuri stuck her tongue out at him while she climbed in the front seat as the others squished into the back.
“Where am I taking you?” Scott laughed as they settled down.

“T’Challa is stuck in meetings until dinner again,” Shuri replied. “So we have the rest of the afternoon free.”

“Any recommendations?” MJ asked.

Scott drummed his fingers on the steering wheel as he racked his brain for ideas. His shoulders started to wiggle, and his drumming got more intense the more he got into it. Shuri looked back at the others with an incredulous smile.

“What the hell?” she mouthed as Scott began humming a rock tune.

“Scott!” Peter exclaimed.

Scott shook his head like a dog shaking off water. “Sorry! Yes! Ideas!” He turned around. “I know something really awesome that you should definitely do in San Francisco.”

“Are you going to come with us?” Ned asked.

“You should!” Shuri said excitedly.

Scott gave the teens a wide grin. “Alright, yeah! But if we’re going to do it, we’re going to do it right. So, we’ve gotta pick up my friend first. You’ll love him. Better than any tour guide you’ll ever meet.”

“Sounds good,” Peter said. “Where are we going?”

Scott put the car in reverse and began backing down the forest road. He met Peter’s eyes in the rearview mirror and gave the teen a mischievous grin.

“We’re going to Alcatraz!”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so most of this science is factual, but I took liberties with some of it :)
Hank Pym was eccentric. Scott Lang was a child trapped in an adult’s body. Scott’s friend, Luis, however, was on an entirely different plane of existence.

The jovial fast-talker was more than willing to be the tour guide for the impromptu trip to Alcatraz. He was practically bouncing on his feet by the time Scott and the teens pulled up to the dock. The only way to get to Alcatraz was by ferry, and the teens quickly bought tickets at the ticket counter while Scott chatted with Luis.

“Listen, man,” Luis said, “you know I love you, but we gotta fix our little ant problem. Those two nearly messed up my seats in the van!”

Scott scoffed. “Your van is a piece of junk! They couldn’t have done that much damage.”

Luis gasped dramatically and put his hand over his heart. “I know you didn’t just insult my baby!”

“It’s an eyesore!”

“Hey,” Luis said, pointing his finger at Scott. “That van picked you up from jail.”

Scott sighed. “I know-”

“And!” Luis continued emphatically. “That van saved your illicit behind when you needed a quick getaway!”

“Okay, okay…”

“And! It picked up two sorry-looking ants that could have easily been my mom’s cousin’s boyfriend’s Labradoodles.”

Scott held up his hands in defeat. “Okay! I’m sorry! It’s a good van!”

Luis nodded his head in satisfaction. “You bet it is!”

“Oh my god,” MJ whispered to her friends. “This is going to be insane.”

“This is going to be insane.”

“Insanely cool or just insane?” Ned whispered back.

“Probably both,” Peter replied while Shuri snickered.

A large horn sounded, and they all turned to find the ferry preparing to dock. Scott and Luis led them to the front of the line, and once the walkway opened, they headed on board. Luis skipped right past the covered sitting area and went straight towards the front of the boat. The teens snapped a few pictures together and then tried to zoom in and get some pictures of Alcatraz itself. Clouds had begun to fill up the sky, and thunder rolled in the distance.
“Spooky, right?” Luis said, raising his brows. “This island always gives me major creepy vibes, ya know what I’m sayin’?”

“We’ve literally never been here before,” MJ deadpanned.

“Well trust me,” Luis said, “you’re about to find out why they call this place Dead Man Walking Island.”

Scott shook his head. “No one calls it that!” He looked to the teens. “Literally, no one calls it that.”

“Hey, man,” Luis insisted, “if you knew what I knew…”

“What do you know?” Peter asked.

Luis motioned for the teens to come closer, so they formed a semi-circle around him. “Alright, so the year is 1775 and some wack Spanish explorer called Juan Manuel de Ayala was just chilling on some boat, right? And he sees the island and goes ‘dammnn there’s a lot of pelicans here!’ and he names it La Isla de los Alcatraces. Cause Alcatraces means pelicans, you feel me? So, like, word gets around that there’s this super creepy island full of pelicans, and President Fillmore gave permission for the military to use it. Well, look, when you get the military involved, all sorts of crazy things start happening. Cause he’s like, ‘yo we definitely to put the biggest and baddest criminals here, right?’ Who’s gonna mess with an island full of pelicans in the middle of the rough ocean?”

The teens stared at each other in awe as Luis spit out his information without barely taking a breath. They hadn’t even noticed that the boat was moving towards Alcatraz itself because they were so engrossed in his story. He gripped Peter and Ned’s shoulders and leaned in like he was about to tell a secret.

“So then you get the Civil War, right? Like, the actual civil war, not the superhero civil war. Anyway, so there’s all these people committing treason and sympathizing with the Confederates, so they get captured and sent here. But then it, like, fills to the seams with people, so they gotta build more, right? And they add a mess hall, more prison rooms, cause obviously there’s gonna be more prisoners, and then a hospital. This joint was the biggest reinforced concrete building by 1912!”

He let go of their shoulders and laughed. “And don’t even get me started on the people who got sent here! Ol’ Scarface himself got sent here because he kept talking to his peeps while he was in jail in Atlanta! But the higher ups, they know better, so they send his butt to Alcatraz. Ain’t no one to talk to here but some pelicans! Capone couldn’t get word out and his operations stalled for the whole four years he was sent here. And then you’ve got Alvin Karpowicz aka Creepy Alvin aka Public Enemy Number ONE! That dude spent the longest here at 25 years! Can you imagine chilling on an island for 25 years with nothing but crappy food and your thoughts?! It’d be enough to drive anyone loco.”

“Did anyone ever escape?” Shuri asked quickly while Luis paused to take a breath.

Luis laughed. “Escape? Listen, if some idiot ever managed to break out of their cell they took one look at the ocean and said ‘nah, fam, I’m out’ and they’d go running back in. The idiots who actually tried either drowned thinking ‘damn I shoulda just stayed inside’ or they got shot. There was this one big breakout attempt though. Oh man, that was an intense one. These six baddies tried to take over the jail, and it almost worked but they forgot to get the keys. Now you tell me how smart it is to try and break out of jail without the dang keys to leave the front door? Those fools got their butts whupped by the U.S. Marshals before they could sing “La Cucaracha”.

“How come it closed?” Peter asked. “Too many people died trying to escape?”
Luis shook his head. “Nah, man! Why does anything close?” He held out his left hand and rubbed the tips of his fingers together. “Dough! Green! Denaro! Money! They went broke. It cost too much to run this joint, plus all the buildings kept crumbling from the salty air. Erosion and all that. So they closed. And now it’s a museum.”

“So do you know all this stuff because you really like history?” Ned asked.

“What?” Luis scoffed. “No!” He ducked his head down a bit and lowered his voice. “I used to be in the business of extraction of goods. Now I’m legit though. But, like, pre-legit times, I used to research about other people who were also in the extraction business. They needed escape plans, you know? So why not study the ones who escaped from here?”

MJ blinked slowly. “But...you just said none of them escaped.”

Luis snapped his fingers. “Exactly! So if you study that, then you know what not to do!”

Scott wrapped his arm around Luis’s shoulder. “This guy was the best in the extraction business,” he said proudly.

“But, now I’m legit,” Luis repeated proudly. “And Scotty here’s legit too!”

“Sometimes,” Scott corrected with a smirk.

The boat slowed down as it prepared to dock at Alcatraz. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ hopped off as soon as it stopped, with Luis and Scott following closely behind. Walking into Alcatraz was like walking back in time. Paint peeled off of walls, and tiles had been missing from the floor for decades.

Luis continued to spout off fact after fact as they walked through the hospital first. It sketched Peter out to see the sheets and blankets still hanging off the rickety metal beds. He couldn’t imagine how creepy this place would be at night.

The prison cells themselves were claustrophobic. There was hardly enough room for the twin-sized mattress pushed up against the side of the cell and the tiny sink and toilet stuck to the wall. Ned gulped as he looked at some of the stains on the bed.

“Do you think that’s...blood?” he whispered to Peter.

“Oh yeah,” Luis whispered, sticking his head right between Peter and Ned. His eyes were wide and crazed. “The guy that stayed in this cell was asleep one night when BAM!” Peter and Ned jumped as Luis clapped his hands right by their ears. “Dead! Stabbed right in the gut.”

“R-re-re-really?” Peter stuttered.

Luis busted out laughing. “Nah, man, I’m just playin’! They’re probably just stains from the leaky roof!” He pointed up, and Peter saw water stains covering the ceiling.

MJ and Shuri were cackling behind them. “You should have seen your faces!” Shuri exclaimed.

After walking through the laundry room and mess hall, the group headed back outside. The clouds looked truly ominous now, and the sky was taking on an inky black appearance. Luis stood by one of the railings and looked down.

“Scotty! Hey, Scotty!” he called, waving Scott over. “Low tide!”

Scott immediately shook his head. “Nope. No way.”
Luis gave Scott his best puppy dog eyes. “But low tide!”

“You have ZERO proof it even exists,” Scott protested.

“What exists?” MJ asked.

Luis cleared his throat. “Okay, so I was at this poetry reading with my cousin Ernesto. But it was like, grunge poetry, not that Shakespearean crap they have you read in high school or whatever. So, like, this girl with a jet black mohawk gets on stage and-”

“Wrong details, dude,” Shuri interrupted.

Luis rolled his eyes. “Yeah, okay, fine. So, Ernesto turns to me and says he got a friend whose cousin’s little brother use to work on Alcatraz, right? Doing maintenance and stuff like that. So, the brother tells the cousin, ‘Yo, dude, there’s like, a secret tunnel under Alcatraz!’ And the cousin is goes, ‘What no, way!’ So, the cousin’s son plays Little League with his friend’s son, and they get to talking one day and he tells him about this tunnel! It’s on the island, but it’s super hush hush because they don’t want tourists finding out. He was like ‘Man, it’s one of those liability things, you feel me?’ And the friend told Ernesto and Ernesto knows I love this place, right, so he tells me you can get to the tunnel from a staircase on this side of the island. But he’s all like, ‘Cuz you’ve gotta go during low tide otherwise you gonna drown!”

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ looked at each other with wide eyes.

“A secret tunnel?” Peter asked.

“Right around here?” Shuri added.

“And you said it’s low tide right now?” clarified MJ.

“Yup!” Luis nodded.

Ned looked around. “So why aren’t we looking for it?!”

“That’s what I’m sayin!” Luis exclaimed. “Scotty, these guys get it.”

Scott’s will was breaking, especially as more puppy eyes were added into the equation. He looked over the railing. The tide was really low...and there were two responsible adults...and the chances of the tunnel actually existing were slim to none...

“Fine,” he finally said. “But we’re not doing anything that gets us in trouble, got it?”

“We promise!” the others replied.

“Besides,” Luis added. “Ernesto’s friend’s cousin’s little brother said it’s not even roped off. So, like, we wouldn’t get in trouble with security anyway!”

Scott held his arms out to Luis.

“Lead the way!”

Chapter End Notes
All of the facts about Alcatraz are true (except Dead Man Walking island lol), so yay mini history lesson! :P

"See" you all next week!!
Finding the tunnel was actually easier to find than expected. Mostly because no one in their right mind would think to take some really steep metal stairs down the edge of the cliff towards the ocean. The stairs led to a metal ladder, which led to an embankment. The sand was soft and moist, and Peter felt his shoes sink down as he helped Ned step off the ladder. The ocean water lapped gently at the edge of the sand, and Peter felt small raindrops pelt his shirt. Thunder rumbled low in the distance as the sky turned murderous.

“Whoa,” Ned gasped, turning towards the wall of the cliff.

A large tunnel jutted out from the rock wall, completely empty since there was a low tide. Peter, MJ, and Ned pulled out their cell phones and turned on the flashlight mode. They couldn’t see too far into the tunnel, but something on the walls caught Shuri’s eye. She walked in while Scott and Luis argued outside.

“See, Scotty!” Luis yelled, jumping up and down. “I told you it was real!”

“Yeah, yeah,” Scott sighed. “You win. Nice tip.” He looked over and saw Shuri disappear inside the darkness. “Hey! Don’t go in there!”

“There’s something written on the walls!” she called back. Peter, MJ, and Ned followed her, leaving Scott and Luis standing in the rain.

“Crap,” Scott muttered. “C’mon.”

Ned held his phone light up against the tunnel wall. “What is that?”

“Looks like writing,” Shuri replied, leaning in for a closer look. “Most of it’s faded though.”

“Probably from the salt water,” Peter observed.

“Luis, does this whole tunnel fill up during high tide or just the entrance?” MJ asked.

Luis shrugged. “I think just the beginning part.”

Peter turned to his friends. “So maybe there’s some writing more intact farther down where the water can’t reach it.”

Shuri led the way as the others followed closely behind. Scott and Luis were too curious not to get answers themselves.

The light from outside disappeared as they walked another fifty feet down the tunnel. The walls were damp, but the writing was clear. Someone had been down here before.
“Rumor has it is that this is one of the ways people used to try and escape,” Luis said. “I bet this leads back inside!”

Ned looked closely at the wall. “Get out,” he said.

“I know, right!?” Luis exclaimed. “Crazy!”

“No,” Ned gulped, “I mean that’s what this writing says. Get out.”

“Mine says ‘There’s no escape,’” MJ read.

“Die here forever,” Shuri added. She scoffed. “Geez, these were pleasant people.”

Luis chuckled nervously. “Oh boy, that’s some creepy stuff right there.”

Something splashed back the way they came, and the teens instinctively aimed their flashlights at the entrance.

“What was that?” MJ asked.

Luis shook his head. “Nope, creepy, let’s go!”

The hair on Peter’s arms stood up. “Hang on!” he interrupted. “There’s water.”

“Obviously there’s water!” Shuri exclaimed impatiently. “We’re on an island in the middle of the ocean!”

“No,” Peter insisted. “There’s water in the tunnel!”

His friends’ eyes widened.

“There...there shouldn’t be water in the tunnel,” Ned said. The others nodded. “So then-”

Scott and Luis’ phones started blaring as an emergency signal text popped up on their screens. Scott’s face paled as he read the message.

“Storm surge,” he said. “We’ve gotta go. Now!”

They wasted no time in running. Water splashed everywhere, and it got higher and higher the closer they got to the entrance. Peter almost fell flat on his face, but Shuri managed to pull him up by his arm.

A huge crack of thunder seemed to make the entire tunnel shake. Scott leaned against the wall to keep from falling over when he got a look outside. A huge wave had formed and was heading straight for them.

“Come on!” he shouted. He ushered everyone over to the ladder, and they gripped the metal bars tightly as the wave crashed over them. The cold water was a shock to their systems, and they screamed in protest.

“WE DIDN’T DIE!” Luis shouted with joy as the wave receded.

“Gogogogogo!” Scott exclaimed.

The harsh wind carried salty water through the air that pelted their skin. MJ gripped the ladder first and climbed up quickly. Her feet slipped on the slick metal, and she cursed loudly.
Ned watched as another wave grew in the distance. “Guys!”


The wave crashed, soaking everyone to the bone, but thankfully, no one fell off. Peter, Ned, Scott, and Luis quickly climbed the ladder and followed the girls back up the staircase. Small streams of sunlight began to peek through the clouds as the rain and wind died down slightly. When they got back to the top of Alcatraz, all six of them collapsed on the ground, shivering and shaking from the cold.

“You guys okay?” Scott asked.

Peter gave him a shivery thumbs up as a reply. He quickly sat up and opened his backpack to search for the flashdrive Hank had given him. By some miracle, it managed to get wrapped up in the old granola wrappers, so there was hardly any water. His data was safe.

“L-l-let’s nev-never do that a-a-again,” Ned stuttered.

“Agreed,” MJ coughed.

Shuri sat up and looked around. The island was deserted, and she guessed people had gone inside to wait out the storm. “Luis,” she said, “I like you. But I’m never listening to your ideas again.”

“Fair enough,” Luis groaned, shaking the water droplets off his head. “But hey! Ernesto was right!”

Peter stood up and held out his hand for Scott to grab. “I think we should head back now,” Peter said with a small smile.

Scott clapped Peter’s shoulder. “I’d say so.” He grinned sheepishly. “Sorry about that.”

Peter shrugged. “It’s literally just another day for us,” he replied.

“So true,” MJ added.

“Unfortunately,” Ned said.

Shuri poked Ned’s arm. “What do you mean unfortunately? Your life would be boring without us!”

They walked away and continued to bicker, leaving Scott and Luis staring at them in awe.

“Man, to be a kid again,” Scott sighed.

Luis nodded. “Just think, in a few years, that’s gonna be Cassie!” He jogged to keep up with Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned as they headed back to the ferry launch.

Scott gulped nervously as he thought about the kind of mischief Cassie would get into in a few years. He sighed and put his head in his hands.

“Aww crap!”
Since they were going back to New York the next day, Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ said goodbye to Scott and Luis when they dropped them off at the rental house. The first thing they did when they got inside was put their wet clothes in the dryer and take showers. By the time T’Challa came back from his business meeting, they were curled up on the couch making fun of ridiculous infomercials on TV.

“What a storm!” T’Challa exclaimed as he put his things on the kitchen table. “Did you guys get caught in it?”

Peter looked at Shuri nervously. “Sort of!” he called back.

“What’s for dinner?” Shuri asked before T’Challa could bring up the rain again.

T’Challa came over to the couch and sat down on Shuri. She yelped in protest and tried pushing him off. “Well,” he said, holding Shuri’s hands away from his side. “What is a trip to San Francisco without some seafood, yes? Why don’t we go to Fisherman’s Wharf for-hey!”

Shuri managed to smack T’Challa in the head with a pillow MJ had handed her. Peter, Ned, and MJ left the siblings to duke it out while they got their shoes and wallets.

Fisherman’s Wharf was nestled right in the bay. Dusk meant that the street lights were on, but there was still a hue of a sunset now that the storm had long since passed. Cable cars traveled down the paved street while the group walked along the boardwalk.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ spotted Alcatraz across the bay. The old prison was lit up with hundreds of lights, making it look even creepier than when they had been there earlier in the day. Thankfully, T’Challa was too interested in looking for a restaurant than he was at looking at the historic site.

“How about that place?” T’Challa asked, pointing ahead.

The Wipeout Bar and Grill was a funky little restaurant with picnic benches right next to the water. The smell of seafood and french fries filled the air, and the teens all nodded enthusiastically.

The host sat them right against the railing, and Ned peered over to look at the water. A gaggle of hungry fish poked their heads above the surface, hoping for a bite to eat.

“What are you getting?” MJ asked the others as she looked through her own menu.

“Ugh, it all looks so good!” Shuri complained.

“Seafood,” T’Challa said. “Try the seafood.”

Peter pointed to a picture of fish and chips. “’Ello, mate!” he joked in a fake British accent. “I think I’ll get some fish and chips!”

“Bro,” Ned said, wrinkling his nose. “Your accent is terrible!”

MJ smirked at him. “You should never do that again.”

Shuri covered the side of her head. “Ahh! You’ve killed my ears!”

Peter just stared at T’Challa and then glared at his friends. They all busted out laughing as the waiter came to take their order. Peter did wind up getting his fish and chips, while Shuri chose a salmon salad. T’Challa ordered a shrimp and steak combo, and to round out their order, Ned and MJ split coconut shrimp and nachos.
After dinner, they spent time walking around Fisherman’s Wharf. They couldn’t resist getting a selfie with the huge crab statue in the middle of the square. MJ stopped in a souvenir shop to get a postcard for her parents. Shuri insisted on splitting a bag of saltwater taffy, and they spent almost twenty minutes deciding which combination of flavors to get.

MJ was looking around and sketching quick images when a poster caught her eye. She stopped dead in her tracks, causing the others to bump into her.

“Hey!” Peter yelped. “What was that for?”

MJ pointed at the storefront. “Check it out!”

Madame Tussauds Wax Museum had a huge promotional display featuring some of its most famous figures. Standing front and center was none other than Tony Stark himself.

“Tony has a wax figure?!” Shuri exclaimed.

“What?!” Ned gasped. “No way!”

The four turned to T’Challa expectantly. His shoulders shook as he laughed at the possibilities. “Oh, we are definitely going in,” he promised. “Do whatever you want to that statue.”

He paid the admission fee for all of them, and they made a beeline for Tony’s figure. It was wearing a classic pinstripe suit, and purple tinted sunglasses rested on the figure’s face. His expression was smug as it stared into space.

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned had a field day. They gave Tony’s figure bunny ears, pretended to scream in horror at it, and even mimicked the pose. Peter’s favorite was the one where they all stuck their tongues out and made the rock star pose with their fingers. By the time they were finished, they had to wipe the tears off their face from laughing so hard.

“We’ve gotta send him these!” Ned said, flipping through his phone.

“I can’t believe I didn’t know this existed,” Peter added, shooting a few off to Aunt May. She sent back a bunch of emojis in response to the silly pics.

T’Challa grinned as they began to walk back to the house. “I’m glad you decided to come with me,” he said sincerely. “I hope you had fun.”

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned turned around and gave T’Challa huge smiles and thumbs up.

“We did!”

Chapter End Notes

So, there is a Madame Tussauds at Fisherman's Wharf, but I made up Tony having a wax figure there. But, let's be real...he totally would! :P
Okay, peeps, this is a really exciting/nerve-wracking chapter for me. I've written and edited it about five or six times to make it go the way I want it to go. I really hope you all enjoy it! So much fluff. So much cheese. Hopefully a lot of "awwww" at the end.

As a timeline note, it is the beginning of July right now (in case anyone was wondering).

Also, I totally realize this has become a slightly Peter-centric fic for the last few chapters. It will be balanced out once the Scotland arc hits. Thanks for your patience and support!! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Why are we going to Tony’s today?” MJ groaned. “We’re supposed to be figuring out how to get to Scotland tonight!”

Peter shifted his backpack on his shoulder as he walked down the street. “Because he knows I want to test my powers, and he asked me to come today. If I told him no, he’d get suspicious!”

Shuri smirked. “He’s the worst at lying to Tony.” Peter waved her off and she flipped him the bird behind his back.

“It shouldn’t take more than a couple of hours,” Peter said. “We’ve already got brain scans. We just need to do fitness stuff and blood tests.”

“Shuri and I can brainstorm about where Captain America might be,” Ned suggested.

MJ raised her brows. “Just don’t search anything on Tony’s wifi. FRIDAY would rat you guys out in a second.”

Ned nodded. “No worries, I already downloaded some maps of Scotland on my phone. We can rule out some towns based on location.”

Peter turned around and started walking backwards. “MJ, we’ve gotta figure out a way to get there. And how to spin this to Aunt May.”

“You want to tell her?” Shuri asked, surprise lacing her voice.

“I just…” Peter sighed. “I’m kinda tired of lying to her.”

“You didn’t tell her about the tunnel at Alcatraz,” Ned pointed out.

“Okay,” Peter said, holding up his hands, “that was just an omission. Leaving the country unsupervised is a totally different story! And after the whole Norway thing...and space thing...” He trailed off, not needing to provide any further explanation to his friends.

They soon reached the Avenger’s Tower, where Pepper was waiting for them when they got off the
She was bouncing on her toes, and a huge smile lit up her face. She gave Peter and Shuri a hug and then introduced herself to MJ and Ned before pulling them in for hugs as well.

“So listen,” she said, lowering her voice. “I know you’re here to run some tests, but I have a huge favor.”

“What’s up?” Peter asked.

“I replaced all of the kitchen appliances,” Pepper explained, “but I haven’t had a chance to test them, and Tony’s being stubborn. He just wants to keep ordering takeout. Can you maybe pretend to be hungry and ask him to heat up some of the frozen pizzas I put in the freezer?”

Ned rubbed his hands together excitedly. “Thank god! We totally forgot to eat lunch before we got here.”

Shuri nodded. “I’m actually hungry too, so it won’t even be a lie!”

Pepper sighed with relief. “Awesome! Thank you so much!” She heard a door open down the hall. “Speaking of the devil…”

“Peter!” Tony called as he met the group. “And friends! How was your trip to the West Coast?”

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ began talking over one another, trying to get all of the details out from the trip. Tony caught bits and pieces, an amused smile playing on his face as they argued about what happened when and how.

“Well that’s...fascinating,” he finally said. “Ready to get these tests done?”

Peter shifted on his feet. “Actually...we have a favor…”

Shuri cleared her throat. “We forgot to eat lunch,” she said innocently. “Can we maybe have something to eat first?”

“And,” Ned added, “Peter’s powers would probably perform better if he had food in his system!”

“I’m in the mood for frozen pizza, honestly,” MJ said, shrugging her shoulders.

Tony narrowed his eyes playfully at Pepper. “You put them up to this, didn’t you?” he asked.

Pepper blinked rapidly. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“Uh huh,” Tony replied, crossing his arms. He looked at the teens, who were either rubbing their stomachs or looking at him pleadingly. “Argh, fine! Let’s heat up the stupid pizzas.”

“YES!” they exclaimed.

They followed Tony to the kitchen like obedient puppies. He opened the massive freezer and began digging for two large cheese pizzas. Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned pulled seats out from the island, while Pepper leaned against the counter and pulled out her cell phone.

“Peter, heat up the oven, would you?” Tony asked. “425, I think.”

Peter walked over to the oven and was about to start it when FRIDAY’s voice came through the ceiling.

“Before you set the temperature, Mr. Parker, there seems to be an object in the oven,” the AI said.
“I’d take that out first.”

Peter scrunched his nose, leaned down, and opened the oven door. Inside, sitting on the middle rack was golden-brown bun. He stood all the way up and looked at Tony, who was practically buried in the freezer trying to get the pizzas out. “Uhhh, why is there a bun in your oven?” Peter asked.

“Nope,” Tony replied, sticking his head up. “Not my oven, Pepper’s oven. She keeps telling me it’s her oven.” He bent back over and continued to rummage.

“Okay then,” Peter amended. “Why is there a bun in Pepper’s oven?” He gasped, realization coming over him like a tidal wave. He looked over to Pepper who nodded in confirmation. MJ, Ned, and Shuri suddenly got it too, and they all began shouting excitedly at Pepper.

“OH MY GOD!” Peter yelled, jumping up and down.

“YES!” Shuri exclaimed, pumping her fist.

“You’re...I can’t...that’s EPIC!” Ned stuttered.

“Congrats!!” MJ yelped.

Tony took the two pizzas out and placed them on the counter. “What the heck is going on?” he asked over their screams.

Peter ran over to his mentor and gripped his shoulders. “Tony, there’s a bun in Pepper’s oven!”

“What?” Tony asked, wrinkling his brow. He walked over to the oven and peeked inside. “What the heck is that doing there?”

Shuri rolled her eyes while Ned and MJ put their heads in their hands. “Tony! There’s a bun in Pepper’s oven!” she yelped.

“I can see that!” Tony exclaimed back at her. “Just take it out! I can’t make the pizza if that’s in there!”

Pepper’s shoulders shook with silent laughter as Peter let out an exasperated sigh. “Tony,” he said slowly, “there is a bun-” He waved his arms around the oven door. “-in Pepper’s oven!”

Tony pinched the bridge of his nose in frustration. “Peter, I swear to god, if you say there is a bun in Pepper’s oven one more time, I’m-” He stopped, the rest of the sentence stuck in his throat. He looked from Peter to Shuri to MJ to Ned, and finally, to Pepper.

“There’s a...there’s a bun in the oven,” Tony said slowly. “But this is your oven so...so there’s a bun in your oven.” He pointed from the real oven to Pepper.

Pepper smiled and handed her phone to MJ, who took over the recording. She walked over to Tony, who was still babbling.

“There’s a bun in your oven?” he asked, his eyes watering.

Pepper nodded and laced her fingers through Tony’s hand. She rested it gently on her stomach. “There’s a bun in my oven,” she whispered.

Excitement, fear, happiness, nervousness, and pure, unadulterated joy crossed Tony’s face in a matter of seconds. He giggled, gently pushing his hand on her stomach. “Oh...my...god,” he gasped. “Oh my...GOD! OH MY GOD!” He turned to the teens. “THERE’S A BUN IN HER OVEN!”
shouted. He pulled Pepper in and wrapped his arms around her. He lifted her up and spun her in a circle.

“THERE’S A BUN IN HER OVEN!” he yelled again. Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned cheered, and maybe even cried a little bit too.

Tony put Pepper down and quickly kissed her. “How? When?” he asked breathlessly.

“I just found out yesterday,” she said breathlessly, cupping his cheeks. She gave him another quick kiss. “I know it’s early, but I didn’t want to wait to tell you.”

“Oh my god,” Tony laughed. “This is...I can’t even...”

“Are you happy?” she asked.

Tony rubbed her shoulders. “I’m so happy. Beyond the moon happy. I’m just-” He paused and looked Pepper up and down. “Should you be standing right now?” he asked, concern filling his voice.

“I’m fine-”

Tony shook his head. “No, you should sit down. In fact, you shouldn’t be doing anything strenuous right?”

“Tony,” Shuri said, “she’s only in her first month!”

“Which is why,” Tony reasoned, “we should be even more careful!” He led her over to a chair and gently pushed her to sit down. “Okay...okayokayokay,” he said, rubbing his chin. “FRIDAY!”

“Yes boss?” the AI replied.

Tony began pacing in the kitchen. “We need baby supplies. I want you to order the top main baby products from online. Gender neutral colors.” He turned to Pepper, who was staring at him with crossed arms and an amused expression on his face. “Do we want to do a gender reveal? I mean, even though gender is a social construct and the gender binary is no longer really a thing-”

“Tony,” Pepper interrupted.

“No, you’re right, we should go gender neutral.” He looked back up at the ceiling. “Gender neutral colors, FRIDAY. And prenatal vitamins too. Lots of them. Can we order an ultrasound machine to keep here?”

“TONY!” Pepper exclaimed more forcefully. “You’re freaking out!”

Tony nodded manically. “Yeah, a little.” He watched her excited expression fall. “No, wait. I’m so happy! I swear to god this is the best day of my life.”

“Besides your wedding?” MJ suggested from the island.

“Yeah, of course!” Tony replied. “I just...I have no idea what to do!”

Pepper held out her hands, and Tony put his in them. She rubbed her thumbs on his palms and smiled. “This is my first time too, you know,” she chuckled. “But we’ll do it together.” Tony nodded. “So, here’s what you’re going to do.”

“I’m listening,” Tony said, tilting his head towards hers.
“You’re going to reschedule Peter’s tests for another day. Sorry, honey,” she said, looking at Peter.

“It’s seriously no problem,” Peter said, silently cheering that they now had an out to finish planning Scotland.

“You’re going to walk them out,” Pepper continued, “and then you and I are going to go over the doctor’s results. Then, we’ll look at some baby stuff.” Her eyes took on a mischievous glint. “And once we get tired of doing all that we’re going to celebrate by…” She pulled him in close and began whispering in his ear. Tony’s eyes widened, and then they practically rolled in the back of his head.

“Okay, yup,” he groaned. “Kids, time to go!”

MJ handed Pepper her phone, and they all took turns giving her huge hugs. Tony quickly ushered them all out and back towards the elevator.

“Congratulations,” Shuri said to Tony. “That is so amazing!”

“Your baby is going to be, like, insanely smart,” Ned commented.

“And badass,” MJ added.

Tony smiled, but Peter could tell there was some tenseness behind it. When they got to the elevator, Peter waved his friends off. “I’ll be right down,” he promised.

The others nodded knowingly, and they headed downstairs without him. Peter shifted on the toes of his feet. “How are you feeling?” he asked softly.


Peter shook his head. “No way. That actually all sounds pretty normal.”

“I just…” Tony paused and sighed. “I didn’t have a great father, you know? And now...now I’m going to be one. I feel like I keep messing up all the time. Don’t get me wrong,” he said quickly, “I want to be a father. I just don’t want to be like my father. I want to be better.”

“Tony, I know you’re going to be a great dad,” Peter said, pressing the call button for the elevator.

Tony raised his brows and gave Peter a slight smirk as the elevator doors opened. “Oh yeah?” he asked as Peter walked inside. “And how do you know that, smart guy?”

Peter looked down at his shoes and then looked back up at Tony. Peter’s smile was small, but it contained the most sincerity Tony had seen from him since they first met. As the elevator doors began to close, Peter took a deep breath and mustered up every bit of courage he had.

“Because you’re already an amazing dad to me.”

Chapter End Notes

Just to clarify: Pepper got pregnant AFTER Vegas. I know that is super fast considering Vegas was about a week and a half to two weeks ago. Let's just pretend the biology of it all works (the timing will be important later). Thanks for rolling with it! :P
Part 28

Peter took a shaky breath as the elevator shut and it began going down. He knew he had made the right decision telling Tony what he did, but it didn’t mean he wasn’t terrified about being vulnerable to the one person he cared the most about in the world besides Aunt May.

Peter’s heart was pounding so hard that he didn’t even realize the elevator had switched directions and was now climbing back up. The doors opened, and he came face-to-face with Tony.

“Wha-” Peter started to say, but Tony cut him off by stepping in the elevator and pulling him into the biggest hug of his life.

Peter blinked back tears and wrapped his arms tight around Tony’s shoulders. It was the perfect hug, the kind that makes you feel safe and warm and loved.

“What you said,” Tony whispered roughly, his voice choked with emotion, “meant the world to me. You hear me? The world.” Tony cupped the back of Peter’s head, just like May would do when she was about to tell him something important. “I’m so proud of you. Who you are and what you’ve done.”

Peter pulled back just enough to wipe at his eyes and look up at Tony. “I meant it,” he said softly. “All of it.”

Tony struggled with what to say next. A million things crossed his mind, but he couldn’t get anything out. So, he gave Peter a watery smile and hugged him one more time.

They were still wrapped in their embrace when the elevator door opened at the bottom of the Tower where Shuri, MJ, and Ned were waiting patiently for their friend.

“So are you gonna start calling him dad now?” MJ asked as she playfully shoved Peter’s shoulder.

Peter shook his head. “Nah,” he replied with a grin. He was practically floating up the stairs to his apartment.

“You realize Pepper is basically your mom now, right?” Shuri asked. “And you’re getting a new sibling.”

“Dude!” Ned exclaimed. “You’re going to be a big brother!”

Peter laughed as Ned wrapped him in a headlock. They wrestled with each other in the hallway while Shuri snuck Peter’s keys out of his pocket and unlocked the apartment door.

“Hello?” Aunt May called from the kitchen.

“Hi May!” the teens yelled back. They dumped their backpacks on the floor and headed into the kitchen. May had just finished making lunch, and since they hadn’t gotten to eat the frozen pizza, they eagerly scarfed down her food.

“Well you guys seem particularly happy today,” May commented.
“Pepper’s pregnant!” Ned exclaimed with his mouth full of food.

May’s eyes widened. “That’s wonderful!” she gasped.

“And Peter...” MJ started, but Peter subtly shook his head. “Uh, Peter got to help Pepper break the news to Tony!” she said, recovering quickly.

“Tell me everything,” May ordered.

Peter explained Pepper’s adorable pregnancy reveal, and the others chimed in as well. May couldn’t help but laugh at their description of Tony completely missing the “bun in the oven” reference.

“So...” she said slowly, once the story was done, “any plans for the week?”

Peter stuck a hummus-coated carrot in his mouth and shrugged. Ned wouldn’t meet her eyes, and MJ kept her head lowered towards her plate. Shuri pretended not to hear her.

“Okay, what are you guys planning?” she asked. She narrowed her eyes at Peter. “Spit it out. Now.”

Peter gulped and began telling her about his plan to go to Scotland to find Captain America. He watched as her eyes widened, glared, and bored into him with a fierce intensity. He knew he was taking a huge risk in telling her the truth, but he hoped she would understand why this was important.

After he was done talking, she rested one hand under her chin and tapped the other fist lightly on the table. “So let me get this straight,” she finally said. “You want to travel to Scotland, alone, and find Captain America. But you don’t know where in Scotland because your mysterious friend from Brooklyn didn’t have any other information. And, if you magically find him, you’re going to try to convince him to come back and talk to Tony.”

Peter looked around at his friends, who nodded in approval at her summary. “Yeah,” they said in unison.

May stared at Peter incredulously. “Honey, do you have any idea how crazy your plan sounds?!”

“Crazy is kind of our speciality, May,” Ned commented. MJ kicked him under the table. “Ow! Well, it is!”

May just shook her head. “Why do you really want to do this?” she asked. She held up her hand as Peter opened his mouth to answer. “And don’t tell me it’s because Tony and Bucky are on speaking terms. This is a whole different scenario, kiddo.”

Peter looked at his friends, and then Shuri stood up. “I think my kimoyo beads are ringing!” she said suddenly. She bopped Ned on the head.

“Oh yeah!” he said. “I can hear it too...from the other room.” He pulled MJ up and the three of them left Peter alone with his aunt.

May grinned wryly at Peter. “Your friends are about as subtle as a bull in a china shop.” Peter smiled back at her. “What’s going on, kiddo?” she asked gently.

Peter swallowed nervously. “I, uh...I told Tony he was going to be a great dad.” May stayed silent, knowing there was more on her nephew’s mind. Peter smiled shyly as he continued. “I said I knew that because he was already a great dad to me.”
May rested her hand on her chin and smiled back at Peter. “Really?” she asked. Peter nodded. “I think that’s awesome,” she said softly.

“Yeah?” Peter couldn’t hide the surprise from his voice.

“Yeah,” May repeated. “Your parents and uncle would have wanted you to have someone like Tony in your life. And Pepper.”

“You’re still my number one,” Peter promised his aunt.

She leaned over and ruffled his hair, causing him to yelp in protest. “Good! I better be!” She pulled back and sighed. “So Scotland, huh?”

Peter fixed his hair and nodded. “I just...I really care about Tony. And I think this would be really important for him. I want to make things better.”

May gave Peter a small smile. “You can’t fix everything, honey.”

“Maybe,” Peter admitted. “But I can at least try.”

May sighed and began clearing the dishes off the table. The only sound that filled the kitchen was the clanking of dishes against the metal sink. She looked over to the kitchen doorway and saw Shuri, Ned, and MJ pull their heads back behind the wall. “You three can come back in!” she called, turning back to the sink.

They walked in sheepishly and sat back down at the table. Shuri raised her brows at Peter, but he just shrugged in response. Finally, May turned around and leaned against the kitchen sink.

“Okay,” she said. “Here’s how this is going to work.” She held up her index finger. “You pay for the plane tickets on your own.” Another finger went up. “I’ll book you a room and we can figure out how you’ll pay me back later.” A third finger. “You call and check in every single day. Nothing stupid, nothing dangerous. Peter, I swear to god, if I don’t hear from you, I will personally come to Scotland and kick your ass.” A fourth, and final, finger. “And you need some type of adult supervision. No exceptions.”

Peter leaned in towards his friends, and they quickly negotiated a counter offer. He sat up straight and looked at his aunt. “We have a way to get to Scotland without a plane, so we can pay you back for the room now,” he said.

May raised her brows. “Without a plane? How?” She held up her hands. “Wait, do I even want to know?”

MJ shook her head. “ Probably not.”

“But it’s safe!” Ned insisted. “100% safe.”

May sighed and waved her hand. “Continue...”

“We’ll definitely check in,” Peter promised, “and we won’t do anything risky.” He clasped his hands together, begging May to say yes.

“You’re forgetting one thing,” May said, crossing her arms over her chest. “An adult.”

Peter let out an exasperated sigh. “But this is a sensitive mission!” he protested. “We can’t just have anyone coming along!”
May shook her head. “No adult, no going.”

“Can T’Challa come with us?” Ned asked Shuri.

Shuri frowned. “He has meetings to attend to in Wakanda. Besides, he wouldn’t want to get in the middle of Captain Rogers’ business.”


Peter gasped, an idea coming to mind. “CLINT!” he practically shouted. “Clint can come!”

“Who’s Clint?” May asked.

“He knows Tony,” Peter said quickly. “And he’s part of the Avengers. Or he was. He’s kind of retired.”

May quirked her brows. “Is he responsible?”

“Ehhhh...” Peter drawled out.

“He’s the mysterious friend we know, actually,” MJ replied, glaring at Peter. “He’s a landlord in Brooklyn. And he takes care of a dog. That’s pretty responsible.”

May tapped her foot on the floor. “I want to meet him before you leave. He doesn’t hold up to standard, the trip is off.”

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned rushed out of their seats and practically tackled May in a hug.

“THANK YOU!” they shouted. Then, they bolted out the door, grabbing their backpacks on the way.

May just shook her head and grinned as the door slammed shut behind them.

Despite it being nearly 2pm, when Clint opened his apartment door, he looked like he had just rolled out of bed. His hair was sticking up all over the place, and his shirt had more wrinkles than fabric.

“We need you to come to Scotland with us!” Peter exclaimed. “Please!”

Clint looked at Peter and Shuri and then to MJ and Ned. “You multiplied,” he said with a yawn.

“These are our friends Ned and MJ,” Shuri replied.

“’Sup?” Clint asked. He turned around and walked back into his apartment. “I need coffee.”

“Just ignore the mess,” Peter whispered as they followed him inside.

Trash still covered most of the surfaces, but there weren’t as many arrows sticking out of the wooden people against the back wall. Lucky barked happily from his spot on the couch before hopping off and giving the teens sloppy kisses.

“Hi boy!” MJ cooed, scratching behind his ears.
“Now what’s this about Scotland?” Clint asked, drinking directly from the pot of coffee on the counter. He grimaced at the cold, bitter taste, and tossed it in the microwave to reheat.

“We’re going to Scotland to find Captain Rogers,” Peter said.

“And his aunt won’t let us go if we don’t have a responsible adult,” Shuri added.

Clint chuckled at the absurdity of the sentence. “And you thought of me?!”

Ned shrugged. “We were kind of short on options, man.”

“Fair enough,” Clint replied. “But why should I help you?”

“Because we saved your butt from the Tracksuit Draculas?” Shuri suggested.

“Hey,” Clint protested, “I was doing just fine-”

“You got knocked unconscious!” MJ exclaimed.

“You weren’t even there!”

MJ waved her hands at Peter and Shuri. “You don’t think they tell us everything? We know all about you!”

Clint scoffed and aggressively took his nuked coffee out of the microwave. He took a long sip, never letting his eyes wander from the group of teens sitting in the middle of his living room petting his dog.

“I’m kinda short on cash,” he admitted.

Peter shook his head. “We’ve got transportation and the room covered,” he promised. “And I can pay for your food. Tony actually paid me for the Stark Internship stuff.”

Clint thought for a few moments and then gave in. “Fine! I need a vacation anyway, and Simone can watch Lucky. When do we leave?”

“Scotland is five hours ahead of us,” MJ said thoughtfully. “So we’d want to leave early in the morning.”

“So, like, 4am?” Shuri suggested.

“Yeah, but we need to go to our friend’s earlier,” Peter said, ignoring Clint’s groan at the early hour. “We still need to figure out where in Scotland we need to go.”

“Okay,” Ned rationalized. “Let’s meet at the Sanctum at 8pm then. We can figure it out and take a nap.”

“Do you really think he’ll let us take a nap there?” MJ asked.

“It doesn’t hurt to ask,” Peter replied.

“Okay, hold on!” MJ exclaimed. “What time and where? One of you only, please!”

Peter grabbed a piece of crumpled paper off Clint’s coffee table while Shuri handed him a pen from her bag. He scribbled down an address and time and handed it to Clint.
“Just meet us here at 8pm,” he said. “We’ll see you tonight!” Before Clint could change his mind, Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned quickly got up and waved as they left out the door.

Clint looked down at the piece of paper and scrunched his nose in confusion.

“Who the hell lives at 177A Bleecker Street?!?”
Aunt May looked at the Sanctum warily and then at her watch. “He’s late,” she said disapprovingly. Peter silently sent Clint a few choice curse words. “He’s coming from Brooklyn,” he replied. “He’ll be here.”

Shuri glanced to the left and quickly tapped Peter’s arm. “Look! He’s right over there!”

Clint jogged up to the group with a backpack slung across his shoulder. He had thankfully changed shirts, so the one he was wearing now had fewer wrinkles than the other. However, it had quite a few holes. Clint was also sporting the beginnings of a black eye, and he still had gauze wrapped around his wrist. Shuri could see the tip of his bow pointing out the top of his backpack, and she hoped May didn’t notice.

“Sorry!” he panted, bending down and resting his hands on his knees. “I got a bit—” He paused and looked up as Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ all waved furiously at Aunt May. “I got a bit caught up,” he finished, straightening up. He held out his hand to May and gave her a smile. “Hi there. Clint Barton.”

May cautiously shook his hand. “Hi,” she replied. “Nice shiner you’ve got there.”

Clint smiled sheepishly. “I walked into my neighbor’s elbow.”

“Uh huh.” May crossed her arms and turned to the teens. “I don’t know guys…”

Shuri wrapped her arms around May’s shoulders. “You worry too much! Clint is fine! We’ll be fine!”

Ned nodded. “We promise not to go looking for trouble.”

“Even though trouble usually finds us,” MJ muttered. Peter jabbed her in the ribs, and she quickly faked a cheery smile. “Like he said! We promise not to look.”

May wrapped the ends of her hair around her fingers nervously. Finally, she gave them a nod. “Okay. You remember the rules?”

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned nodded. “We’ll be fine,” they said in unison.

“And are you sure you can get to Scotland without paying?” she asked.

“Yeah,” Peter said. “It’s how we got to Norway.”

“It’s totally safe,” Shuri added.

“I’m going to regret this,” May groaned, pulling them all in for a hug. She gave them a tight squeeze before letting go. “Do not make me regret this.”

“We won’t,” Peter promised.

May reached out a tucked some of Peter’s hair behind his ear. “Tony better realize how lucky he is to
MJ smirked. “Oh trust us, he does.”

May held her hand out again for Clint to shake. The second he took it, she yanked him in close.
“You take care of them,” she practically growled, “or you’ll have me to deal with.” She gave his hand a bone-breaking squeeze before letting go and smiling sweetly at the teens. She waved goodbye one last time and headed down the street back to the apartment. Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned waited until she was around the corner before bursting out at Clint, who stared after May with a mix of awe and fear.

“Did you really walk into your neighbor’s elbow?” MJ asked accusingly.

Clint scoffed as he shook his sore hand. “No! I tried pulling one of the arrows out of my practice dummies and I yanked too hard. Slammed myself right in the face.”

They stared at Clint incredulously. “Seriously?” Shuri asked.

“Seriously,” Clint replied.

Peter sighed. “Thanks for lying to my aunt. There are so many things about that story she would’ve had a problem with.”

Clint gave him a cheery thumbs up. “No problem!”

They stooped down to pick up the duffel bags they had quickly packed a few hours earlier. Shuri turned around and knocked on the Sanctum door three times. The wood echoed solidly from inside.

Clint leaned forward. “So how exactly are we getting to Scotland?” he whispered.

The door to the Sanctum opened suddenly, and the Cloak of Levitation stared them down. Clint gasped and practically fell backward. “Cape! Floating cape!” He gaped at the teens as they looked at the Cloak normally. “Why is no one else freaking out!”

Shuri ignored him and focused her attention on the cloak. “Hey!” she exclaimed warmly. “Are Wong or Strange here?”

The cloak extended its left length and guided the group inside. Ned and MJ had to practically drag Clint in with them.


“This can’t be the weirdest thing you’ve seen,” MJ finished, giving Clint one final shove before closing the door.

“What,” a voice bellowed from the staircase, “could you four possibly want now?”

Everyone looked up as Doctor Stephen Strange walked down the staircase. The Cloak of Levitation met him halfway and effortlessly fastened itself around his neck. He tapped the railing and looked at the teens expectantly.

Peter waved his arm from Clint to Strange. “Clint Barton, this is Doctor Stephen Strange.”

“He’s a Master of the Mystic Arts,” Shuri offered.

Ned grinned. “Basically the coolest wizard ever!”
“He’s the best in New York,” MJ added.

The corners of Strange’s mouth lifted slightly at their compliments, but he was no fool. “And I’ll ask again,” he said. “What do you want?”

“We have a favor,” Peter said.

“I figured as much,” Strange replied dryly.

“Can we please use your library to find someone?” Shuri asked. “And then you send us there?”

Strange raised his brows. “Brave of you to assume I have a library.”

“You don’t?” MJ asked.

“Of course I do!” Strange replied, rolling his eyes. “You’ve seen the size of this place.”

“Then why did you-“

Strange smirked. “Didn’t your parents teach you not to assume things you don’t know?”

Clint crossed his arms. “Then should I assume you’re not going to help us?”

Before Strange could answer, another voice called out. “Do we have visitors?”

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned grinned. “HI WONG!” they all yelled.

“I’ll be right there!” he shouted back. They could hear his footsteps getting closer.

Strange motioned for them to come close. “Do not mention Vegas,” he threatened.


“Because he doesn’t know,” Strange said through gritted teeth.

Peter’s eyes brightened. “You mean he doesn’t know how you were hungover?”

“No.”

“Or how you puked in our hotel room?” Shuri added.

“No.”

Ned grinned. “Or how you performed a magic show for the police?”

“No!”

Peter held out his hand to Strange as Wong’s footsteps got closer. “We won’t mention Vegas if you help us,” he promised.

Strange quickly shook Peter’s hand, giving it an extra squeeze, causing him to grimace slightly.

Wong finally got to the main hall, smiling at the teens. “It’s been a while!” he exclaimed happily.

“What brings you to our Sanctum?”

“We’re working on a little project,” Shuri replied somewhat truthfully.

“They’re going to use the library for a bit,” Strange sighed.
Wong looked absolutely delighted that Strange was helping them. “Awesome!” He leaned in close. “It’s good for him to socialize,” he whispered as Peter, Shuri, Ned and MJ erupted in a fit of giggles.

“I heard that!” Strange protested.

“I’ll show you to the library,” Wong said, ignoring his friend. He guided Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ behind the stairs, leaving Strange and Clint standing by themselves.

“So you’re a magician?” Clint asked.

“Master of the Mystic Arts,” Strange shot back. “And you are?”

“A former Avenger,” Clint replied. “Bow and arrow is my specialty.”

“Ah,” Strange said, tilting his head up. “And you know the kids, how, exactly?”

“They helped me out of a bind,” Clint chuckled. “I’m their adult supervision for this trip of theirs.” He shrugged and bounced a bit on his feet. “They’re looking for Captain America in Scotland.”

Strange looked Clint up and down, his brows rising higher and higher with each injury. “You’re supposed to watch over them? Can you even take care of yourself?”

“Yes!” Clint scoffed.

“Your injuries say otherwise,” Strange replied. He abruptly turned around and walked behind the stairs.

Not one to be left alone, Clint hurried after him. He and Strange bickered the whole way up to the library, where Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ were hard at work. Ned and Shuri sat together with his laptop open. Their faces were scrunched in concentration as they pointed to the screen.

Meanwhile, Peter and MJ were plotting ways to convince Captain Rogers to come back and talk to Tony. Peter had an article pulled up about persuasive arguments while MJ was typing ideas down on her phone’s notepad. Wong stood at the top of the stairs, observing them with Strange and Clint.

“Are you really going to Scotland?” Wong whispered to Clint.

Clint shrugged. “That’s what they tell me.”

“And what do they plan on finding there?” Wong pressed.

“Captain America,” Clint replied.

Wong raised his brows at Strange. “And you’re going to let them look alone?”

Strange pointed at Clint. “He’s going with them.”

“Like I said,” Wong replied, eyeing Clint apprehensively, “you’re going to let them look alone?”

“Hey!” Clint protested.

“You should go with them,” Wong said to Strange.

“Absolutely not!” Strange shot back. Wong narrowed his eyes. “Don’t look at me like that!”

“Excuse me,” Clint interrupted, “I can handle four teenagers.”
“Not these four,” Strange and Wong said without hesitation.

“I have matters to attend to here,” Strange added to Wong. “I can’t just leave.”

“Sure you can!” Wong replied brightly. “I’m firing you for the week. End of discussion!”

“Wait a second-” But Strange was cut off as Wong walked over to Peter and MJ’s table.

Strange growled under his breath and crossed his arms over his chest with a huff. Clint sent him a sideways glare. If anyone had been standing next to them, they would have felt the mutual annoyance radiating off each other.

They stood like that for over an hour as Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ continued to work. They barely looked up or acknowledged anyone else in the room, although they did eagerly devour the water and snacks Wong brought up for them.

Ned suddenly began tapping furiously at his laptop, his eyes moving up and down the screen. Shuri gripped his shoulder impatiently as they both waited for some type of result to pop up. Suddenly, Ned hopped out of his seat and pumped his fist in the air.

“YES!” he shouted excitedly. Shuri gave him a double high five as Peter and MJ looked up.

“What happened?” Peter asked, already getting out of his seat.

Ned grinned at his best friend.

“We found Captain America!”

Chapter End Notes

So, Doctor Strange isn't like Heimdall where he can just find people. He knew where Odin was in the first place, which is why he was able to help Thor. But, according to articles and stuff I read online, there is nothing about him being able to find people out of thin air. Hence, why the kids did all the heavy lifting :P
“Seriously?” Peter asked, standing up. “You found him?”

Shuri held out her wrist and released one of her kimoyo beads into the palm of her hand. Placing it on the table, she mirrored the laptop screen and projected it into the air. A map of Scotland floated above the table.

“We’ve narrowed it down to two possible locations,” Shuri corrected, eyeing the map. She pinched her fingers over the hologram and zoomed in on the bottom half of Scotland. She pointed to two locations, and small blips appeared.

“Ayr and Kirkcaldy are our best bets,” Ned explained.

“Why?” Strange asked, unable to keep his curiosity hidden.

Ned leaned back in his chair. “Okay, so we know Captain Rogers is in Scotland. He’d want to avoid the big cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh because too many people would recognize him.”

“But,” Shuri continued, “he’d want access to the cities in case of emergencies or if he needed to get ahold of my brother.”

Ned pointed to the blip on the west coast. “Kirkcaldy is a small coastal town not far from Edinburgh.” He pointed to the other blip on the east coast. “Ayr, on the other hand, isn’t too far from Glasgow. It’s almost the same distance as Kirkcaldy is from Edinburgh. They also have about the same population size at around 49,000 people. Less people means lower chance of someone recognizing him.”

Shuri nodded. “If he’s hiding in Scotland, it’s definitely in one of these two towns.”

Clint rubbed his chin, impressed at their work. “Is there any chance you can narrow that down? Two towns across the country is a lot of distance to cover.”

Shuri tapped Ned’s shoulder. “Show them.”

Ned tapped a few keys on his laptop and the hologram of Scotland was replaced with rows of names.

Wong leaned over and squinted as he read some of the names aloud. “Steve Grant, Grant Rogers.”

Ned smiled proudly. “I ran a check on names attached to apartments and houses in both towns. I pulled the ones that he could possibly be using.”

Clint gently poked his finger through the hologram. “These don’t sound like very Scottish names,” he commented.


“Actually,” Strange said, leaning forward. “Can you do a search for people that have Rogers as a last name?”


“Rogers is a Scottish surname believe it or not,” Strange said. He looked over as the others stared at

Ned merely shrugged and applied the filter to his current list. The number of names dropped drastically.

Peter scanned the remaining list, and something caught his eye. “Check this out!” He pointed to a name in the middle and another near the bottom. “These two match!”

Ned made some adjustments and the rest of the names disappeared, leaving only the other two behind.

“James Rogers,” Shuri read.

“He owns a property in Kirkcaldy and Ayr,” Ned added. “They’re both small cottages.”

MJ looked to Peter. “Why do you think that’s him?” she asked.

“Because Bucky’s first name is James,” he replied softly. “He took his friend’s name.”

“Adorable,” Shuri whispered.

“But why would he need two houses?” Wong asked.

Clint grinned. “Smart guy. I’ll bet you anything he switches between them so he’s not spending too much time in one place.”

Shuri clapped her hands together. “So we’ve got it!”

“Hopefully,” Peter cautioned. “There’s a chance we could still be wrong.”

Strange rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “So how do we want to play this? It might not be a bad idea to stay in Glasgow…” He trailed off as Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned grinned at him. “What?” he asked.

“You said ‘we’, MJ replied.

“I did?”

Wong nodded in satisfaction. “You did.”

“Does that mean you’re coming?” Peter asked excitedly.

“Yeah,” Clint echoed unenthusiastically. “Does that mean you’re coming?”

Strange looked at the teens, then Clint, then Wong. He finally sighed. “I...I guess I’ll come.”

Ned and Peter high-fived while Shuri pumped a fist in the air. MJ, meanwhile, had pulled out her phone again and began looking at a website.

“We can split up!” Ned suggested hurriedly. “Three of us can take the house in Ayr and-”

“No way,” Clint replied, shaking his head. “We’re not splitting up. Your aunt would kill me.” He shuddered, thinking about the possibilities.

MJ held out her phone for the others to see. “We can stay in Glasgow. It’s a good mid-way point for both places. Plus, I found an apartment on Airbnb.”

“It’ll fit all of us?” Shuri asked, taking the phone.
“Yeah,” MJ nodded. “You and I can share a bed, and Peter and Ned can share the other. You two,” she said, pointing to Strange and Clint, “can each have a twin.”

“Fine,” the two men muttered. They were less than thrilled about sharing a room with each other, but it would have to work.

Wong checked the time on his watch. “It’s about 10:30 now,” he said. “Why don’t I show you guys to the spare room and you can sleep before you leave?”

At the mention of sleep, Peter yawned involuntarily. He set off a chain as the others began to yawn as well. He motioned for MJ to hand him her phone. “Let me pay for the room first,” he said. “You guys can pay me back later.”

“Book it for five days,” Shuri suggested. “We don’t know how much time we’ll need, and we can always go sightseeing if we have extra.”

“Wake up call is 4am,” MJ informed Strange.

“Too early!” Clint groaned.

Strange nodded. “I actually agree with him. We’ll leave at 6:30.”

“Not much better!” Clint yelped.

“6:30 it is!” Shuri exclaimed before anyone could argue more. “Book the room and then we’ll see you upstairs?” she asked Peter.

Peter gave her a sleepy thumbs up and booked the room. Once he was done renting the apartment under Clint’s name, he grabbed his duffel bag and followed the sound of his friend’s voices back to the main hall and up the stairs. Wong had set them up on the second floor in one of the guest quarters. He had transformed the room so two bunk beds stood against each wall. MJ and Shuri had disappeared into the attached bathroom to change into their pajamas, so Ned and Peter quickly put their own on before the girls came back inside.

“Top bunk!” Peter and Ned yelled. They bolted to the beds and quickly hopped up to the top as MJ and Shuri came back inside.

“Children, I swear,” Shuri muttered. She dove under the blankets of the bed under Peter’s bunk while MJ buried herself under the other bed’s blankets.

“Ummm, guys?” Ned asked, peeking his head over the edge of the bed. “Who’s going to turn out the lights?”

The others groaned, not wanting to leave the comfort of their covers. “It’s kind of a magic house isn’t it?” Peter asked. “Maybe if we ask nicely the lights will turn out on their own.”

“That is some weird logic, dude,” MJ replied with a laugh.

“Can’t hurt to try though,” Ned added.

Shuri cleared her throat and used her best diplomatic voice. “Lights, will you please turn yourselves off? It is quite late and we really must be going to bed.”

The lights still stayed lit.

Peter hummed thoughtfully. “Maybe we all need to do it? Since we’re all guests in the room?”
“Lights please turn out, on three?” Ned suggested.

MJ started the count. “One...two...three!”

“LIGHTS PLEASE TURN OUT!” they all shouted.

The room was suddenly enveloped in darkness.

“Holy shit!” MJ exclaimed. “It worked!”

“This house is epic!” Ned laughed.

The teens were so wrapped up talking over one another that they didn’t notice a hand move away from the light switch. The bedroom door gently closed all the way, erasing any light from the hall.

Wong let out a small chuckle as he headed back towards his own room for the night.
Shuri woke up to find moonlight streaming in through one of the windows in the guest room. She tapped the kimoyo beads on her wrist and the digital clock read 3:45am. Peter was sleeping peacefully above her while Ned and MJ slept on the other side of the room. She carefully pulled the covers off her bed and tiptoed out into the hall.

The thick carpet muffled her footsteps as she explored the Sanctum. She climbed the stairs to the third floor and was met a huge, ornate door. She looked to her left, then her right, and gently pulled the handle down.

Inside the door were shelves upon shelves of books. These did not look like the books from the library on the first floor, however. The spines were worn, yet thick, and a sense of magic hung in the air. It tingled through Shuri’s blood as she walked over to the left side of the room and took one off the shelf. She spotted a plush chair nearby, and sank down into it as she opened the book and began to read.

Peter felt something soft tap his arm in an attempt to wake him up. He tried to brush it off, but the tapping became more insistent. He finally turned over and opened his eyes to find the Cloak of Levitation staring down at him.

“Wha-” he started to gasp, but the Cloak quickly covered his mouth with some fabric. It used its other “arm” and held a point of fabric up to the collar as if making a “shh” symbol. Peter nodded his understanding, and the Cloak released his face. It motioned for Peter to follow him, and it began to float out of the room.

Peter gritted his teeth as he climbed down the ladder, trying to be as quiet as possible. He noticed Shuri’s bed was empty as he reached the bottom rung. The Cloak waited for him in the doorway, and soon, they were off.

He followed the Cloak up the stairs and up to a large door. It floated aside, and gave Peter a slight nod, giving him permission to open it. He gripped the handle and pushed it down.

Shuri looked up suddenly as the door to the library opened and grinned when she saw it was Peter.

“Look at this!” she whispered excitedly, motioning him over. By now, she had dragged a table near her chair and had strewn at least eight books across it.
“Why am I not surprised that you snuck out in the middle of the night to go to a library?” Peter joked as he walked over to her. He peered down at the books, several in languages he didn’t even recognize.

“This isn’t just any library,” Shuri said. “These books are incredible!” She pointed to one that had a diagram of a small sword. It broke down the sword’s components and included a chunk of text that Peter couldn’t read.

“What’s that?” he asked.

Shuri held her wrist out over the table and scanned the page with her kimoyo beads. A Norwegian translation popped up above the palm of her hand when she turned her arm over. “It’s called Dragonfang,” she read, quickly skimming the text. “It looks like an indestructible sword made from—”

“The tusk of a dragon,” Peter finished. He let out a low whistle. “Epic.”

Shuri flicked the screen away and pointed to the rest of the books. “There’s an insane amount of information here!” she exclaimed, her eyes shining with excitement. “Can you imagine how much we could learn from this? The technology I could create?”

Unable to stifle his curiosity, Peter headed over to another shelf and pulled off a green book with gold lettering on its spine.

“Kartkuthi,” he read aloud. He opened the book, and a fancy script stared back at him from the yellowed pages. The words looked unlike any language he had ever seen before, and he walked it over to Shuri. “Can you tell what this says?” he asked.

Shuri scanned the page, but when she projected the screen, “No Translation Found” popped up. She scrunched her nose and tried again, but she got the same message.

“That’s weird,” she muttered. “This links directly to my database in Wakanda which has every translation known to man.”

“Some languages,” a voice said from behind them, “are not familiar to mankind.”

Peter and Shuri whirled around to find Doctor Strange standing in the doorway of the mystical library. He looked completely out of character in dark blue lounge pants and a white t-shirt, his black hair ruffled from sleep. They quickly put the books on the table and gave him sheepish grins. Strange walked up to them, the Cloak of Levitation following closely behind.

“Didn’t your parents teach you not to snoop in other people’s stuff?” Strange asked, picking up the Kartkuthi book Peter had found. He shut it closed with a sharp snap and took it back to its shelf.

“I couldn’t sleep,” Shuri said. “I was exploring.”

Peter pointed to the Cloak. “It woke me up and brought me here,” he added.

Strange glared at the Cloak. “So instead of telling me that Shuri was in here, you woke up another teenager and showed him how to get here?”

The Cloak merely shrugged in response.

“Sorry,” Peter and Shuri said softly.

“These books aren’t like the ones in the library downstairs,” Strange warned, motioning for Peter and
Shuri to sit down. They squished together in the plush chair while Strange leaned against the table. “They’re filled with magic and history and should not be messed with.”

“You mean you can read that?” Peter asked, pointing to the spot where Strange had placed the book.

Strange nodded. “Of course. I can read all of the books in here.”

“Do your powers help you translate the text?” Shuri asked.

“No,” Strange replied. “My powers aren’t like Thor’s or Captain America’s. I wasn’t born with them and I didn’t get injected with a special serum. You could say I unlocked them.”

Shuri raised her brows. “So anyone can become a Master of the Mystic Arts?”

Strange tapped his fingers against the wooden table as he thought about his answer. “Not exactly,” he said slowly. “I spent months studying intensely under someone called the Ancient One. She taught me how to read the texts, fight, and use the powers. It’s a process unlike anything I had ever experienced before. My neurosurgery studies were a cakewalk compared to this. Not many people have that kind of will and dedication. I’m still learning to this day.” His chest puffed up with pride at the end of his statement.

“So,” Shuri said thoughtfully, “if we studied hard enough, we could technically learn all of this?”

“Technically,” Strange replied warily. “But not everyone is meant to.”

“Okay,” Shuri negotiated, “let’s say someone didn’t want to become a Master of the Mystic Arts. But they did want to learn about the history, the magic, the technology, but not use the powers in real life. Is the Sanctum open for that kind of independent study?”

Strange let out a chuckle and crossed his arms over his chest. “Assuming this person could even keep up with the material—”

“I don’t think that would be a problem,” Peter interjected, smiling proudly at Shuri.

“Then technically,” Strange continued, “if they were vetted and approved, it could be possible. Highly unorthodox, but possible.”

He held up a finger and walked over to a row of shelves near the middle of the large room. Peter and Shuri craned their necks to try and see where he was going, but they didn’t dare try and get up from the chair. Strange came back over carrying two books. He handed them to Shuri, who eagerly poured over their titles.

“Il Libro di Cagliostro and Book of the Vishanti,” Shuri read. “What are these?”

“Consider them introductions to the mystic arts,” Strange smiled. “I’d be interested to hear your thoughts on them.”

Shuri looked like she had just won the lottery as she clutched the books to her chest. “I’ll take care of them,” she promised.

Strange nodded and looked at Peter. “As for you,” he said, “I don’t know what Stark’s teaching you about fighting, but your technique could use some work. It’s never a bad idea to learn some martial arts.”

“You’d teach me?” Peter asked, his excitement rising.
“I’d consider it,” Strange replied wryly. He looked out the window and watched as the sun began to peek out over the city. “But we can talk about this later. Your wake up call should be happening soon. I’d go back to your room and try and get a little more sleep.”

Peter and Shuri followed him and the Cloak obediently out of the library and back down the hall. He nudged her side and grinned at Strange behind his back.

“I think we’re growing on him,” he whispered. Shuri smiled back and fist bumped him in response.

Doctor Stephen Strange merely smiled as he led the teens back to their room.

Chapter End Notes

Future plot twist!! :D
Part 32

Chapter Notes

So, I have an idea for a new fic (once this one is over). What if I wrote something about our favs inside the Soul Stone? There is so much Tumblr content to play off of, and it could be like a "here's what we did while everyone else outside got their crap together". Is there anything like that on AO3 now? Does that sound even remotely interesting to anyone? I'd love you hear your thoughts!!

There was not enough coffee in the world to convince Clint Barton that 6am was an acceptable wake up time to go traversing through Scotland. Ned and Peter had to practically drag him out of his bed. They grabbed under his arms while the Cloak of Levitation lifted his feet. They unceremoniously dumped him in the middle of the hallway where Shuri and MJ were waiting with a cup of water. They dumped the freezing liquid over his head, and he woke with a shout.

“Leave me!” he cried dramatically, curling into a ball on the floor. “I won’t go!”

“Fine!” Peter called over his shoulder as the others giggled. “I’ll just tell Aunt May you backed out.”

Clint was up in an instant, the fear of May’s wrath coursing through him. He bolted into his room and came sliding down the banister three minutes later dressed and ready to go. MJ handed him a huge mug of coffee as a peace offering. He tried to down it all in three big gulps, but the coffee was so hot he wound up spitting it everywhere.

“H-h-HOT!” he rasped. He coughed and choked as Ned caught the mug he dropped in mid-air.

Doctor Strange, meanwhile, bounded down the stairs with a surprising amount of pep in his step considering the early hour. He raised an eyebrow at Clint, who was still coughing. Strange had forgone the tunic and Cloak of Levitation for some less conspicuous clothes. He wore a pair a dark wash jeans and navy sweater.

“You’re going to be cold,” he said to the teens, who were dressed in jeans and colorful, printed t-shirts. “Did you really not do any research on where we’re going?”

Shuri grinned proudly. “I designed the shirts,” she replied. “Watch!” She grabbed the small label on the bottom of her left sleeve and pushed it. Within seconds, the shirt began to extend until long sleeves covered the length of her arms.

“It’s nanite thread technology,” Peter explained, doing the same to his own shirt. “So not only can it turn into long sleeves, but the material is impervious to water and most weather.”

MJ fist bumped Shuri. “Apparently they were supposed to be our Christmas in July presents, but Scotland called for an early celebration.”

Clint finally managed to stand up and take the mug from Ned. After take careful sips of the remaining liquid, his eyes brightened. “Who’s ready to leave?” he asked.

“You smell like a coffee shop,” Strange said disapprovingly. “Change.”
“Ha!” Clint exclaimed childishly. “You’re not the boss of me.”

MJ rolled her eyes. “Look, we’re trying not to draw attention to ourselves. Just go change so people don’t think you played around in your coffee for fun.”

Clint grumbled, but obliged, mostly because it was MJ asking him and not Strange. When he returned with his backpack and a new, albeit, wrinkled shirt, Wong was passing out breakfast burritos to the others. He handed one to Clint, who eagerly ate it.

“You all have your things?” Wong asked.

Peter nodded and pointed to the pile of bags on the other side of the banister. “They’re all here,” he said, swallowing his breakfast. “Thanks!”

Strange checked his watch. “Okay, we should probably get go-” He stopped mid-sentence as the Cloak of Levitation floated downstairs. It lowered its collar sadly at Strange, knowing it was being left behind.

“Aww!” Shuri cooed. “Sorry friend! People in Scotland would probably freak out if they saw a floating cape!”

Ned shook his head sadly. “It’s the truth,” he sighed. “We’ll miss you though!”

For a brief, fleeting second, Strange actually felt bad about leaving the Cloak behind. Then, he cleared his throat and got serious. “Right, well, we can’t take you so…” He trailed off and watched as the Cloak floated over behind the bags. He pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed. “You do realize you’d be in a bag or apartment for practically the entire time, right?” he asked.

The Cloak nodded.

“And you’re okay with that?”

The Cloak nodded again more vigorously and held up the “arms” of its fabric in a pleading manner.

“Fine,” Strange conceded. “Get in a bag before I change my mind.”

The Cloak zoomed happily through the air before launching itself inside Ned’s open bag.

“Epic!” Ned whispered in awe.

“Now that we’re all settled,” Strange said, “shall we head to Glasgow?”

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ gave him a thumbs up while Clint nodded, his mouth full of food. Strange slipped on his sling ring and began circling his hands around. A familiar golden circle began to spark in the air, and soon, it grew in front of their eyes.

“After you,” Strange said, gesturing towards the circle. Everyone quickly grabbed their bags and waved goodbye to Wong before stepping through the circle. Clint and Strange were the last two through, and the circle disappeared as Strange put the sling ring back in his pocket.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ looked around in awe. Glasgow was like an epic combination of New York City mixed with castles and other old-fashioned buildings. They carefully stepped out of the alleyway Strange had sent them to and walked onto the sidewalk.

The city center was bustling with lunchtime activity as people hurried from one place to the next. Thick Scottish accents filled the air as people talked on their phones or to those around them. The
sky was dull and overcast, and the weather was a bit chilly. The air was damp as if it had just rained, and distant thunder suggested the sky might open up again soon.

The buildings were smushed together like in NYC, but their architecture was quite different. Random towers jutted out from tall churches all across the city. Brick buildings stood in a variety of colors as cars drove on the left side of the road.

“Whoa,” Shuri breathed.

Strange and Clint walked up behind them and observed the city life. “We should check in at the apartment,” Strange said, looking up at the sky. “We can figure out a more solid plan from there.”

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned followed the adults as they navigated through the city. Clint borrowed MJ’s phone for the directions while Strange led them down the right streets. Just as they stepped up to the apartment building, it began to rain. Strange quickly ushered them inside before closing the door.

“That was good timing,” Clint observed, shaking water droplets from his hair. “I don’t suppose any of you packed an umbrella?”

Everybody but Clint raised their hands.

“Why am I not surprised,” Strange muttered, leading them down the hall. “What’s the apartment number?” he asked Peter.

“1C,” Peter replied. “It should be right down here.”

Sure enough, apartment 1C was nestled in the corner of the building. It had a keypad attached to the door handle, and Peter entered the code he was given after he made the Airbnb reservation.

Inside the apartment was bright and airy. Light wood floors covered the entire space, and large windows led to an outside balcony. Rain still drizzled outside, but the sky wasn’t ominously dark. Two leather couches and a glass dining room table decorated the living room, while sleek cabinets and modern appliances rounded out the kitchen.

Shuri and MJ quickly claimed the room with another outdoor balcony, while Peter and Ned nabbed the room with its own bathroom. That left the room with two twin beds for Strange and Clint. After everyone dropped their bags and unpacked the essentials, they met in the living room. Peter quickly took some pictures of the apartment and texted Aunt May to let her know they had made it to Scotland safely.

“So,” Clint said, settling on one of the couches, “what’s the plan?”

Ned already had his computer out and connected to the WiFi. “Well, it’s about an hour train ride from here to Ayr,” he said. “And an hour and ten from here to Kirkcaldy.”

MJ looked at the clock on her phone. “Well it’s 12pm Scotland time now. Do we want to go to looking for Cap today?”

“Or,” Shuri said, “should we set up base and figure out a more detailed plan?”

Peter tapped his fingers against the cool leather sofa. “We should plan,” he finally replied. “We can get groceries and stuff today.”

“Maybe do some sightseeing?” Ned suggested. “There’s a cool science museum not far from here!”
The others nodded in excitement. Being students at Midtown, science was their thing.

Clint groaned and banged his head against the back of the couch. “Booorrrriinnnggg!” he droned. A flash of red flew into the room and pounced on Clint’s face. “AGH!” he yelped, jumping up and falling over the back of the couch.

The Cloak of Levitation untangled itself from Clint and settled against the wall near the couch. Ned grinned and gave the Cloak a thumbs up. “Good!” he exclaimed. “I was hoping you’d be able to get out of my bag!” He turned to the others. “I figured it could use some air, so I left my bag open.”

Strange accepted the Cloak’s presence with only a little bit of grumbling. “Just stay away from the windows,” he warned. The Cloak saluted in response.

“Okay,” Peter said, getting back to business. “Grocery shopping, planning, then sightseeing. Deal?”

“Deal!” his friends responded.

Strange and Clint nodded.

“Deal.”
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Grocery shopping in Scotland was very similar to grocery shopping in Norway. The food had many similarities to American cuisine, but there were some funny differences.

“Yo, they call chips crisps!” Ned exclaimed, grabbing a bag of Walkers Crisps that look suspiciously like Baked Lays Potato Chips.

“Do you really need to keep grabbing junk food?” Strange asked, rolling the cart against Clint’s ankles.

Clint glared at Strange and took the bag from Ned. “We need these,” he said menacingly, shoving them in the cart.

“Oooo, Jaffa Cakes!” MJ gasped, clutching a box to her chest. “We need these too.”

Strange rolled his eyes, but Peter held up his hands. “Hey,” he said, “they’re chocolate-covered. Chocolate is a plant, you know. So, basically, these things are salads.” He fist bumped MJ, who nodded approvingly at his logic.

“Fruits! Vegetables! Now!” Strange ordered, pointing towards the produce section. He shuddered. “Oh god, I sound like Wong.”

Peter, Ned, and MJ met Shuri in the produce section. She had already bagged a bunch of blueberries and grapes to snack on, and she was currently rummaging through the asparagus. Her own cart was filled with slightly healthier options, but Peter spotted a few more packages of Jaffa Cakes under the bananas and cucumbers.

“We can make salads,” she told Peter. “You should grab some lettuce.”

Peter grumbled at her request. “You know lettuce is the taste of sadness, right?” he asked. Shuri merely pointed towards the lettuce packages. “Ugh, fine!” He stalked off past Clint, who dumped several meat packages in the cart. He also added about five bags of coffee piled in his other arm.

“You think this will be enough?” he asked.

Shuri rifled through the meat and held one up suspiciously. “What’s a British free range gammon joint?” she asked.

Clint shrugged. “No idea, but it looks good.”

“Do you even know how to cook it?”

“Nope,” Clint replied, shaking his head.

Shuri pinched the bridge of her nose and sighed. “Just...just go find some pasta or something to go with it.”

Clint grinned and gave her a thumbs up as he ventured back into the store aisles. Strange rolled his cart over to Shuri’s. He peered inside. “Well, at least there’s more color in your cart,” he said.
Two carts and three bags of groceries apiece later, they all made the trek back to the apartment. Thankfully, the grocery store wasn’t too far away, and the rain had stopped. Ned and MJ helped Strange put the groceries away, while Peter and Clint looked up train times for the next day.

“So there’s a 9am train tomorrow that would put us in Ayr by 10,” Peter called over his shoulder. “You cool if we try there first?”

Shuri tossed him a pack of Jaffa Cakes and hopped over the back of the couch. “That sounds good.” She looked over at Clint. “Is 9am too early?” she teased.

Clint stole one of Peter’s cakes and smirked as he shoved it in his mouth. “9am if fihn!”

“Say it, don’t spray it!” Ned chided.

“How can you all be eating right now?” Strange asked the group. “You had breakfast not even an hour ago!”

“It’s lunchtime here, though,” MJ reasoned. “Our stomachs just know.”

“Plus,” Clint added, finally swallowing his food, “it never hurts to eat.”

After their mid-afternoon snack, they all left the apartment in search of the science museum Ned had mentioned earlier. The Glasgow Science Centre almost looked like the famous bean in downtown Chicago. The whole building was domed with a silver sheen, and it sat right near the water. The whole museum was three floors of interactive exhibits, and the teens had a field day. Even Clint, who had earlier claimed that a science museum would be boring, was just as amazed as the rest of them.

The bottom floor was mostly just the entrance and gift shop, but the real fun began on the first floor. They walked slowly through the Space Zone, learning about the mysteries of the solar system. Shuri and Peter couldn’t help but smirk at how minuscule it all seemed compared to what they had experienced mere months ago. Strange, surprisingly, insisted on a visit to the planetarium for one of its shows. They watched a short video about placing a colony on the moon before heading to other exhibits.

Clint had a field day in the Question of Perception room. There was a small saloon that made you look big, small, and even tilted to the side. Mirrors and clever painting helped achieve this illusion, something Shuri was explaining to Strange as Clint searched the room. He practically made himself dizzy trying to figure out if he could find a spot in the room that made it look like he was standing on the ceiling.

Peter took off his shoes and socks and grinned at his friends. “Watch this,” he whispered. Using his natural abilities, Peter walked to the opposite end of the room and up the side of the wall. “Hey Clint!” he called, hanging upside down. “Check this out!”

Clint whirled around and gaped at Peter. “What?! Let me try!” He bolted over and tried to climb up the wall with no success. It wasn’t until he nearly bashed his head open on the third try that Strange put a stop to it.

“Get down,” he ordered Peter. “You’re cheating.”

Clint bopped Peter on the back of the head. “Rude!”

On the second floor, they were preoccupied the most by the Quantum Technologies exhibit. Considering their brief brush with the Quantum realm in San Francisco, they wanted to learn all they
could about what was currently known.

“They could really use Pym’s research here,” MJ noted, reading the signs. “These guys are just talking about viewing the quantum realm. Pym’s actually been there.”

Ned nodded. “He’s way ahead of them.”

“Do you think they’ll ever get back?” Peter asked.

Shuri discreetly scanned the exhibit information on her kimoyo beads and grinned. “Of course! We might even beat them to it.” The others stared at her. “What?” she asked. “Do you really think I didn’t make any notes about his machine while we were in his lab?”

“Are you really planning to…?” Peter questioned.

Shuri shrugged. “Not now, obviously. There’s still a lot of variables I don’t know. But someday, yeah. I can do it.”

Peter had no doubt that his friend could either. “Just take me with you when you go,” he said with a smile.

Shuri gave him a thumbs up in response.

“Always!”

Strange and Clint had to practically drag the teens away from the science museum when it was time for it to close. They had begged and bargained for just a few more hours, insisting that they could beat the security system. But alas, they were soon on their way back to the apartment.

Pubs and restaurants were alive with people as they drank and ate into the night. Peter’s stomach rumbled with his own hunger, and he couldn’t wait to get some food of his own.

They got back to the apartment building, and Peter unlocked the door to 1C. When he opened it though, the hair on his arms stood up. Before he could walk inside, Clint blocked him with his arm.

“Does something feel...off?” he asked Strange, his brow furrowed in concentration.

Strange nodded solemnly and yanked his fists down through the air. Gold circles appeared, their mysterious symbols swirling around his knuckles. In a flash, Clint had his bow unfolded and ready to fire. They stalked inside and motioned for Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ to follow closely behind.

The apartment looked exactly as they left it. The same Jaffa Cake wrappers were sitting on the coffee table, and their bags were still on their beds. The Cloak of Levitation appeared to be “sleeping” on the couch. Everything looked fine. Peter rubbed his arms and carefully looked around for any sign that something was amiss.

“The apartment’s clear,” Strange said, coming out of MJ and Shuri’s room. “There’s no one here.”

“Is anything missing?” Clint asked.

Ned poked his out of his room. “All of our stuff is here,” he replied. “And I had my laptop in my
backpack while we were at the museum.”

“I don’t see anything missing either!” Shuri called.

“Are you just paranoid?” MJ asked.

Peter shook his head. “No, something didn’t feel right.” He sat down at the glass dining room table and grabbed the newspaper sitting on the edge. He skimmed the story and sighed, deciding that they all must just be really jet lagged. “Does anyone want to read about Budapest before I throw this out?”

Clint’s ears perked up. “What did you say?”

Peter held up the newspaper. “Budapest. Apparently there’s some riot—”

Clint snatched the paper out of his hands. “Where did you get this?”

“On the table!”

“Did you buy this?” Clint asked Strange, holding the paper up.

Strange shook his head. “No.” He looked to the teens. “Did any of you?”

They all shook their heads.

Clint slapped the newspaper against his leg and chuckled softly. “Of course you’d bring up Budapest,” he whispered. He cleared his throat. “Someone was in here,” he said.

“What?!” the others exclaimed.

“Who?” Strange asked, his defenses on the rise.

Clint gave them a wry grin as he held up the newspaper for them to see.

“Natasha Romanov.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy!!! :P
A couple of notes!

1) Thanks to those who pointed out my Bucharest/Budapest blunder. I was watching Civil War when I wrote the chapter, and I mixed up the whole Bucky plums scene in Bucharest with Budapest :P

2) I go back to school for professional development on Monday, and then my students come back the day after Labor Day. Due to the new year, plus a new grad class, AND a new freaking curriculum I will probably limit my updates to 2-3 times a week once school starts. Because it's gonna get busy real quick. Summer has spoiled me with lots of writing time :P Thanks for understanding!

The apartment exploded in questions, shouts and confusion.

“The Black Widow?” Shuri practically shrieked.

“Will she kill us?” Ned asked, looking pale. “Oh god, she’s going to kill us!”

“Does she know where Cap is?” Peter stepped in front of Clint, who was re-packing his bag. “Does she?” he asked more forcefully.

Clint gently pushed Peter out of the way. “Kid, I don’t know!”

Strange crossed his arms. “Do you care to tell us what you do know?”

Clint held up the newspaper and pointed to its headline. “Budapest,” he said. “It’s a message for me, which means she knows I’m here. And since this apartment is a bit too big for one person, I’m going to take an educated guess and say she knows I’m not alone.”

“But how did she even find us?” MJ asked. “We only told May and Wong where we were going!”

Peter’s face dropped. “It’s my fault,” he said softly. He looked at his friends guiltily. “I messed up.”

Shuri sat down on the couch. “What do you mean?”

“I...I booked the Airbnb in Clint’s name,” Peter admitted. “It needed to be under one of the adults and since May knew Clint was coming but not Doctor Strange...” He trailed off. “I had to text her the confirmation. It needed to be a name she’d recognize so she wouldn’t freak out.”

Clint nodded. “That explains it,” he said.

“Is she dangerous?” Strange asked.


“Probably?” Ned gulped.
“That’s why I’m going to go meet her,” Clint said, shifting his backpack on his shoulder. “Figure out what she wants.”

Peter stood up a bit taller. “I’m coming with you.”

“Absolutely not,” Clint shot back without hesitation.

“But if she warns Cap-”

Clint gripped Peter by the shoulders. His hands were strong, but they didn’t use enough force to hurt. “Listen, I have no idea if she’s with Cap. But I can guarantee they keep in touch. Wait for me to come back, then we’ll have a plan. Got it?”

Peter scowled at Clint as his shoulders were released. Strange looked between the two and gently pulled Peter’s shirt until he was standing next to him instead.

“I’ll be back soon,” Clint promised. “With answers.”

He turned around to leave, and Shuri gave him a quick hug. “Please be careful,” she whispered.

Clint pulled back and cleared his throat. “Uh, thanks,” he replied, touched by her concern. He gave them all one final nod before leaving the apartment and shutting the door behind him.

Peter whirled around to Strange. “You can’t just-”

Strange held up a finger.

“But-”

“Peter, wait!” Shuri demanded, running over to the window. After a few moments, she turned back around. “He’s gone.”

Strange smirked. “And that tracker you pulled out of your bag?”

“In his backpack,” Shuri replied proudly.

“A tracker?!” Ned, Peter, and MJ exclaimed.

“The hug was a nice touch,” Strange said.

“Shuri, you’re a genius!” Peter gasped.

“I know,” Shuri shrugged, as if it were obvious.

Instead of making a move to walk out of the apartment to follow Clint, Strange sat down on one of the couches and grabbed the remote for the TV. He clicked it on and began surfing through the different channels.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ stared at him in confusion.

“What are you doing?” Peter asked.

“Well,” Strange replied, adjusting himself so he sat more comfortably, “as your responsible adult on this trip, I can’t technically give you permission to leave and go after a trained spy.” He looked up at them, his brows raised. “I can tell you that I plan on spending the rest of my night out here though.”
Shuri was quick to catch on. “And we can tell you that we plan on hanging out in our rooms the rest of the night.”

“Will you now?” Strange asked. “That sounds like a marvelous idea.”

“Long day and all,” MJ added. She pretended to yawn as she stretched her arms over her head. “That time difference is killing me!”

Strange clucked his tongue. “Shame. Here I thought we’d be able to watch the news or something.”

“So…” Peter said slowly. “We’re just going to go to bed then.”

“Together,” Ned added unnecessarily. “Go to bed together.”

“Well alright then,” Strange replied. “Just...be careful, would you? On the way to the bedroom that is. Shout if you need help.”

Peter met his eyes and nodded firmly. “We promise.”

“Good,” Strange nodded, turning his attention back to the TV. “Night then!”

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ decided not to wait around for Strange to change his mind. They bolted for Shuri and MJ’s bedroom and quickly shut the door.

“You brought trackers?!?” Peter asked immediately.

“My friend,” Shuri chuckled. “I brought much more than that.” She tossed her backpack on the bed and went over to her duffel bag. “We don’t have time to inventory it all now though.”

“So what’s the plan?” Ned asked.

“Obviously Peter and Shuri follow Clint,” MJ replied.

“But what about us?” Ned frowned.

“Four of us is too conspicuous,” MJ reasoned. “Besides, we can be more help here.”

Peter looked at his oldest friend. “Guy in the chair?” he asked hopefully.

Ned nodded confidently. “Guy in the chair.”

Shuri handed him what looked like a remote with a large screen in the middle. “This is the receiver for the tracker I put in Clint’s backpack. If I connect it to my kimoyo beads, will you find a map of Glasgow and tell us how to follow him?”

Ned nodded and quickly pulled his laptop out of his bag. “You’ve got it. I’ll have you guys parallel him so he doesn’t catch on.”

“Anything you want me to do?” MJ asked.

Shuri showed off four earpieces. “Can you relay what’s going on? While Ned’s giving us a route, we’re going to need eyes inside wherever Clint goes.” MJ nodded and tucked the earpiece in its place.

“You have earpieces too?!” Peter exclaimed, taking one for himself. “What the heck, Shuri?”
“It’s good to be prepared,” Shuri shrugged.

“Prepared for what? A James Bond movie?”

“Excuse me,” MJ scoffed, “we are much cooler than James Bond.”

“Agreed,” Ned added, tapping away at his keyboard. “Okay, I’ve got his signal loaded. You guys better hurry and catch up!”

Peter shrugged off his backpack and pulled out his web slingers and wallet. He tucked the latter in his back pocket and slid the slingers on his wrists. He would be ready for anything. Shuri decided to bring her entire backpack just in case they needed one of the many tools she had ready for them.

“Good?” he asked, opening the balcony door and stepping outside.

Shuri nodded and wrapped her arms around Peter’s shoulders. He shot a web and stuck it to the door and then carefully rappelled down to the street. He disconnected the web and they began to run.

“Ned, you copy?” Peter asked.

“Loud and clear dude,” Ned replied. “You guys need to turn right and go that way for a bit. Clint’s got a head start, but I can give you a shortcut.”

Peter and Shuri didn’t need to be told twice. They took off running down Abercromby Street. It was officially night time, and they weaved around people and between street lamp shadows.


They made the left and continued on. The farther they ran, the more Peter realized they didn’t have an actual plan for when they caught up with Clint.

“He stopped, guys,” MJ said.

Peter paused to catch his breath. “Where did he go?”

“Do you think he found the tracker?” Shuri asked.

They heard Ned attacking his keyboard. “Okay, I hacked the CCTV near where his tracker stopped. He doesn’t come out on the next street, so he must have gone in one of the buildings. Give me a minute and I’ll see if I can figure out which one.”

Peter started running again, Shuri following closely behind. Once Ned told them they were within three yards of the tracker, they stopped and blended into the shadows. The street was lined with pubs and little shops.

“Any luck?” Shuri asked.

“There he is!” they heard MJ exclaim. “He went into Old College Bar!”

“It’s to your left,” Ned added.

Peter and Shuri looked down and found the white lettering of the Old College Bar. It looked like your average hole-in-the-wall on the outside, with large windows and black finishes.

“Are they even going to let us in?” Peter asked skeptically.
Shuri shook her head. “I doubt it. In Europe, you need to be 18 in most places to drink.”

“Do you really have so little faith in us?” MJ chided. “If you go past the bar, there’s an alleyway. You should be able to sneak in the service entrance.”

“Let’s give it a shot,” Peter said, determination etched on his face. They quickly ducked into the side alley and found the door MJ was talking about. Peter kept watch while Shuri worked her magic to get the door open.

“Here we go,” Shuri whispered, turning the door knob. It opened with a soft click, and she and Peter snuck inside. They tiptoed down the dimly lit hallway, praying that no one would find them. Shuri reached the end of the hall first, and carefully peeked her head around.

“Do you see them?” Peter asked, leaning forward.

Shuri had to squint her eyes. Apparently, dark and dim were common features of this pub. She glanced around at the different tables and booths until she spotted a familiar head of spiky blonde hair. “I found them!” She ducked backwards and pointed Peter in the right direction. He found Clint talking with someone he thought looked like Black Widow. But instead of red hair, she now sported blonde locks that could rival Clint’s. They were both deep in conversation, two full glasses of beer in front of them.

“Guys, we found them,” Peter told Ned and MJ. “Now we’ve just gotta get closer.” He turned to Shuri. “Unless you have a magic bug or something.”

Shuri shook her head. “That is one thing I do not have.” She tapped her foot against the floor. Suddenly, her eyes brightened with an idea. “What if we get one of the earpieces close? Then we can hear what they’re saying!”

Peter looked skeptical. “Love the idea, but how will we get it over there?”

Shuri hummed thoughtfully. “Can you shoot a web and stick it to something nearby?” She pointed to the thick pillar supporting one of the tables near Clint.

Peter did the math in his head and nodded. “I think so.” He kneeled down as Shuri took out her earpiece. He extended his wrist and she held the device in front of his web slinger. Peter took a deep breath and was about to fire when Shuri stopped him.

“Wait!” she exclaimed. “Where did they go?”

Peter scrunched his nose. “Wha-?” He stood up and looked at where Clint and Black Widow had been sitting, but the table, and the beer glasses, were now empty.

“Ned, they’re gone!” Peter said.

“What?!” Ned clicked a few keys. “But the tracker is still inside the building! They haven’t left that spot!”

“Yeah, guys,” MJ said, “unless they’ve turned into ghosts, they should definitely still be there.”

“Peter, maybe you can use your spider abilities to find her!” Ned suggested eagerly.

Peter rolled his eyes, even though Ned couldn’t see him. “Dude, just because she’s called Black Widow doesn’t mean she’s an actual spider! My powers won’t work on-”
Peter’s voice got stuck in his throat as he felt a strong hand grip the back of his neck. Shuri let out a 
gasp as the same thing happened to her. Both of their earpieces were confiscated and smashed under 
the toe of a powerful boot, and the vice-like grip returned.

“Маленькые,” a voice whispered sweetly in their ears.

“Hasn’t anyone ever taught you to listen to your elders?”

Chapter End Notes

Nat says "little ones" in Russian at the end. I used Google Translate, please don't be mad if it's not super accurate.
Natasha Romanov never loosened her grip as she guided Peter and Shuri back out the service entrance and into the alley. Clint was waiting outside, leaning against a wall. Natasha gave the teens a gentle shove towards him.

“I told you that you were being followed,” she said with a smirk. “All that time in Brooklyn has made you soft.”

Clint glared at Peter and Shuri, who at least had the decency to look guilty. “I told you to stay put!” he seethed. “Did Strange put you up to this?” Despite his easy-going personality, Clint was quite capable of getting angry, and this was proving to be one of those times.

“We snuck out!” Peter exclaimed quickly, covering for Strange. “I just...I just needed to know what was going on!”

Clint poked a finger right into Peter’s chest, backing him up against the wall. “No,” he growled, “you didn’t trust me to handle the situation!” Peter’s eyes widened and his breathing picked up as Clint seemed to close in around him. He blinked rapidly as memories of the warehouse began to suffocate him.

“Clint,” Natasha said softly, “back up.”

Clint finally saw the terror etched on Peter’s face and stepped away. Peter slid down the wall and took a shaky breath as the cool night air washed over him. He felt something brush against his arm, and when he turned his head, he found Shuri sitting next to him. Her arm against his own grounded him back to reality, and the beginnings of his panic attack receded. He gave her a slight nod to let her know he was okay before turning his head back to focus on his knees. He gazed at the stitching pattern on his jeans as his breathing returned to normal.

“We’re sorry,” Peter said, finally looking up at Clint.

Clint sighed and nodded. “Thanks.” He cleared his throat. “Sorry for overreacting.” He sat down on the other side of Peter. “Do you guys ever listen to what people tell you?”

Peter and Shuri shrugged. “Sort of?” Peter replied with uncertainty.

“It varies from day to day,” Shuri added.

Clint scoffed and shook his head before lighting banging it against the brick wall. “Unbelievable,” he muttered. But his anger was already starting to diffuse.

They all stood in silence for a few moments until Natasha spoke. “Well isn’t this sweet,” she said wryly. “Тряпка.”
Clint rolled his eyes. “I’m not soft!”

“Just calling it like I see it,” she shrugged. She held out her hands and helped Peter and Shuri up. “I remember you from Germany.” She looked him up and down, and Peter blushed under her intense gaze. “A bit younger than I expected.”

“Natasha Romanov, meet Peter and Shuri,” Clint said, hopping to his feet.

Nat raised her eyebrows at Shuri. “You look just like your brother,” she commented.

“Ugh,” Shuri replied, wrinkling her nose.

Clint rubbed some of the gravel off his jeans and gestured towards the alley entrance. “Let’s go for a walk, huh?”

Peter nodded and sent a quick text to Ned and MJ letting them know that everything was fine and they had covered for Strange. He and Shuri followed Nat and Clint back onto the street, and they began to walk aimlessly in the night. Peter was trying to get back on Clint’s good side by not asking any questions, but he was practically bouncing on the tips of his toes. Shuri wasn’t much better.

The corners of Nat’s lips turned up in a small smile. “Как долго вы собираетесь их ждать?” she whispered softly to Clint. How long are you going to make them wait?

“As long as I want to,” he grumbled stubbornly.

So they kept walking.

And walking.

And walking.

Nat and Clint both seemed to lead the way at different points as they wandered around the city. Shuri and Peter used every bit of restraint not to question or talk, and their insides felt like they were going to explode.

Finally, after about half an hour of silent walking, Clint turned around and faced the teens. “Have you learned your lesson?” he asked.

Peter and Shuri practically collapsed in relief. “YES!” they shouted dramatically.

Nat and Clint chuckled, and he gripped the handle of the door closest to him. When Peter and Shuri looked up, they realized they had walked a really roundabout way to the apartment building. Peter led the way back to 1C and punched in the code at the door.

Ned, MJ, and Doctor Strange were all sitting at the table eating dinner. The thick smell of meat filled the air, and Peter and Shuri’s stomachs grumbled loudly. They had never gotten to eat before chasing after Clint.

“Well look who finally decided to show up,” Strange said, playing the part of a disapproving chaperone. “Did you have fun sneaking out?”
Before the teens could answer, Clint cut in. “Nice job there, doc. You didn’t even know they left!”

“Oh I knew they snuck out,” Strange replied. “But I also knew they’d be safe once they caught up with you.”

And that was probably the nicest thing he had said to Clint since they met.

“Oh,” Clint said, blinking. “That’s uh...well I...” He cleared his throat and gestured to Nat, ready to change the subject. “Everyone, this is Natasha Romanov.”


MJ held her plate up over her sketchbook. “You guys want food? Doctor Strange figured out how to cook that gammon stuff Clint bought.”

Everyone nodded eagerly, and soon, their plates will filled with meat and asparagus (the greens were on Strange’s orders). After getting some food in their stomachs, Nat was finally ready to talk.

“So,” she said, “let’s just cut all the formalities. I know the gist of why you’re in Scotland, and I’ve gotta say, I don’t know how successful you’re going to be. Rogers isn’t much into collaborating these days.”

“But you know where he is,” Peter stated.

Nat nodded. “Of course. We both went underground together after Germany.” She looked at Peter, who blushed under her intense gaze.

“Do you have any regrets about Germany?” Shuri asked.

“No,” Nat replied, shaking her head. “I did what I thought was right. I switched sides, betrayed people close to you.” She looked at Peter and Shuri as she said this. “But, I would do it again.”

“So Captain America came to hide in Scotland?” Ned asked.

Nat grinned at the use of Steve’s superhero name. “Yeah. I think he liked the idea of being closer to where his family got started. Go back to the beginning, you know? Before it was all a mess.”

Clint stole the rest of the meat off Nat’s plate. “So Steve’s doing okay?”

“As okay as anyone in that situation, I think,” she replied honestly. She looked over at MJ who was huddled over her sketchbook. “Are you drawing me?” she asked.

MJ held up a finger, signalling for her to wait. After a few more pencil strokes, she blew on the paper and displayed it for everyone. A rough line sketch of Nat and Clint stared back at them. Their elbows were practically touching as they both shared a meal on paper. MJ had managed to capture the subtle nuances of their friendship. Clint was looking at Nat while she was looking down at his hands. The way MJ drew their eyes showed the depth of their friendship. They could read each other with just one look.


“Can I keep that?” Nat asked. MJ nodded and tore out the page in the sketchbook. “Thanks,” she said, taking the paper.

“Aww, who’s the softie now?” Clint cooed teasingly.
A harsh boot against his foot told him it certainly wasn’t her. While Clint gripped his toe and cursed loudly at Nat, she stared calmly back at Peter.

“No, why don’t you tell me exactly why you’re looking for Steve,” she said.

So Peter did. He explained how he was working with Tony and what his mentor/father figure meant to him. How Tony and Bucky have started mending things. How maybe it was time the adults actually started acting like adults by apologizing and working through stuff instead of hiding from it.

He talked for almost forty-five minutes, and Nat’s eyes never left his during the entire explanation. By the time Peter was done, his throat was hoarse, and he was silently begging her to see why this was so important for him to do.

Nat tapped her fingers against the smooth glass table thoughtfully. “Okay,” she finally said. “Okay.”

Ned glanced between her and Peter. “Okay as in, you’re okay with the plan? Or okay as in I need to kill you all now?” Shuri and MJ both jammed their elbows into his ribs. “Ow!” he yelped.

“Well it is a valid question considering her skill set,” Strange replied, speaking for the first time in ages.

Thankfully, Nat chuckled. “Okay as in I won’t warn him you’re coming,” she replied. “He might decide to run if I give him a heads up.”

“Thank you,” Shuri said gratefully.

“But,” Nat warned, “you need to convince him to talk to Tony all on your own.” She quirked her brows. “And that might not be as easy as you think.”

Peter nodded. “Fair enough.” He cleared his throat, a sudden boldness taking over. “Have you thought about talking to Tony? About the whole switching side things.”


“It’s just a thought,” Peter said.

“Maybe you’re tired of running too,” Shuri added.

“Where did you find these kids again?” Nat asked Clint.

Clint scoffed. “They found me. They won’t go away.”

“Tell me about it,” Strange muttered.

“Hey!” Ned protested. “We make life interesting!”

Clint pointed to himself. “I fight aliens and bad guys for a living, and he,” he said, pointing to Strange, “can do magic things with his hands. We already have interesting lives.”

“You’d miss us if we were gone,” MJ replied with a simple shrug. “You can admit it, it’s okay.”

With that, Nat stood up. “Well this has been delightful. Thanks for the food. I’m sure we’ll be seeing each other again someday soon.” She walked over to the door and gripped the handle.

“Wait!” Ned exclaimed. “Is Captain Rogers in Kirkcaldy or Ayr?”
Nat gave them all a sly grin. “I said I wouldn’t warn him you were coming, but I never said I’d tell you where he is.”

And with that, she opened the door and disappeared down the hall.

“She’s so cool,” Shuri whispered as the door closed shut.

“You two seem like the least unlikely friends ever,” Ned said to Clint.

Clint laughed. “We balance each other out. Trust me, I bring as much to the friendship as she does.” He stacked the dinner plates on top of each other and put the pile of dishes in front of Peter and Shuri. “Have fun doing the dishes!”

“What?!” Peter and Shuri yelped.

“Consider it your official punishment for sneaking out,” Clint replied with a grin. He walked to the sofa and hopped over the back. He landed right on the Cloak of Levitation, which promptly yanked itself up and caused Clint to tumble onto the floor.

“So graceful,” Strange deadpanned. The Cloak floated over to him, and the teens watched as he secretly gave it a high five.

They hid their snickers as they carried the dishes over to the sink. Ned and MJ helped them wash the dishes while Clint settled on the couch to watch TV and Strange began to read a book on the balcony.

Peter filled the sink with warm water while Shuri pulled out dish detergent and soap. She squirted some in the sink before putting it on her sponge. Ned and MJ waited with dish rags to dry off the clean stuff. Shuri grinned mischievously and flicked a few soap bubbles at Peter.

“Hey!” he yelped, flicking some back at her. But, he got a little too over enthusiastic and splashed a bit of water at her too.

She gasped dramatically. “You did not!” MJ wordlessly handed Shuri her towel and Shuri began to whirl it around in a circle, the fabric coiling up tightly.


Shuri cracked the towel at Peter, who jumped back and began running around the apartment. He blocked the TV and practically vaulted onto the couch cushions, much to Clint’s dismay. MJ had somehow stolen Ned’s towel and was now chasing him around the apartment as well, the shenanigans infectious. They yelled and laughed as they each ran and tried to avoid each other.

Suddenly, Peter felt the floor drop from under him as he floated into the air. A gold light surrounded his entire body, and he turned until he was hanging upside down. He could hear the shouts of protest from his friends as the same thing happened to them.

Doctor Strange walked inside, golden circles hovering over his hands. He ignored their protests and walked them back over to the kitchen before unceremoniously dropping them in front of the sink.

“What do the dishes,” he said sternly, “or I’ll show you the extent of my skill set.”

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned quickly stood up and began to finish the dishes as Strange walked back out to the balcony to finish his chapter. Shuri let out a small giggle as the bubbles floated in the air. Peter tried to hold back a snort, but it came out anyway. MJ bit her lip, but she couldn’t stop the
laughter from building up and tumbling past her lips. Ned’s shoulders shook and tears filled his eyes as the four of them busted out laughing together, the sound drifting out to the living room and balcony.

And despite their best efforts, Clint and Doctor Strange couldn’t keep the smiles from taking over their faces as well.

Chapter End Notes

Natasha will be back, don't worry!!
In a surprise to end all surprises, Clint was the first one awake the next morning. He got a little revenge of his own by dumping some nice, cold water over the teens to wake them up. Their screams woke up Strange, who went to investigate the commotion. Peter and Ned practically knocked him off his feet as they rushed to try and escape Clint’s second cup. In an effort to get maximum payback, Clint launched the cup of water, nailing Strange right in the face.

“Oh no,” Clint said, backing away as Strange stood dripping in the hallway. The wizard’s eyes narrowed into impossibly thin slits, and his face turned an epic shade of red. Peter and Ned took refuge in Shuri and MJ’s room while Strange began to stalk Clint like prey.

Clint bolted, but not before Strange used his powers to trap him to the ceiling above the sink in the kitchen. He aimed the extendable hose up at the captured Avenger and gerryrigged it so it blasted a steady stream of cold water in his face. Strange nonchalantly made a cup of coffee at the opposite end of the kitchen while Clint spluttered.

“I want you ready to leave in twenty minutes!” Strange shouted to the teens.

They knew better than to argue, so they quickly rushed to get dressed. Strange let Clint down from the ceiling (rather, he dropped him), and handed him a mug of coffee. Clint shook his head, glaring at Strange, but taking the coffee nonetheless.

“They have such a weird relationship,” MJ whispered to Shuri as they peeked around the corner.

Shuri nodded in agreement. “Tell me about it.”

“Ten minutes!” Strange shouted.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ ran into the kitchen dressed and ready to go. They grabbed food for the train ride and hitched their backpacks over their shoulders. Clint reappeared from his room with damp hair but dry clothes. He finished his coffee with three big gulps and turned right back around to use the bathroom before they left.

Strange looked around the apartment. “Where’s the Cloak of Levitation?” he asked.

Ned pointed back to the room he and Peter shared. “It’s chilling on my bed. I think it liked the change of scenery.”

Strange nodded and accepted this fact. Peter, Shuri, and MJ decided to ignore the slight wiggling that was coming from Ned’s backpack.
Unlike the morning, the train ride itself was uneventful. Everyone stared out the window at the rolling hills and beautiful scenery. MJ, as usual, was sketching while the others preferred to capture the images on their cameras.

When the train pulled into Ayr an hour later, everyone grabbed their bags and hopped off onto the platform.

“Woah,” Peter said, stepping out into the sunlight. “It’s almost like Bodø!”

And he was right. Ayr was a small coastal town with brightly colored houses and boats docked in the nearby harbor. The smell of salt drifted through the air as the sun shone through thick, fluffy clouds. While the buildings had a similar architecture as the ones in Glasgow, these ones seemed more...quaint. They were shorter, for one, and there wasn’t the bustling crowds of people everywhere. Peter could understand why a place like this would appeal to Captain Rogers.

“So where is this place?” Clint asked.

Shuri pulled out her tablet and uploaded the coordinates. “It’s about five minutes from town,” she replied. “Right near the water.”

Strange gestured in front of him. “Lead the way.”

The walk to the cottage was calm and peaceful. The only words exchanged were when Shuri told them to change directions. While Peter may have been silent on the outside, his insides were storming. His grip on his backpack got tighter and tighter the closer they got to the cottage. He had mentally prepared himself with what he wanted to say, but now that they were possibly close, he was getting nervous. What if he messed up? What if something went wrong? What if this wasn’t even the right place?

Ned, sensing his friend’s distress, casually bumped his shoulder. “It’ll be fine,” he promised.

“And if it’s not?” Peter asked, acknowledging the possibility of failure for the first time.

“Then we figure it out,” Ned shrugged, as if the answer was obvious. “Together, like we always do.”

Peter smiled, his confidence slightly renewed. He was so focused on his on small conversation with Ned that he almost ran into a man in a black peacoat. Thankfully, his spidey senses kicked in at the last second, and he only brushed the man’s arm.

“Sorry!” the man exclaimed. His pale face was accentuated by his bright blonde hair, and Peter was surprised to hear him speak with a British accent.

“It was my fault-” Peter started to say, but the man already ducked his head back down and weaved around Strange and Clint, who were arguing yet again. Peter kept walking, but he stared after the man, as if he were familiar.

“Better watch it,” MJ teased. “With your luck, you’ll trip and fall when you meet Captain America again.”

Peter stuck his tongue out, but he almost did trip over Shuri as she stopped in front of him. They were in front of a one-story brown cottage with a rows of flowers framing the path to the front door. If Peter craned his neck far enough, he could make out the shoreline near the ocean around the back.

“This is it,” Shuri confirmed, double checking her tablet.
No one made a move to go to the front door.

“Do we just...knock?” MJ asked.

Strange held up his hands and took a step back. “This is your mission. I’m just supervising.”

Clint nodded. “What he said.”

Peter looked at his friends. “Let’s try knocking.” They walked over the round stepping stones that led to the front door. Peter swallowed thickly and took a deep breath as he held his fist over the sun-bleached wood. He exhaled and knocked three times.

No one answered.

“Try again?” Shuri suggested after a few moments had passed. “Maybe he didn’t hear you.”

So, Peter tried again. Still, nothing.

“He could be out,” Ned said. “Just because no one’s answering doesn’t mean he’s not here.”

“Or he could be at the place in Kirkcaldy,” Shuri added.

Was Peter disappointed? Sure. But he wasn’t going to give up. Just as he was going to recommend a new course of action, something odd happened.

The front door squeaked as it opened just a crack.

Everyone stared at the door cautiously, as if they couldn’t believe what they had just witnessed.

“Haunted house?” Ned gulped.

Strange gave Clint a slight nod, and they both moved to the front of the pack. Clint had already unsheathed his bow from his backpack while Strange began creating small circles in front of his hands. Clint carefully opened the door and stepped inside the house, Strange following closely behind.

Peter quickly unzipped his bag and pulled on his web slingers while Shuri attached smaller version of her panther blasters to her wrists. MJ and Ned effortlessly moved into formation behind them as they crept inside the house after Strange and Clint.

The inside of the house seemed normal enough. The teens walked into a small living room with a thick oriental rug covering the middle of the floor. Then, it opened up to a kitchen with tall windows everywhere. They could clearly see the river Ayr past the backyard, and there was also a small garden along the edge of the house.

Peter and Shuri walked cautiously to the left hallway and were greeted by a bedroom. The sheets and blankets were pulled up to the top of the bed, but the wrinkles on the fabric indicated that someone had slept there recently. Peter motioned backwards, and they all tiptoed across the hall to the second bedroom. The king-sized bed was was immaculate, and Peter knew it had been unoccupied for some time.

MJ had acquired a random umbrella from somewhere in the house and decided to branch off to check out the lone bathroom. Deodorant, two toothbrushes, and various shampoos stood neatly on the counter, lined up like soldiers ready for battle. She ducked back out into the hallway and met up with her friends.
“No one,” Peter whispered. “There’s no one here.”

“Is there a basement we missed?” Shuri asked.

Ned shook his head. “I didn’t see any other doors.”

“Then how did the front door open?” MJ wondered softly. Suddenly her eyes widened. “There’s no other doors!” she exclaimed in a frantic whisper.

“We already established that!” Peter replied, quirking his eyebrows.

MJ rolled her eyes as if the answer was obvious. “If there’s no other doors, and we haven’t found anyone, where the heck are Doctor Strange and Clint?”

Shuri gasped. “You’re right! They came in first! We should have at least seen them!”

Suddenly, a heavy THUNK echoed from the front of the house. The teens whirled their heads around, and held their breaths. Another solid THUNK could be heard from the same direction as the first.

Without really thinking, Peter rushed back into the front living area. He let out a yelp as he found Doctor Strange and Clint passed out on the floor by the fireplace. A woman with loose, curly hair stood over them, red mist pouring out of her fingers. She glanced up as Peter, MJ, Ned, and Shuri raised their arms and prepared to attack. The woman effortlessly lifted her right hand, and Peter felt his own arms point up towards the ceiling, held their by some invisible force. He tried to yell, but nothing came out. The others were soon immobilized as well, terror etched on their faces as they struggled against their invisible bonds.

Peter heard the click of the deadbolt, and when his eyes darted back to the front door, he saw the man in the black peacoat take his hand off the latch. He walked over to the teens and gently confiscated their weapons. With a flick of her wrist, the woman released them, and they collapsed onto the floor, panting heavily.

“I...I know you!” Peter finally managed to get out. He pointed a shaky finger at the woman. “I know you!” he repeated.

She smiled kindly at Peter, and he realized she really wasn’t that much older than him. “Hello, Peter,” she said, her voice tinted with a soft accent.

“G-Ger-Germany?” Shuri asked, still reeling from their capture. Peter nodded, his eyes darting over to Clint and Strange.

The woman caught his gaze. “They’re just asleep,” she promised. “I wouldn’t hurt them. My name is Wanda Maximoff.”

“Well,” the man said, clearing his throat. He removed his coat and tossed it over the back of one of the chairs as did his best to smile at the teens.

“Would anyone care for a cup of tea?”

Chapter End Notes
More new characters! Yay!! :D
Hey peeps! After tomorrow, my posts are going to start getting more sporadic. Time to go back and teach the future leaders of our world!! :D

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ sat warily at the kitchen table across from Wanda while the man waited patiently at the stove for the tea to boil. Clint and Doctor Strange had been moved to the couch, where they were both still sleeping peacefully.

When Natasha Romanov stared at the teens, they felt like she knew all their secrets. But as Wanda stared at them, they felt like she knew their souls. It was an unnerving feeling, and they tried to keep their thoughts as neutral as possible. But with their chaperones passed out from some mind magic on a random couch in Scotland (while on a mission to find Captain America on top of it all), neutral was the last thing on anyone’s mind.

The sharp whistling of the kettle broke Wanda’s gaze from the group, and she smiled at the man as he poured steaming water into five mugs. Peter still couldn’t shake the feeling that he knew the mysterious stranger from somewhere.

“Here you go,” the man said, placing the mugs on the table. Small bags of English Breakfast tea floated at the tops of the mugs, and Wanda used her powers to pass them out.

“You’re not drinking any?” MJ asked, looking at the man.

He shook his head. “I do not need to eat or drink to sustain myself,” he replied.

Memories of Germany came rushing back to Peter. “You’re the red guy!” he exclaimed, finally placing the android. “From the airport!”

“Yes,” the man smiled. “But instead of ‘the red guy’ you can call me Vision.”

“But,” Ned said slowly, “you’re not red right now.”

Vision nodded. “I am able to change my appearance to blend in to my surroundings. My normal red skin would not bode well here.”

Wanda blew on her tea before taking a small sip. “I must say, I’m surprised to see you all here. Steve made it so it would be extremely difficult to find us.”

“Does he know we’re here?” Peter asked, concern filling his voice.

Wanda shook her head. “Not yet. Care to explain?”

So for what felt like the millionth time, Peter told her why they were in Scotland and why they needed to find Captain America. Wanda visibly bristled at the mention of Tony’s name, and Vision gently rested his hand on her forearm.
When Peter was finished explaining, Wanda sighed. “You do realize Tony needs to accept responsibility for some of the things that happened in Germany too, right? Your heart is in a good place, but you really don’t know or understand all that happened.”

Shuri cut in before Peter could go on the defensive. “Of course. But Captain Rogers was wrong too. He shouldn’t have hidden the fact that Bucky killed Tony’s parents. That wasn’t right.”

“And what do you hope to accomplish if you can get them to talk?” Wanda asked, rubbing the rim of her mug with her thumb.

“World peace?” MJ joked, causing Wanda to actually smile.

“Or at least some peace,” Peter added in a serious tone. “They were friends. They fought together. This can’t be the thing that tears them apart.”

“And if they cannot work out their differences?” Wanda asked softly.

Peter shrugged. “Then I drop it. But at least I can say I tried.”

Wanda’s gaze bore into Peter, and he could practically feel her inside his thoughts. Her powers tickled the inside of his brain, and he took a deep breath and let her in so she could see everything. “You really care about him,” Wanda whispered after a few moments.

“Yeah,” Peter nodded. “We all do.”

“But you,” she replied, “have a bit more invested than the others.” They all sat and drank their tea, pondering everything that was said. Wanda finally turned to Vision. “What do you think?”

Vision looked at the teens and then back at Wanda before taking her hand in his own. “I think,” he said, interlacing their fingers, “we should go to the beach.”

“The beach?” Ned asked, scrunching his nose. “What’s at the beach?”

Instead of answering, Vision stood up and helped Wanda out of her chair. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ all looked at each other as the two adults opened the back door and walked outside.

Shuri was the first to abandon her tea mug and follow them out the door. Peter and MJ quickly went after her while Ned ran into the living room to get his backpack. He managed to find an old receipt and a pen inside the front pocket, so he quickly scribbled a note for Clint and Strange to find in case they woke up. He stuck it on Clint’s forehead before heading outside himself.

He jogged to catch up with his friends, who were already at the edge of the sand. Vision and Wanda sat just above the water’s reach as the waves ebbed and flowed in front of them. Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned pulled off their shoes and walked across the coarse sand. Ned looked around him to confirm that no one else was around before unzipping his backpack. The Cloak of Levitation spilled out, stretching itself in the warm sunlight.

“I knew it!” Shuri exclaimed. “Sneaky!”

“Quick!” Peter hissed to the Cloak. “Pretend you’re a beach blanket or something.”

The Cloak was more than happy to oblige as it spread out on the sand and began to sun itself. Wanda and Vision chuckled, completely unphased by the magical cloak. The teens sat down and stared at the water.
“So why’d we come here?” MJ asked.

Vision smiled and tilted his head towards the sun. “Because sometimes you just need to think in front of the water.” Wanda leaned her head against his shoulder, and it became extremely clear that this was a tradition they had been doing for a while.

“So cute!” Shuri mouthed to her friends.

Peter smiled and allowed himself to fall back against the sand. His mind wandered aimlessly as the water crashed gently in front of him. MJ had left her sketchbook inside, but she closed her eyes and began to commit the images of the beach to memory. Ned laid down and began to snore softly as the rhythmic flow of water put him to sleep.

“So you wish things were different?” Shuri asked Wanda and Vision. She curled her knees into her chest and rested her chin on top of them.


“Yes,” Vision agreed, “the family is not quite what it used to be.”

Wanda’s ears perked up as something behind caught her attention. “Welcome back!” she called over her shoulder. “Did you enjoy your nap?”

Peter and the others sat up and watched as Clint and Doctor Strange walked over. They were surprised that the two men did not seem more distressed about being forced to sleep. Wanda stood up and brushed the sand off her jeans and reached out to hug Clint. He wrapped her in his embrace, and she melted into his arms, her head resting on his shoulder.

“Missed you, kid,” he whispered.

“You too,” she replied, giving him a tight squeeze.

Clint pulled back and nodded at Vision. “This is a nice look for you,” he said with a grin. “Sorry for trying to shoot you...well...you know when.”

Vision returned the smile and waved Clint off. “I forgive you. And please accept my own apologies as well.”

Clint nodded. “This is Doctor Stephen Strange,” he said, pointing to his companion.

“Hello,” Strange replied with a small wave. “If you’re thinking about knocking us out again, do me a favor and don’t.”

“Yeah!” Clint exclaimed. “What was all that about anyway?”

Wanda nodded her head at the teens. “I was more interested in hearing what they had to say,” she teased. “You just got in the way.”

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ snickered while Clint protested his importance with Wanda. Strange looked over and saw the Cloak sunning itself. “Is that the Cloak of Levitation?!” he exclaimed.

“What?” Ned asked, pretending to be surprised. “No way!”

“We borrowed a blanket from Wanda,” Shuri lied. She lifted up the edge of the Cloak and let it go. The Cloak played dead, so it fluttered aimlessly back to the ground.
“Mmm hmm,” Strange hummed, unconvinced.

Clint gestured between Wanda and Vision. “So how long has this been going on?” he asked.


“Oh it’s there,” Clint laughed. He looked over and watched as Peter, Shuri, Ned and MJ made their way to the water. They screeched as the cold liquid splashed around their ankles. MJ ducked down and swiped at the waves, getting Peter right in the torso. He began chasing her around, trying to get revenge. Shuri hopped on Ned’s back, and he charged at the other two, laughing all the while.

“They seem like good kids,” Wanda observed.

“They are,” Strange and Clint replied together. They looked at each other, brows raised, as if they couldn’t believe they had agreed on something.

“Do you think they can convince Steve and Tony to talk?” Vision asked.

Strange shrugged. “Who knows. They’re really determined to try though.”

“He’s at the cottage in Kirkcaldy, right?” Clint asked. “Since he’s not here with you.”

Wanda nodded. “He and I alternate cottages every month to keep suspicious eyes away. How did you figure it out?”

Clint pointed at the group. “They did. Ned and Shuri did some major hacking, and Peter and MJ helped orchestrate the whole trip here.” He bumped Wanda with his shoulder. “You going to tell Cap we showed up?”

“No,” Wanda replied. “This might be good for him. But, Clint, please do me a favor.” She looked up at Clint with pleading eyes.

“What?”

“Please don’t tell him about Vision and I. And make sure Tony apologizes too.”

Strange and Clint corralled the teens and made them get ready to head back to Glasgow. Ned shook out the “beach blanket” and folded it up into his backpack while Strange wasn’t looking. Wanda and Vision lent them some towels to dry off. Soon, they were ready to leave.

“It was good seeing you,” Wanda said, giving Clint one last hug.

Vision shook Strange’s hand. “I hope we run into each other again someday,” he said. “I feel like we’d all have much in common.”

Strange grinned. “You can look me up whenever you’re in New York.”

“If,” Wanda corrected.

“Well hopefully it’ll be a ‘when’ soon,” Peter chimed in.
“Nice meeting you,” MJ said.

“Thanks for not, you know, knocking us out,” Ned added.

Shuri waved as she led the group out the door. “Bye!”

They all walked down the sidewalk back towards the train station with a new plan in mind. Get back to Glasgow to rest up for the night.

Then travel to Kirkcaldy and find Captain America once and for all.

Chapter End Notes

So here's a little Wanda and Vision fluff because the next chapter is going to be angsty. Not physical angst, but emotional angst. So, be prepared :)
Chapter Notes

Okay, friends, I think if there is any chapter that you dislike/disagree with, it might be this one. Please give it a chance and read my reasoning in the end notes. Thank you so, so much!!

There won't be an update until possibly Thursday, so just a heads up! I'll answer comments when I can, and please feel free to leave your thoughts and (constructive) criticism! :D

This was it. The moment they had been waiting for since they picked up Ned from San Francisco. They had gotten back to Glasgow the night before to recharge and prepare for today. Everyone slept restlessly knowing what was ahead. The final boss battle, as Peter and Ned liked to think of it. After a tense train ride filled with anticipation and nerves, the group was finally in Kirkcaldy, Scotland ready to face Captain America himself.

They all stood about 500 yards away from the small cottage near the Firth of Forth estuary. It looked normal enough with a white exterior and red thatched roof. Shuri pocketed her tablet and gently pushed Peter forward. He took her cue and led everyone to the front door.

“Here goes nothing,” he said more to himself than anyone else. He knocked on the door, each rap of knuckles against wood echoing wildly in his chest.

The door opened, and Natasha Romanov appeared with a smirk on her face.

“You must have made quite the impression on Wanda,” she said, impressed. “She never even told us you made it to Ayr.”

“We’re good like that,” MJ shot back with a slight nod of her head. “Can we come in or what?”

“By all means,” Nat replied, opening the door wider.

While the outside of the house looked older, the inside was actually quite modern. Light wood floors and stainless steel appliances greeted them as they all crowded in the kitchen.

“Nice place,” Strange said to be polite.

Heavy footsteps thudded as they came down the wooden stairs on the other side of the hall. “Nat?” a voice called. “Is someone here? I thought I heard…” The voice trailed off as Steve Rogers walked downstairs. He looked much more rugged than his poster-boy days with long hair and a shaggy beard. His eyes had dark bags under them, and he walked with the air of a man who was exhausted.

His face flickered over each of the teens and then moved to Strange and Clint. His eyes widened as he recognized his friend.

“Barton?” he practically gasped. “Wha-?” His mouth opened and closed like a fish out of water.
Clint gently moved Shuri and Ned aside to embrace the super soldier. “Yeah, good to see you too.” He clapped Steve on the back.

“How did you-?”

“These four were pretty determined to talk to you,” Clint replied, nodding his head at Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ.

“Very determined,” Strange added dryly.

Steve looked over at Strange. “I’m sorry, have we met?” he asked, wrinkling his brow.

“Doctor Stephen Strange,” Strange replied. “And no, not yet, but considering our job descriptions, it really was only a matter of time.”

“And you’re all here to talk to me?” Steve crossed his arms over his chest. His brain was completely overwhelmed and only processing some of the information being thrown at him. “Is something wrong? What’s going on?”

“You guys!” Ned hissed. “It’s Captain America!”

Ignoring him, Peter swallowed and stepped forward. “I wanted to talk to you, actually,” he said. “About Tony Stark.”

Steve’s gaze bore into Peter so intensely that the teen felt like it would split him in two. “You’re the kid from Queens,” he said softly. “You’re actually a kid…”

“Peter,” Shuri said. “His name’s Peter. And I’m Shuri. I believe you know my brother.”

Steve looked over at Shuri. “T’Challa?” She nodded. “I...yeah, I know him.” Apparently, the surprises kept coming.

Nat gestured towards the back door. “Why don’t you and Peter talk out by the bay?” she suggested. “The rest of us can occupy ourselves until you finish.”

“You know what this is about?” he asked her.

Nat just tilted her head towards the door and gave him a small smile as she lightly shrugged her shoulders.

Steve’s incredulous expression never faded as he moved to the back door and guided Peter outside. Shuri, MJ, and Ned gave him a thumbs up before disappearing with Nat towards the front of the house.

The short walk through the backyard to the bay was silent. Peter could feel Steve sizing him up, which threw him off. But it would be okay. He and MJ had been practicing what to say and how to say it.

“You wanna sit here?” Steve asked, motioning to some rocks on the ground. Peter had been so occupied with his thoughts that he didn’t even realize they had reached their destination.

“Uh, sure,” he replied, quickly sitting down.

For a while, neither of them said anything. The silence hung between them like a heavy blanket as the sounds of nature crashed around them. Finally, Steve cleared his throat.
“You know Nat?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Peter replied. “We ran into her when we first got to Scotland. We were looking for you and she found us first.”

Steve let out a soft chuckle. “Sounds like her. And she didn’t tell me about you because…?”

“She made us figure out where to find you on our own. We already went to the cottage in Ayr.”

Steve was impressed. “You’ve met Wanda, then.”

“Oh yeah,” Peter said with a laugh. “She was fun.”

Steve smiled back. “So, you’re, uh, Spiderman,” he said.

“Yeah,” Peter nodded.

“You’re working with Tony, then?”

“Sort of,” Peter replied. “I haven’t been on any major missions since...well, since Germany. I kind of work exclusively in my neighborhood though.” He looked down and smiled. “Helping the little guy, you know?”

Steve nodded and let out a light chuckle, remember a time when he would have been considered the little guy. “How is Tony?” he asked softly.

“He’s...he’s good,” Peter said. “He and Pepper got married. Well, they eloped, actually.”

Steve looked over in shock. “Really? Tony got married?”

“And Pepper’s pregnant,” Peter added, practically dropping a bombshell over Steve’s head.

“Wow,” was all Steve could say. “Wow.”

Peter took a deep breath and prepared his speech. “Yeah, I was surprised too. But I got to be there. When they got married, I mean. And when Pepper told him she was pregnant. That was an awesome day.” Peter smiled fondly as he remembered his exchange with Tony in front of the elevator. “And since all this stuff is happening with him, and you’re pretty important to him...I thought that maybe...well I thought that maybe you two would be able to talk.”

“Talk?” Steve asked.

“I just...it’s...well...” Peter struggled to find the right words. Be direct, he heard MJ say inside his head. Don’t sidestep the issue. “Don’t you think it’s time you two apologized to each other?”

Steve’s jaw tightened, his defenses rising. “I sent Tony a letter,” he said stiffly.

“Yeah, but I mean really talk,” Peter said. “Get it all out.”

Steve shook his head. “Kid, with all due respect, you really don’t know the full picture.”

“I know that you hid the fact that Bucky killed his parents,” Peter shot back. “I know that killed him because you were supposed to be his friend.” Don’t get defensive, MJ has also warned. You won’t convince him of your point that way. Whoops.

If Steve was surprised that Peter knew this information, he didn’t show it. “I thought I was protecting
“Protecting him?!” Peter scoffed. “By lying to him for years?! Friends don’t do that!” He bit his lip to prevent himself from saying more as he stood up and looked away.

Steve stood up and squared off with Peter. “Friends also don’t betray each other to the government,” he said firmly. “Or go recruiting kids to fight their battles for them.”

Peter stood toe to toe with Captain America. “I’m sixteen,” he said sternly, never breaking eye contact.

“You. Are. A. Child.” Steve punctuated each word with a step towards Peter, slowly backing him up. “And Tony should have known better.”

“I can take care of myself,” Peter replied, too hyped up on adrenaline to focus on Steve closing in. “I have powers.”

“Okay, you can take care of yourself?” Steve scoffed. “Fine. Think about this then. Did Tony ever tell you what happened after the airport? What they did to Wanda? To Clint even?” He shook his head in disbelief. “When they stayed behind in Germany, what do you think happened to them? You think they got a cushy cell? Think again.”

Deep down, Steve knew it was wrong to take his anger out on a kid, but it had been building up for so long, and he was so, so tired. Tired of running, tired of fighting, tired of feeling like his only purpose in life was to fight. There were too many things left unspoken. He had tried to be diplomatic in his letter to Tony. Truthful even. But some wounds were still fresh, and now that he had started, he couldn’t stop.

“And he got you involved in this entire mess,” he continued. “Tell me, for a man that’s going to be a father, how responsible is that?” Steve stared down at Peter. “That doesn’t sound like a good father to me.”

Peter knew Tony had kept secrets about Germany from him to protect him. He also knew there was a lot of regret buried in those secrets. He had hinted as much outside the elevator. But Steve had touched a nerve in Peter so raw that he felt like he might burst with anger. The second Steve saw Peter’s face fall, he knew he had taken it too far. But it was too late, and you can’t take back words once they’re spoken.

Without really thinking, Peter reached out and shoved Steve. Despite his enhanced super soldier abilities, the teen’s push actually managed to knock him off balance.

“Screw you!” Peter grunted, shoving him again. “Screw YOU!”

“Peter-”

“You don’t think he has regrets?!” Peter shouted. “You don’t think he knows he needs to apologize too? You don’t think he knows that he wasn’t RIGHT?!” He felt tears prickle his eyes as he pushed Steve again. “Of course he knows! But you don’t get to call him a bad father. You hear me?!” An angry cry escaped his throat as he gave one final push. “I said DO YOU HEAR ME?!”

Steve stumbled backwards and nearly tripped on the rocks before managing to catch himself. He watched as Peter panted heavily and swiped at the tears falling down his cheeks. Clearly, Tony meant the world to this kid.

“Peter, I’m sorry,” Steve whispered. “I shouldn’t have said that.”
“H-He’s not a b-b-bad father,” Peter said shakily.

Steve didn’t miss how Peter left out “going to be” from his sentence. “I know,” he replied, his heart sinking.

“Because he’s not.”

“Peter, I know.”

“He’s not,” Peter repeated, his voice barely a whisper now. His shoulders sagged heavily as he realized his mission was a complete and utter failure. His plan had been so perfect, and he messed it up by getting angry. He literally shoved Captain America. And yet, Peter found himself speaking up one more time.

“Can’t you both just try? Please?”

Chapter End Notes

So, I HATED that stupid apology letter from Steve in CW. I think it could have been written way better. Both Tony and Steve were in the wrong about different things in that movie (which this whole scene draws from).

Peter is a child (yes, an older teen, but still a child). He literally only knows about what he saw and what Tony told him about why he went to Germany (which, let's be real, wasn't a whole lot). Plus, he cares so much about Tony, so he has a lot of bias in this situation. Hence, why he got mad at Steve so fast. Also, I take some liberties and assume Peter knows/found out about Tony's parents. I don't think it's a huge reach, personally.

Steve would 100% be pissed to learn that Peter is a child, which is why I wrote him the way I did. Also, after leaving the only life he knew, there is no way he's not still some kind of bitter over what happened, apology letter or not. Yes, he would still answer the phone if Tony needed him, but I have no doubt there's still some anger there.

I hope this helps clarify things! As always, thanks for reading!
“Okay.”

Peter looked up at Steve, who was staring out at the water. “Really?” the teen asked, wiping the last of his tears from his cheeks.

Steve nodded. “I can’t promise it’ll be right now,” he said. “But I’ll try.”

Peter quickly stood up and shuffled over to the super soldier. “That’s all I’m asking for. Just to try.”

The corners of Steve’s mouth lifted slightly. “You’re a good kid. And I really am sorry about what I said.”

“You were angry,” Peter replied softly. “It means you care.” He cleared his throat and looked Steve in the eye. “I forgive you.” Suddenly, he broke out into a grin and held out his arms. “See? Easy right?” he joked.

Steve let out a laugh at that one. “If only!”

Peter smiled wistfully as his gaze drifted back to the water. “Yeah. If only.”

After a few moments of silence, Steve clapped Peter’s shoulder. “We should head back, huh?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Peter replied, raising his brows. “Who knows what they’re up to.”

When Steve and Peter walked up the stone path leading back to the house, they found the others in the front yard. They were all paired up together, and Nat was leading MJ, Shuri, and Ned through some self-defense exercises.

“The biggest pressure points on a person are their eyes, nose, groin, and knees,” Nat said, pointing to each body feature. “If you’re ever faced against someone, aim there first.” She motioned for Shuri to hold out her arm. “If someone does manage to grab you by the wrist, turn your arm so your thumb is on the same side as their thumb.” She gripped Shuri’s wrist and rotated it. “Your perp’s thumbs are going to be weaker, so one nice yank should free you up, plus it knocks them off balance. You guys try.”

Clint grabbed Ned’s wrist while Doctor Strange grabbed MJ’s. Once Nat had Shuri in a tight grip, she nodded her head. The teens all quickly twisted their arms and yanked. MJ managed to pull Strange all the way to the ground, surprising him with her strength. Clint and Ned smacked their heads together, but the teen still managed to escape. Shuri also broke her grip, but Nat challenged her by grabbing on to her opposite wrist and making her repeat the exercise.
“You want avoid hitting heads,” Clint winced, rubbing the tender spot on his forehead. Ned chuckled sheepishly as his own face turned red.

MJ, meanwhile, helped Strange back up to his feet. “You’re pretty strong,” he observed, a hint of pride in his voice. “But not everyone will take it easy on you.”

MJ raised her brows and held her wrist out again as a challenge. Strange smirked as he accepted, and was on his ass again less than ten seconds later. Shuri and Ned bowed down to MJ as she preened from their praises. Clint was practically rolling on the ground, clutching his sides as Strange picked himself back up again.

Nat grinned and spotted Steve and Peter in her peripheral. “Want to join the fun?” she asked, turning to them.

Steve quirked his brow. “I think we both know who’d win,” he smirked.

“Uh, yeah,” Peter replied. “Me.”

Shuri, MJ, and Ned gasped dramatically as Steve crossed his arms and stared down the teen. “I dropped a storage container on you,” Steve said. “Remember?”

Peter scoffed. “Only because I let you,” he bragged.

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah.”

Steve stood nose to nose with Peter, an amused smile playing on his face. “Put on the suit,” he challenged, “let’s go a few rounds.”

Peter glanced back at his friends, who were gesturing and silently egging him on. Ned looked like he was about to pass out from excitement over the entire exchange, while MJ had her sketchbook open and ready to go. Shuri had her kimoyo beads on record mode, and she gave Peter a thumbs up. Strange and Clint just stood by to watch how the entire thing would pan out. He turned back to Steve, his arms stretched out wide.

“I don’t need my suit to beat you,” he said confidently.

Nat gave Steve a small nod from over Peter’s head. The super soldier widened his stance and held up closed fists.

“Bring it on,” he said, his smile growing wider.

Peter crouched down, preparing to battle. He quickly yanked his cell phone out of his pocket and tossed it to his friends. Nat stood between the two and held out her arm.

“Clean fight,” she ordered. Peter and Steve nodded. “Three, two one...start!”

Peter pounced forward, aiming for Steve’s arms. The super soldier dodged the attack easily, and knocked Peter’s legs out from under him. He moved with such intense speed that Peter could barely keep up, despite his incredible reflexes. Before the teen knew what was happening, he felt himself being lifted up off the ground. His stomach dropped as he flew through the air, the wind whistling in his ears until...

...he landed all the way into the water.
“You should have seen your face!” Ned exclaimed, his cheeks wet from crying because he was laughing so hard. “It was like this!” He widened his eyes and then opened his mouth in a mid-scream as he held his hands near his ears.

“You can!” MJ laughed, pulling out her sketchbook. She showed the group a quick sketch of Peter’s shocked face right at the apex of Steve’s throw.

Shuri pounded on the table, gasping from laughter. “I’ll do you one better! I can show you!” She proceeded to pull up a holographic video and show everyone a 3D video of the toss.

Peter turtled himself in the thick blanket Nat had given him and aggressively sipped his hot chocolate as his ears burned red. “Yeah, yeah, yeah,” he grumbled. “We get it.”

Steve smiled good naturedly at Peter and passed him the bag of marshmallows. Clint made Shuri replay the video again, and had her pause it right went Peter’s face seemed to be squished by the force of the wind.

“Now that,” Clint said, “is a fantastic image.”

“It’s a good look for you,” Strange smirked, drinking his hot chocolate. Peter tossed a marshmallow at his forehead in protest. Everyone burst out laughing, even Peter. Apparently, Tony had been right. Steve really did take it easy on him in Germany.

The dryer buzzed in the mud room, and Steve stood up and checked on Peter’s clothes. He had offered to lend the teen some shorts and a t-shirt while his clothes dried. Despite Peter’s physical stature, he was practically swimming in the borrowed garments (no pun intended).

“So,” Steve said, tossing Peter’s clothes at him, “I don’t know what time you plan on heading back, but there’s a local pub not far from here. They don’t bother us or ask too many questions. Would you like to stay for dinner?”

Ned’s eyes widened at the prospects of eating dinner with Captain America AND Black Widow. “Uh, yeah!” he replied enthusiastically.

MJ shrugged indifferently. “I’m cool with that.”

Shuri and Peter both nodded. Peter looked at Strange and Clint, who pretended to be thinking it over. “Please?” Peter asked. “We’ll be so good the rest of the trip.”

“Cross our hearts and hope to die,” Shuri promised.

Strange let out a small chuckle. “Now that, I would pay to see.”

“Yeah, we’ll stay,” Clint decided. “It’ll be nice to catch up.”

They all gathered their things and headed out, choosing to walk instead of drive. Since it was the middle of summer, and there was no rain in sight, the sun was still shining. Steve hung back with Shuri and Peter while the others walked slightly ahead with Nat.

Steve cleared his throat. “So, Shuri...I know this isn’t my place to ask. When I dropped Bucky off at Wakanda, I promised I would leave him to get better.”
Shuri smiled knowingly at Steve. “Bucky is doing very well,” she replied. “His treatments have gone better than expected.”

Peter nodded. “He’s a really cool guy.”

“You’ve met him?” Steve asked, shock evident in his voice.

“Yeah. I stayed in Wakanda last summer. Bucky helped Tony and T’Challa get us out of a slight mess.”

“Wait,” Steve said, turning to look at Peter and Shuri. “Tony’s met Bucky?”

Peter gulped, realizing his mistake. “Um...yeah?”

“And they’re both still alive?” Steve asked incredulously.

Shuri nodded. “I believe they came to a type of truce,” she replied. “We don’t know all the details.”

Steve shook his head. “I don’t...I don’t even know what to say to that.”

“You haven’t talked to Bucky since he came to Wakanda?” Peter asked.

“I didn’t want to jeopardize his recovery,” Steve replied. “T’Challa sends me some updates, but he’s busy and too much communication puts all of this at risk.” He waved his arm over the sidewalk to signal Kirkcaldy.

“Well...” Peter said slowly. “What if you could keep up with him?”

“How?”

“Do you have a cell phone?” Shuri asked, picking up on Peter’s idea. Steve pulled out a flip phone, and she hummed in disapproval. “No, like a real cell phone.”

“This is a real cell phone,” Steve insisted.

“On what planet?” Shuri mumbled. She cleared her throat and wracked her brain for ideas. “Okay, just use Peter’s for now. I’ll get you set up with an untraceable phone later.”

Peter pulled out his phone and opened his barely-used Tumblr app. He pulled up Bucky’s blog and showed it to Steve.

“What is this?” Steve asked, trying to focus on walking and looking down at the phone in Peter’s hands at the same time.

“It’s called Tumblr,” Peter explained. “It’s kind of like a blog. You can type posts up about your life. Or reblog stuff other people create.”

“Reblog?”

“Let’s focus on one thing at a time,” Shuri backtracked. “We thought giving Bucky a blog would help him recover. He’s actually become quite the Internet sensation.”

“It’s totally the goats,” Peter added. “People love the goats.”

Now Steve looked even more confused than before. “Goats?”
Shuri nodded. “He doesn’t live in the palace with us anymore,” she said. “He lives in a small village community near a lake. He takes care of some goats now.”

“And a tiger,” Peter reminded her.

“Oh yeah!” Shuri exclaimed. “Tigger!”

Steve jogged in front of them and held up his hands. “Hang on, hang on. You’re telling me that Bucky...my Bucky...takes care of goats? And a tiger? And has a...a blog about it?”

Peter and Shuri looked at each other and then back at Steve. “Well, yeah,” Peter replied. He held out his phone. “See for yourself.”

And boy did Steve see. Shuri had to gently push Steve’s back to navigate him through the streets until they reached the Novar pub. Peter guided him to the table as he continued to scroll through Bucky’s posts and catch up on his friend’s life. Nat wound up ordering him fish and chips, and yet he did not put the phone down. In fact, his face was buried in the screen that he didn’t even look up until Peter’s phone died. By that point, almost an hour had passed, his food had barely been touched, and everyone else had gone off in conversation without him.

“You find what you were looking for?” Nat asked, smirking at Steve.

He blinked as he came back to reality after finally reaching the end of Bucky’s Tumblr. He had been reading the exact same post over and over again for almost twenty minutes. Bucky didn’t name names, but Steve could tell what it was about right away. The more he read the post, the more it made him think. Steve shoved a couple of lukewarm fries in his mouth before nodding at Nat.

“Yeah,” he replied. “I think I did.”

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter will by a Bucky blog post! But an earlier one, before he became the King of Memes. :}

Chapter End Notes
My apologies in advance for how short this is! Update tomorrow to make up for it!

Also, this Tumblr post is well before the Vegas incident. In fact, it happens right after Bucky gets back from space. It's the post that Steve was reading over and over again in the last chapter.

You’ve Goat to be Kidding Me

Blog post 3

So I know most of my posts on here so far have been pictures of Peggy and Steve, but something’s been on my mind and I was told this thing is supposed to help me get my thoughts out or whatever, so here it goes…

Have you ever done something wrong that you couldn’t control? You tried and tried to do the right thing, but it all went to hell anyway? Just me? Great.

I messed up. Big time. For a long time. I’m not talking little things like forgetting to close the door to the goat hut when it rains, or giving Steve so many plums that he gets a stomach ache (seriously, he needs a limit on his plum intake).

I hurt a lot of people, and even though I had very little say in the matter, I still did things. But the worst thing I did was to someone I might have considered a friend if life had been different.

I got to meet him today. We had mutual interests get into trouble, and they needed our help. Together. I never thought I would get the chance to apologize, but the opportunity literally landed in my lap and shot me to space. I was made to believe that what I had done all those years ago was right, and even though my brain might have believed it, I was wrong. So wrong.

We all mess up, but not all of us get a chance to apologize for it. This guy and I aren’t going to be best friends anytime soon, but I got to tell him how sorry I was.

And it was the best thing I could have done.

JBB
“Please explain why the hell we’re in Northern Scotland,” Strange groaned, practically falling asleep standing up on the train platform.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ were all bouncing excitedly on top of the concrete, their hearts pounding in anticipation. Clint, meanwhile, sipped from his third cup of coffee, just there for the ride.

They had returned to Glasgow the previous night after Steve finally snapped himself out of his Tumblr stupor. He had promised to talk to Tony at some point, but he didn’t give a clear idea as to when that would be. Peter needed to trust that he would keep his word, so they all said goodbye with the unspoken promise to meet again one day.

Strange had wanted to go back to the States right away. But, since they had paid for five days of the Airbnb and had only used three, the teens made a convincing argument that they should enjoy the rest of their time in Scotland.

They gave Strange no other instructions except to create a portal that led to Fort William, Scotland. Shuri navigated her way to a train station, and they all splurged on first class tickets for the next train. They even split the cost for Strange and Clint’s tickets to be nice for dragging them so far from their original destination.

“So, remember how we used to compare you to Harry Potter?” Peter asked, leaning over the train platform trying to crane his neck down the track.

“Yeah,” Strange replied, pulling Peter back by the collar of his shirt.

Ned soon took his place, leaning over to get pictures of the tracks and Scottish Highlands peeking out in the distance. “Well,” he said, “this is the actual train from the movies!”

“We’re going to ride the Hogwarts Express!” Shuri exclaimed, shaking Clint’s shoulders. “Isn’t that incredible?!”

“Mmm,” Clint hummed, nodding his head. “What’s Harry Potter?”

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ gaped at Clint as if he had grown three heads like Hagrid’s dog, Fluffy.

“Ex-cuse me?” MJ asked, clutching her sketchbook tightly.

Peter rubbed his hands over his face as if trying to wipe Clint’s ignorance from his vision. “You’ve never heard of Harry Potter?”

Before Clint could answer, Ned interrupted. “How can you not have heard of it?! It’s, like, the most popular franchise from the 2000s!”

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Clint shrugged. “ Didn’t have time for it, I guess.”

Shuri led Clint over to one of the benches on the platform and made him sit down. “Well, make time because you’re about to get a crash course.”

Clint looked desperately to Strange for help, but the wizard merely smirked and waved. “I’m going to buy some snacks!” he called to them.

“Okay!” the teens replied, completely forgetting they had all packed extra snacks in their backpacks.

Clint, meanwhile, looked murderous. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ divided and conquered their Harry Potter knowledge, and talked non-stop for the entire twenty-two minutes that Strange was gone. They went over the basic premise of the books, and explained some of the common Harry Potter terminology. When Strange came back with a bag of treats, Clint looked as if his worldview had been expanded, and he wanted to start exploring.

“I feel like I’ve missed out on so much!” Clint exclaimed, running his fingers through his hair and tugging. “You said there’s books and movies?”

MJ nodded. “Between Peter, Ned, and I, we can lend you the books when we get home.”

“And I can send the movies from Wakanda,” Shuri added.

Clint eyes got so shiny and excited that an outside would have thought the teens had just told him he had won the lottery. “What house would I be in?” Clint asked.

Peter hummed thoughtfully and rested his hand under his chin. He looked at his friends. “Hufflepuff?” he asked them.

“100 percent,” Shuri nodded.

“Oh my god, yeah,” Ned noted.

“He’s loyal,” MJ observed, stroking her chin. “And he did offer to help us with the Scotland thing. Talk about being kind and dedicated.”

“What about him?” Clint asked, pointing to Strange.

“Slytherin,” Strange replied before the others got a chance to speak. They all stared at him. “What?” he asked. “I know Harry Potter.” Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ gave Strange such happy puppy dog eyes that a bystander might have thought the wizard was a celebrity greeting his fans.

A shrill whistle cut through the air, and they all jumped up from their spot on the bench. Strange had to practically round them up like a bunch of really excited puppies as the Jacobite train rolled into the station. The long black and red train was exactly like the teens remembered it from the movie.

Staff members hopped out of various doors on the train to collect tickets. The one that took the group’s tickets directed them to one of the first cars on the train since they had reserved a specific Harry Potter compartment. They all crammed into the skinny hallway and walked one-by-one until they reached their destination.

“Ohmygoshohmygoshohmygosh!” Shuri squealed, sliding the door open.

The compartment was light and airy thanks to a huge window on one side and the glass door on the other. Six plush seats covered with a black and gold cover took up most of the room in the
compartment. In between the seats stood a table with six mugs, saucers, and a container filled with packets of sugar. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ carefully placed their backpacks on the racks above the seats and sat down. Clint and Strange both took the end two seats.

They spent the first ten minutes taking selfies in the compartment and then pictures of the inside of the train itself. Strange and Clint patiently allowed them to rearrange themselves in as many different picture poses as possible until the warning whistle blew.

“So what’s the plan?” Strange asked, closing the door.

“We’re going to ride the train,” Peter replied, as if it was obvious.

“Right, I get that...but what’s the overall plan? Our final destination?”

“Oh,” Ned said, pulling out the ride itinerary from a slot in the wall. “Well, we ride the train all the way to Mallaig, and then we come back!”

Strange blinked once, twice, three times. “So you’re telling me...that we’re going to ride a train to Mallaig, turn around, and come back?”

“We have to stop and explore Mallaig a little bit,” Shuri said.

“But we’re literally just riding a train all day!” Strange protested.

“But it’s the Harry Potter train!” Clint exclaimed.

“You are no help right now,” Strange said, pointing a finger at Clint.

“Just think,” MJ said, coming up with an idea to appeal Strange’s logical side. “We’ve had a really hectic few days. Won’t it be nice to just chill on the train, enjoy the scenery, and explore a new town?”

Strange went to say something then stopped. She did have a point…

“Fine,” he grumbled. “How long is this going to take?”

“Six hours round trip,” Peter said nonchalantly.

Strange’s eyes practically bugged out of his face.

“SIX HOURS?!”

Chapter End Notes

This is a real thing you can do in Scotland! It’s called the Jacobite train!
Part 43

Chapter Notes

Y’all, tomorrow is the first day of school for me! This will be year 4 of teaching, and I can't wait! I know I've been posting less frequently than before, but work and grad school have to come first. My goal is still 3 times a week though. Thanks for understanding!

So, there is one more chapter (after this) left in the Scotland arc, and then we head back to NYC! Are there any adventures we want the group to have before Steve and company come back in the picture? Also, I've got some really cute fluff coming your way (and it involves the baby).

If Strange thought the teens would be completely unprepared for their Harry Potter adventure, he was quite mistaken. MJ quickly produced a deck of Dutch Blitz cards from her backpack, and they spent the half an hour or so aggressively trying to beat each other. The point of Dutch Blitz was to get rid of all of your cards by stacking them in colored, numerical-order piles in the middle of the table. It was every person for themselves, and it got quite heated at times. Shuri nearly knocked Ned’s hand into his face when they both tried to place a green six down at the same time. Peter dominated the game because of his fast reflexes, and Clint called foul on Strange multiple times when he used levitation to get the cards where they needed to go.

“Why don’t we take a break?” Shuri suggested after Clint threw a card at Peter’s head in frustration.

They explored the rest of the train and discovered the Harry Potter souvenir shop. Okay, it had more than just Harry Potter items, but when they were presented with wands and cloaks, the temptation was just too much to resist. Shuri, Ned, and MJ split the cost of a t-shirt for Peter since he had booked the Airbnb, and they also each bought shirts from their respective Harry Potter houses. MJ and Shuri both bought Ravenclaw shirts while Ned chose a Hufflepuff one. Peter proudly donned his Gryffindor shirt after a quick trip to the bathroom. When he came back, the others were trying to convince Strange and Clint to get in on the fun.

“Come one!” Ned pleaded. “We’ll all match!”

“Oh joy,” Strange deadpanned. “I’d love nothing more.”

MJ held a medium Slytherin shirt up to his chest, then shook her head and searched for a large. “You can keep pretending you don’t like us, but we know the truth.”

Strange swatted her hands away as she tried holding up the bigger shirt. “I never said I didn’t like you. I just have no desire to go around wearing matching t-shirts like a high school tour group.”

“But we are in high school,” Peter reasoned. “And you are our chaperones.”

“Plus you’re the only Slytherin,” Shuri added. “You’re distinguished.” She left out the fact that Peter was also the only Gryffindor, but Strange didn’t notice.

“Distinguished, huh?” he smirked, looking at the t-shirt again. It didn’t actually look that bad, if he
was honest. He hardly ever wore green anymore...He pretended to think about it some more just to prolong the anticipation. “Fine,” he finally said.

“Yes!” Ned exclaimed. He looked around the souvenir car. “Where’s Clint?”

MJ pointed to the checkout area. “Over there,” she replied. Clint was already paying for his Hufflepuff shirt, a wide smile on his face.

Once the rest of them changed, they quickly made their way back to their compartment.

“Why are you rushing?” Clint called, trying to keep up with the teens.

“We’re about to pass the Glenfinnan Viaduct!” Peter exclaimed. He skidded to a stop outside their compartment and flung the door open. He, Shuri, MJ, and Ned practically smushed their faces against the window trying to get a better look.

The Glenfinnan Viaduct was a large bridge set right on top of a rolling, green hill. The bridge had arches underneath, and the height made the perfect viewing spot for the mountains on either side of the train.

“Is this in the books?” Clint asked, gently peeling Ned back from the window so he could get a better look.

“Yeah,” Ned nodded. “In the second one, Harry and Ron miss the train to Hogwarts, so they steal Ron’s dad’s flying car and go right over the viaduct!”

Strange reached around MJ’s face and unlocked the window before sliding it up. This only further encouraged the teens to try and stick their heads outside for a better view. Like the good chaperone he was, Strange made them take turns poking their heads outside and then taking pictures with their phones.

The train stopped at Glenfinnan station for a short break, and then they continued on. The scenery was absolutely breathtaking. It was a beautifully overcast day, and the sun cast unique shadows across the landscape as it peeked through the thick, fluffy clouds. They passed a few lochs, and the water rippled in the slight breeze. The train rode right along the shoreline in some areas, and if they really tried, they could almost feel the mist of the water spraying towards the window.

Everyone enjoyed a complimentary cup of tea before settling quietly into their seats. Shuri started reading one of the books Strange had given her while MJ sketched. Her normal black and white sketches got a pop of color as she used special colored pencils she had packed for the occasion. Clint dozed off as Strange meditated across from him. Not to disturb the peace of the group, Ned and Peter quietly played card games using the normal deck Shuri had packed.

The Jacobite reached Mallaig right before lunch. Clint jolted awake as the whistle blew sharply, signaling their arrival. The train had a two hour layover in Mallaig before heading back to Fort William.

“What do you guys want to do?” Clint yawned as he stretched his arms over his head.

Peter rolled his own shoulders and shivered involuntarily as a slight breeze rippled through the air. “Food?” he suggested with a sheepish grin.

“You ate almost the whole way here!” Strange exclaimed incredulously.

It was true. The entire stash of snacks Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned had brought had been whittled
down to less than half in the course of the train ride.

“But we’re growing!” Shuri reasoned. “Besides, those were all Jaffa cakes and sweets!”

“I could totally go for fish,” Ned sighed dreamily. He looked out at the vast harbor and all of the boats docked in the water. “This place definitely seems like it would have good fish.”

MJ tapped away at her phone before looking up and smiling. “I think I found the perfect place.”

She expertly guided them through the small town until they came to Jaffy’s Fish and Chips Takeaway Deli. When they walked inside, it looked exactly like a regular deli, only this one was stocked to the brim with a huge assortment of fish. Raw fish sat in the display case, but the thick scent of fried batter wafted in from the kitchen in the back.

Everyone’s stomachs grumbled hungrily as they glanced over the vast menu. Strange and Clint both got fried haddock, while Peter and Ned stuck with cod. MJ and Shuri decided to be slightly more adventurous and ordered plaice, which turned out to be a variety of flat fish. Since they were in Scotland, and it was on the menu, Clint ordered a jumbo haggis for them to split.

They only had to walk a short distance to the harbor itself, and they decided to eat on one of the docks with their feet dangling above the water. They watched as fishermen pulled ropes out of the water, and the salty scent of fish hung heavily in the air.

“You ready for this?” Clint asked with a grin, holding out the huge bowl of haggis.

Ned leaned forward to sniff it and wrinkled his nose. “That smells so weird!”

“Did you know it’s illegal to have haggis in the US?” Strange commented.

Peter’s eyes widened. “Why?”

Strange poked his fork directly into the haggis and took a bite. He raised his brows in approval as he chewed. “It contains sheep’s lung,” he replied after swallowing. “It’s illegal to have any food with sheep’s lung in the US.”

Peter, Ned, and MJ looked slightly green around the gills as they stared down at the brown pile of food. Shuri, meanwhile, was used to her share of interesting-looking foods in Wakanda. Feeling a bit braver than the others, she took her own forkful.

“A bit bland,” she said. “Could definitely use more seasoning.”

Clint wiggled the bowl under Peter, Ned, and MJ’s noses. “C’mon! You’ve gotta at least try it!”

They looked at each other uneasily before taking a small amount of haggis. Clint, Strange, and Shuri watched as they chewed, waiting for their reactions.

“It’s not that bad,” Peter admitted.

MJ scrunched up her nose and shook her head. “You can keep this nonsense,” she said. “Not my thing at all.”

Ned took another bite. “I really don’t know what to think,” he said. “It’s not bad...but it’s not the best thing I’ve eaten...”

“Would you like to know all of the ingredients?” Strange smirked.
“NO!” the teens replied emphatically.

After they all finished eating, they decided to walk the Mallaig Circular. It was a quick one-mile walk that took them around the entire village. It was warm now that the sun was out from the clouds, but there was a nice breeze from the water. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ took lots of pictures, especially when they reached the tops of hills. They could see over the entire harbor, and in the distance, they could make out the Small Isles. They spent the most time at the end of the trail, which was settled near the coast. Clint spotted a few seals, and Strange even saw a whale in the distance.

“The train’ll leave in about twenty minutes,” Peter said, checking the clock on his phone before locking the screen.

“We could just use a portal to get back,” Shuri suggested, looking at Strange. “I mean, we’re going to use one to get back to Glasgow once we stop in Fort William.”

“Really?” Strange asked, raising his brow. “What happened to a six hour round trip?”

MJ shrugged. “You both have put up with a lot on this trip. If you don’t want to ride all the way back, it’s cool.”

“Yeah,” Ned added. “Plus, we did get to see a lot already.”

Strange hummed thoughtfully and tapped his fingers against his chin. “But,” he said slowly, “I’m sure the views look quite different coming the opposite way.” He nudged Clint’s shoulder. “Wouldn’t you agree?”

Clint nodded. “For sure! Plus, we never got to eat in the food car. Can’t miss that, can we?”

“Do you ever think about anything besides food?” Strange asked, rolling his eyes.

“Wait, seriously?” Peter asked. “You don’t mind taking the train back?”

“No,” Strange and Clint replied.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ all hopped up and pumped their fists in the air. “Yes!” they exclaimed. They all started running towards the station.

“We’ll meet you there!” Shuri called over her shoulder.

Clint waved them off as he and Strange kept a more leisurely pace. “You like them,” he sang to Strange. He wiggled his fingers around the wizard’s head. “You liiiikkkkkeeee themmmmm!”

“Of course I do!” Strange snapped. “How can they not grow on you?”

Clint snickered and laced his fingers together behind his head. “They’re certainly unique.”

They both watched as Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ reached the sidewalk outside the station. They all hopped on the edge of the curb and walked as if they were on a balance beam.

“So I have an idea for our last day,” Clint said, breaking the silence.

“Oh yeah?” Strange replied. “Enlighten me.”

Clint clapped his hands and rubbed his palms together. “So hear me out—”

“Oh boy…”
“We’re in Scotland.” Clint paused and stared at Strange expectantly.

“Yeah?” Strange asked. “And?”

“And!” Clint exclaimed. “What’s the one thing you HAVE to do if you visit Scotland?”

Strange racked his brain, and then a little light went off in his mind. “That? Really?”

“You’ve gotta admit,” Clint said, pointing to the teens. “They’re going to love it.”

Strange nodded. “This is true.”

“Do you want to tell them? Or should I?” Clint asked, a hopeful look in his eye.

“You go,” Strange replied. “It was your idea after all.”

Clint jumped excitedly in the air before running off after them.

“Hey guys!” he shouted. “Guess what we’re going to do tomorrow?”

“What?” the teens yelled back.

“We’re going hunting for the Loch Ness Monster!”
Part 44

Chapter Notes

A bit of a longer chapter since I’ve been so sporadic with posting! :P

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ loved science. They also loved mysteries and exploring. So, when given
the opportunity to explore Loch Ness, they were all about it. They had been excited to find Steve,
but this was a whole new ball game.

Since they had to check out of the apartment at 1pm, they decided to do an early self-tour of Loch
Ness. They would wake up at 7am to get packed up and ready to leave by 9am so they could catch a
9:30 cruise. Considering the teens had stayed awake until almost 3am looking up conspiracy theories
about the loch and Nessie herself, they were not as bright-eyed and bushy-tailed as Strange and
(surprisingly) Clint. They all somehow managed to pretzel themselves on Peter and Ned’s bed, their
laptops precariously placed in the empty spaces between them.

“Five more minutes,” Peter groaned, pulling the pillow over his head as he ignored his alarm.

Ned reached over Peter and slammed his hand down on the phone screen, trying to get the incessant
beeping to stop. One of the laptops fell to the floor with a thud, but they were all too tired to care
about it. MJ stole the pillow from Peter and burrowed under it while he yanked the covers over his
head in protest.

Shuri’s kimoyo beads began to vibrate against her wrist with her own alarm, so she tugged them off
and threw them against the wall. Peter, Ned, and MJ sighed in relief at the silence.

“This is why we don’t pull all nighters,” Strange chided from the doorway.

The teens all groaned at the newest intrusion.

“We need more sleep!” MJ mumbled.

Clint walked in the doorway with a mug of coffee. He tilted his head to one side, then the other, as
he looked at all four teens trying to go back to sleep on the one bed.

“Okay, two things,” he said, raising his voice so it was impossible to ignore under the blankets and
pillows. “One, how am I more awake than you right now? And two, how the heck are all of you
fitting on that bed?”

“Science,” they all replied sleepily.

Clint and Strange exchanged a look before walking over to the bed. They each took a side and
swiftly yanked the covers off the bed, then tossed the pillows on the floor.

“Hey!” Peter yelped, the cold air a rude awakening to his warm, sleepy form.

“Not nice!” Ned whined.

“Get up and pack your clothes or the mystery of Nessie will remain a mystery,” Clint threatened.
Strange raised his brows, impressed at Clint’s authoritativeness. “What he said.”

Shuri was the first to give in, peeling herself off the mattress and dragging herself into the bathroom. MJ kicked Ned and Peter to get them up, until they retaliated by kicking her off the bed completely. By the time Shuri finished in the bathroom, MJ was chasing Ned and Peter around the apartment with pillows as payback.

Despite their delay, everything was packed and ready to go by 9am. Clint helped Strange stack all of their bags in one corner of the apartment so they would just be able to come back and grab them before leaving Scotland for good. Strange also packed away all of the groceries, and he organized the cold goods in the fridge for later.

By the time Strange was ready to create the portal, Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned were awake and slightly more energetic. Once Clint did a once-over and made sure everything was packed, Strange waved his hands around his sling ring, and then they stepped through the portal to Loch Ness.

The air was damp, and the sky was dark. As Shuri took a deep breath, she could definitely smell the impending rain. Loch Ness looked like any other lake settled between mountains. The water rippled in the breeze, but there was no sign of any monsters lurking beneath its depths. A light brown castle stood regally on one of the hills overlooking the loch, but other than that, there weren’t too many houses around. Not like Mallaig, Ayr, or Kirkcaldy.

“Where’s the boat?” Ned asked, activating his nanite shirt Shuri had made him. His short sleeves morphed into long ones, and he sighed in relief at the protection from the cool temperature.

Strange pointed to the right, and they saw the array of boat cruises lined up on the side of the loch. “We’re the Jacobite line,” he replied.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ grinned at the familiar company name. Without waiting for permission, they raced to the boat while Strange and Clint followed at a leisurely pace behind them.

The Jacobite Warrior was a long boat with two decks and a boxy appearance. The lower deck was encased in a plexiglass covering while the top deck was open to the elements. People had already begun lining up to hop on board for the tour, so the teens anxiously waited in line. Strange and Clint quickly caught up since they were in charge of the tickets, and the group was soon granted permission on board.

“C’mon!” Shuri exclaimed, heading right for the back. She carefully weaved through passengers who had already settled into their seats until she walked back outside. There was a small overhang covering them from the light drizzle that had started, but in order to get a good look into the water, Shuri stepped out from the protective covering.

“Do you think they’ll cancel because of the rain?” Ned asked with a worried look at the sky.

Strange shook his head. “It’s Scotland. They’re used to rain. Now, if it were thundering and lightning, that would be a different story.”

Peter nodded before joining Shuri on the deck, with Ned and MJ following closely behind.

“You want to go in there?” Clint asked, nodding to the covered deck. “I think it’s heated.”

Strange cast one last glance at Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ before nodding. “Let’s just make sure we can see them,” he replied. Clint headed through the open doorway and found a seat near the back right that gave them the perfect view of outside and the teens.
The boat horn boomed through the air, and soon, they were off. They cruised along the water, and Peter shook his head as water droplets collected in his wavy hair. He and the others barely paid attention to the commentary from the boat guide since they were too busy discussing their own theories about the Loch Ness Monster.

“Okay, so, the deepest point in the loch is 755 feet,” Peter said, reciting facts from his research the night before.

Shuri shook her head. “No, remember, there was a sonar reading of 889 feet a few years ago.”

“I thought that was an anomaly,” MJ interjected. “It doesn’t count.”

Ned held his phone out, his notes pulled up on the screen. “MJ’s right. The deepest part is still accepted at 755 feet.”

“Look, either way, that’s super deep,” Peter commented. “Plus, there are underwater cave systems.”

“That are completely unexplored,” Shuri added.

“Exactly,” Peter nodded. “We literally know more about the surface of Mars than we do about the bottom of our oceans and other water sources.”


“Okay, creature theories,” MJ demanded.

“Plesiosaur?” Peter asked.

“Timing’s off,” Shuri replied immediately. “This whole area used to be frozen. It’s only in the last 10,000 years that it’s been like this.”

“Plus, aren’t Plesiosaurs cold blooded?” Ned added. “This water would be way too cold.”

“Not if it adapted through evolution,” Peter countered.

“Well if you’re going with the evolution theory,” MJ said, “what about the theory of it being a long-necked amphibian?”

On and on they continued their debate as they scanned the water’s surface eagerly. They all knew the chances of them seeing an actual monster were slim to none, but it was still fun to hope.

The rain had really begun to pick up at this point, so they ducked inside and met up with Clint and Strange. The loch looked even eerier with the rain, and it made an awesome echoing noise against the boat’s exterior. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ settled into the wooden booth and gazed outside, transfixed by the sight.

Peter spotted the brown castle again. “What’s that called?” he asked.

“Weren’t you paying attention to the tour guide?” Strange asked in mock disapproval.

“Nope,” MJ admitted with no shame.

Clint grinned back at her. “It’s called Urquhart Castle. Super old. Has a drawbridge and everything.”

“More importantly,” Strange added, rolling his eyes, “it played a huge role in the Wars of Scottish Independence. It passed through quite a bit of hands before becoming the monument it is today.”
Ned nodded impressively. “So you said it has a drawbridge, huh?”

Strange put his head in his hands. “Why do I even bother?” he mumbled into his palms. Shuri and patted his shoulder comfortingly while MJ took the opportunity to sketch him “in crisis”.

The tour continued around the loch, and the commentary turned to the history of the Loch Ness Monster. Since the teens had researched almost every piece of information they could the night before, they let their minds wander as the boat continued to travel through the loch.

It was a totally different experience than the train the day before, even though the views were just as beautiful. But alas, by the time the boat docked at the end of the tour, no monster had been spotted.

“We have to come back!” Shuri exclaimed as she hopped off the boat. “I can build a portable sonar machine!”

“Ooo, I bet we could even make a mini submarine in Tony’s lab,” Peter brainstormed. “Send it down and control it from the boat!”

MJ went even further. “We should probably just rent our own boat,” she said. “We can cover more ground that way.”

“And I can totally get the sonar data that’s been collected already,” Ned added confidently. “We can skip all the looking around and go right to the deepest part.”

Strange and Clint just stared at the teens incredulously. “Do you have any idea what you could accomplish if you put your brains to practical use?” Strange asked.

Peter smirked. “You mean save the world?”

“We kind of already do,” Shuri replied with a similar grin.

“Guy in the chair,” Ned said pointing to himself.

“Don’t worry,” MJ said. “We’re well on our way to world domination at this point. And we haven’t even graduated high school yet.”

Clint leaned over to Strange. “She scares me the most out of all of them,” he whispered.

MJ tiptoed around Clint until she was directly behind him. “Good,” she whispered near his hearing aides. He shrieked and practically jumped in the air at the shock. He swatted her away while the teens giggled uncontrollably in response.

Strange just shook his head and smiled.

“Okay,” he said, “it’s time to go home.”

After a quick pit stop back to the Glasgow apartment to pick up their bags (and the Cloak of Levitation, who was quite sullen about being left behind), Strange prepared a portal to drop the teens and Clint back off in Queens.

What he did not tell them was that he would be doing so right in the middle of Peter’s living room.
Peter, Shuri, Ned, MJ and Clint stumbled through the portal and tripped on the couch and coffee table. Peter managed to spin around and avoid a major catastrophe while Ned nosedived right into Clint, sending them both sprawling on the wood floor. MJ’s fall was cushioned by her backpack, while Peter caught Shuri’s arm before she could become acquainted with the corner of the coffee table.

Strange wasted no time changing portals, but he poked his head in before leaving completely. “I’ll see you,” he said, pointing to Peter and Shuri, “sometime soon.” And then he disappeared back to the Sanctum.

Clint helped Ned up before adjusting his hearing aides and dusting off his pants. “Well, this has been fu-” He stopped mid-sentence and stared with wide eyes and an open mouth at something behind the teens.

Aunt May stood in the doorway between the kitchen and the living room, her own jaw dropped in shock. Her face was pale, and her fingers had a white-knuckled hold on a plate of breakfast foods. “Y-y-you…” she stuttered.

“Hi-hi Aunt May!” Peter said too cheerfully. He quickly rushed over and took the plate out of her hands.

“B-b-b-but…”

Clint chuckled awkwardly as he rubbed his hand on the back of his neck. “Nice to see you again!” he exclaimed. “As you can see, they’re safe and sound! Just like I promised! So no need to kill me, right?” May didn’t answer. “Right?” he asked again.

“Dude,” Shuri whispered. “Just go!”

Clint nodded and waved. “Well, since we’re all good here…” He practically bolted out the door, no doubt going back to his Brooklyn apartment building.

A familiar chirping noise came barreling down the hall, and Peter quickly scooped Yoshi up while Ned closed the apartment door.

“Hey girl!” Peter cooed, nuzzling his pet alien lizard. “We missed you!”

“So May,” MJ said, bringing Peter’s attention back to his shell-shocked aunt. “How have you been?” Before May could answer, a familiar golden circle reappeared in the middle of the living room. Strange stretched his torso through and pointed at Ned. “I need my cloak,” he said, ignoring May’s stuttering.

Ned quickly shrugged off his backpack and unzipped it. The Cloak of Levitation floated out, waved goodbye to the teens, and then drifted to Strange.

“Bye!” the four exclaimed as the portal closed once more, with Strange and the cloak disappearing inside it.

May looked at each of the teens, who were smiling much too enthusiastically considering they had just appeared in her living room through a magical hole in the air. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath as she calmed herself. Then, she opened her eyes.

“PETER, WHAT THE F-!”
Part 45

Chapter Notes

Next update will be Monday!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter groaned as his ringtone blared in his ear. He would have ignored it, but the familiar “Iron Man” song signaled that Tony Stark himself was calling, and Peter knew better than to keep him waiting. He reached blindly around the bottom bunk until he gripped the rectangular device. Yoshi was zero help as she continued to sleep on his chest, her claws digging into his skin.

“Turn it off!” Shuri yelped from the top bunk. MJ sat up on her air mattress and tossed a pillow at Peter’s head as he tried to unlock the screen and stop the music. Ned, meanwhile, snored obliviously from his sleeping bag at the foot of Peter’s bed.

“Hullo?” he mumbled, burrowing himself under his covers.

“Good afternoon!” Tony exclaimed far too happily. “And how our friendly neighborhood Spiderman doing today?”

“M’fine,” Peter yawned. “How’re you?”

Tony paused for a beat. “Hang on, were you still sleeping?”

“Maybe,” the teen replied, his eyelids drooping shut.

“Kid, it’s almost noon,” Tony said, a hint of concern in his voice. “You sick or something?”

Peter shook his head even though Tony couldn’t see him. After being unceremoniously dropped in the middle of his living room the afternoon before in front of a shell-shocked Aunt May, the teens had to explain what the heck happened. After she had accepted the fact that someone very similar to “Harry freaking Potter” could transport them across the world (and parts of space), she was more than happy to pull out the snacks and listen to them talk about every detail from the Scotland trip. Ned, Shuri, and MJ made sure to describe Peter’s “fight” with Steve in excruciating detail, so he had to relive his airborne experience all over again.

“Not sick,” Peter finally said. “Just jet-lagged.”

“Jet lagged?” Tony asked. “You been traveling?”

The words had escaped Peter’s mouth before he had a chance to process them. His eyes shot open and he hopped up, nearly hitting his head on the bottom of the top bunk. Yoshi let out a loud chirp in protest and scurried up the ladder to the top bunk to sleep by Shuri, where she would not be disturbed. “No!” he exclaimed quickly. “I-We...uh…” Peter stuttered. “We’re just lagged!”

“Lagged?” Tony chuckled. “Is that a new Gen Z term I missed out on?”

“Sure! We stayed up late to...to finish a Lego project!” Peter sighed in relief as he thought of a valid excuse. Technically, they had stayed up until almost 11pm putting the finishing touches on a
Hogwarts castle set that Peter had gotten for Christmas but had never finished. The time difference had finally caught up to them, though, and they all slept through May leaving for work.

“Well wake up, kiddo,” Tony demanded. “You wanted to run tests, remember?”

Peter blinked a few times, trying to unfog his brain. “Tests...oh right! My powers!”

“There’s the genius! Glad you’re with us,” Tony joked.

“Hang on,” Peter said. “What about Pepper? And the baby? Aren’t you busy with that stuff?”

“So funny thing about that…” Tony replied slowly. “Apparently I’m being a little overbearing? Pepper says I can’t start renovating the Tower for a state-of-the-art nursery until it’s the size of a plum.”

“A plum?” Peter asked.

“Did someone say food?” MJ poked her head back out of her sleeping bag. Her thick curls were a wild mess around her head. “Do you have plums here?” Peter shushed her as he tried to listen to Tony.

“Yeah, she’s got this app that tells you how big the baby is based on how many weeks along she is, and I’ve gotta wait for plum status.”

Peter smiled fondly. “How big is it now?”

“So about the size of a seed,” Tony replied softly. Even though Peter couldn’t see him, the teen knew he was smiling. Tony coughed. “So anyway, I could use the distraction. You think you can drag yourself out of your Lego-induced stupor? The other Three Musketeers can come too.”

“Yeah, okay.” Peter pulled back his covers and started getting out of bed. “Give us, like, an hour?”

“Great! See you soon.” Tony disconnected the call.

“You should have negotiated for two hours!” Shuri whined from the top bunk.

Peter laughed as he grabbed some semi-fresh clothes off his closet floor. “We have to get up eventually, you know.”

“But it’s summer!” Ned protested sleepily. “Summer is for sleeping in all day and staying up all night.”

Peter ignored him and headed to the bathroom. He heard thuds come from his bedroom, and he knew from Ned’s shouts that MJ and Shuri had decided to “help” him wake up. The bathroom became a revolving door situation as all four teens showered and got dressed. While MJ was the last one to finish up, Peter searched the kitchen in hopes of finding some food. Unfortunately, May hadn’t left anything, and Peter’s stomach grumbled sadly. He quickly pulled out his phone and sent a quick text to Tony.

*Any chance we can eat something at the Tower before the tests?*

Ned padded into the kitchen as Peter put his phone away. “Listen, I’ve gotta go home today,” he said
glumly. “My fam just got back from San Francisco yesterday, and they want to see me. As if we didn’t just spend a bunch of family time together.”

“Same here,” MJ added, walking in. She tied her damp hair into a messy ponytail before sitting in one of the chairs. “Mine haven’t seen me since art camp.”

Peter was bummed, but he understood. “No worries. Shuri and I’ll text you everything.”

“Uh, you better!” MJ scoffed.

Ned nodded enthusiastically. “You’ve gotta let us know if you figure out anything new!”

Shuri finally came in the kitchen with Yoshi trailing closely behind. “So it’s just the two of us then?” she asked.

Yoshi climbed up Peter’s leg, and he rubbed the top of her head affectionately. “Three?” he replied with a grin. Shuri smiled back and gave him a thumbs up. His phone buzzed in his pocket, and he took it out to read the text.

_**IronDad:** Yeah, I think we can manage something :)

---

“I’m dying!” Peter gasped, falling to the floor. His chest heaved as he tried to catch his breath. His brown hair stuck to his forehead in a sweaty mess, and he was pretty sure he was about the defy the odds for youngest age to have a heart attack.

“Relax,” Tony smirked. “You’re not dying.”

“Yes...I...am...” Peter panted.

“You didn’t even run that far!” Shuri exclaimed. “How can you be this tired already? Aren’t you supposed to have super powers?”

Tony, true to his word, had put Peter through an intense battery of tests after feeding him and Shuri pizza and fruit. There had been a stickiness test to see what types of surfaces Peter could stick to well. Basically, Peter could handle any surface, but his power degraded in water over time. Then, Tony had created obstacles of varying heights for Peter to jump over to test his jumping abilities. He managed to clear 35 feet before getting caught on the edge of the wall and tumbling over the other side (much to Shuri’s amusement). After a break to take some bloodwork, Tony had then asked Peter to punch test dummies to see how much pressure he could produce per square inch.

But the worst, by far, was the endurance test.

“I hate you,” Peter sighed to no one in particular. Yoshi chirped at him from her comfortable spot on the lab table. Shuri had managed to make a tiny pair of lab safety goggles for her out of some spare material in Tony’s lab while Peter had been doing his tests, so she looked quite adorable. Peter raised an exhausted hand up at his pet and waved.

“No,” Tony replied. “You hate running.”
“Same thing.”

Tony walked over and poured some cold water over Peter’s head. The teen let out a deep breath and let the cold liquid seep into his skin. He sat up and shook his head while his mentor went back to his computer screen to look at the readouts from the running test.

“You burned an insane amount of calories,” Tony noted. “I’m surprised you haven’t passed out before from a caloric deficit.”

“I’m not usually working that hard,” Peter grumbled, slowly standing up. Shuri barely looked up from her tablet as she handed him a power bar. He greedily opened the wrapped and took a huge bite out of it. He barely chewed it twice before wincing and spitting it on the table. “That’s disgusting!” he choked.

Shuri took the bar and examined it. “Too bland?”

“Too everything!” Peter shot back. “I’d rather eat cardboard!”

Shuri shook her head disappointedly. “But it has all the nutrients you need to replace the calories, fat, and sodium you lost from running. Can’t you just deal with it?”

Peter handed the bar back to her, and she took a bite. Her face went from a neutral expression to one of horror in an instant. “Oh my god!”

“Told ya so.”

Shuri responded by throwing the bar back at him before returning to the drawing board.

“Hey, hey, hey!” Tony exclaimed. “This is lab, remember? Not a high school cafeteria! Save the teen angst for The Breakfast Club, yeah?” He motioned for Shuri to hand him the bar. “Add some sugar. It won’t be all natural, but it might taste better.” He pointed to Peter. “And you! We’re running these tests to see your powers’ limits. You’re a math guy. You like limits, right?” He smiled cheekily as Peter tried to prevent his lips from tugging upward. “C’mon, let’s try it again to see if your stamina degrades.”

Peter groaned but made his way back over to the treadmill. Tony handed him the weird tubey thing to stick in his mouth before heading back over to the controls. Peter gave him a thumbs up, and soon, he felt the belt move under his feet.

And he began to run.

“Wow, you really wore them out, huh?” Pepper chuckled. Her high heels clicked against the tile floor as she joined Tony in the hallway that separated the kitchen from the common room.

Peter and Shuri were passed out on the couch, and Yoshi was sleeping peacefully on the coffee table. Two empty bowls of ice cream were stacked neatly on the floor, and an episode of House Hunters International was playing as background noise on the TV.

Tony scratched the top of his head. “It’s so weird. They’ve never been this tired before.”

“Were they up late?”
Tony nodded. “Building Legos apparently.”

“That does sound like them,” Pepper smiled. She paused and rubbed Tony’s arm. “So…”

“So…?” Tony asked, a smirk playing on his lips. Pepper stared at him knowingly. “I’m still thinking about it!”

“What’s there to think about?” Pepper nodded at the sleeping teens. “You don’t think they’d go for it?”

“I don’t know Pep. They’re fantastic kids, but do you think they’d want the responsibility of being godparents?”

Pepper lightly smacked his arm. “How many times do I have to tell you? Guardians and godparents can be two totally separate things nowadays.” She gave him a soft kiss on the lips. “Let’s run through this again…Happy and Rhodey would be their guardians. If we-”

“-kick the bucket, they take care of the baby,” Tony finished.

“Crappy phrasing, but accurate,” Pepper replied. “Peter and Shuri would be godparents. They could babysit. Be mentors. Kind of like the cool aunt and uncle.”

Tony kissed Pepper’s forehead then knelt down and gently lifted her shirt, exposing her stomach. He placed an even softer kiss right above her belly button. Pepper carded her fingers through Tony’s hair as he kissed her stomach again.

“What do you think baby?” he whispered. “Do you want Peter and Shuri to be your godparents?” He turned his head and pressed his ear against her skin, as if listening for an answer. He smiled as her stomach gurgled in response.

“You’d really be okay with this?” he asked, looking up at Pepper.

“I wouldn’t have brought it up if I wasn’t sure,” she replied.

“They might not want to,” Tony said. “It’s not the same as a guardian, but it’s still a lot of responsibility.”

“Well,” she grinned, “you won’t know until you ask, will you?”

“I’ll ask,” Tony said, pulling down her shirt and standing back up to give her forehead a kiss.

“I promise.”

Chapter End Notes

FLUFF!!!

Tony and Pepper are thinking of the godparent thing as more symbolic just FYI. It was an idea I had in my head, and I'm just going to run with it.

Also, Soft Tony is life.
“Shuri!” Peter exclaimed. He waved his best friend over excitedly to his lab bench. Shuri put down her soldering iron and lifted up her safety glasses as she walked over to Peter’s work area. He cleared his throat, and widened his stance as he grinned mischievously. “Imagine this,” he said dramatically. “The year is 1985.” He held up his phone and Shuri nodded enthusiastically at the image on the screen.

“And Debbie just hit the wall?” she asked coyly.

“She never had it all,” Peter replied sadly, hanging his head.

“One Prozac a day,” Shuri sighed.

“Husband’s a CPA.”

Shuri clutched her fist into her chest. “Her dreams when out the door!”

“When she turned 24!”

“Only been with one man.”

“What happened to her plan?” Peter asked.

Shuri swooshed her arm dramatically in front of her. “She was gonna be an actress!”

“She was gonna be a STAR!” Peter added, jumping and raising his arms in the air.

“She was gonna shake her a-”

“If you say ‘ass’”, Tony threatened from across the room, “I’m going to kick yours out of my lab.”

“On the hood of Whitesnake’s car!” Shuri continued, ignoring Tony’s empty promise.

“Her yellow SUV, is now the enemy!” Peter insisted.

“Looks at her average life…”

“And nothing-”

“Has been-”

“ALRIGHT!” they both shouted with huge smiles on their faces. “SINCE BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, MADONNA, WAY BEFORE NIRVANA!”

Tony shook his head and chuckled as he closed his protective mask back over his face. At this point,
he was 100% used to their shenanigans, especially since they had spent the last two weeks helping him in the lab. He had adapted to their tendency to bust out in songs from all decades, but especially the early 2000s. They argued singing in the middle of a project helped them work better. Tony argued they did it to annoy him. Neither teen would comment on that point.

But good lord, at least they had stopped dancing. No, he did not love Kiki, and he did not care if the baby sharks were safe at last.

What he did care about was the epic advancements they had made in the last two weeks. Even though using the “tech conference” had merely been a ruse to get him to Vegas, Tony hadn’t been able to let go of the idea Shuri had mentioned about virtual reality. Stark Industries really hadn’t gotten its hands on that market, but maybe it could. So after testing Peter’s powers, Tony had invited the teens to stay at the Tower to help him with research and product development. He was still compiling all of the data from the tests into a comprehensive report, and the tech projects had put it on the back burner for now.

Shuri, being the tech genius that she was, already had ideas in mind. Virtual reality hadn’t been a priority in Wakanda, but what teenager wouldn’t want to explore the world from the comfort of their own home? So, with Tony’s resources, Shuri was able to begin to bring her ideas to life. She was currently working on a glove and goggle set that would revolutionize virtual reality as they knew it.

Peter bounced between VR projects and improvements to Spiderman tech. He was now on Web Fluid 3.0, and he was trying to figure out how to change the design of his web slingers so he could wear them without looking conspicuous. He wanted to be able to make a quick change if necessary, and was working on a watch-type design.

Early mornings, afternoons, and sometimes even evenings were spent in the lab. Ned and MJ popped in at some point every day to hang out or participate in a movie/game night. Apparently, since Peter had already been away so much this summer, he and Yoshi were a packaged deal. Tony had actually grown quite fond of the lizard and her tiny little lab safety goggles.

Plus, he couldn’t lie...he had spent a lot of time with Peter and Shuri over the last year, but ever since Pepper had planted the seed about godparents in his head, he really wanted to spend more time with them. Despite their teenage shenanigans, Tony couldn’t deny how incredibly smart and kind they were. Maybe it wasn’t a crazy idea after all…

FRIDAY interrupted Tony’s train of thought. “Boss, I think we’ve got visitors.”

Tony quirked his brows. “You think?” he asked.

“Well, I know Ms. Potts entered the Tower about five minutes ago. But my security systems aren’t responding at the moment,” FRIDAY shot back, a slight annoyance present in its voice.

Peter and Shuri stopped in the middle of their work. “Did someone break into the Tower?” Shuri asked.

“Stay here,” Tony demanded, ignoring her question. His heart pounded and adrenaline pulsed as getting to Pepper became the only thing on his mind. He reached out his arm, and one of his suits immediately reacted, covering him from head to toe. Before Peter and Shuri could insist on helping, Tony flew up the stairs.

“Let’s go,” Peter said, scooping up Yoshi without hesitation. He looked forlornly at his web slingers, which were currently out of commission from his tinkering. “I really need to make a secondary pair!” he groaned. He bolted, taking the steps two at a time, with Shuri right behind him. When they got
upstairs, everything seemed totally normal. Nothing was broken, and no alarms were blaring.

What was a bit unusual was seeing Steve Rogers standing in the middle of the common room with Tony aiming both his repulsor blasters at him. Pepper stood in the doorway between the common room and the kitchen, her hand covering her mouth.

Tony’s faceplate opened up, exposing his narrowed eyes and clenched jaw.

“Rogers,” he gritted.

“Hey Tony,” Steve replied, holding his hands up in surrender.

“Any chance we could talk?”

Chapter End Notes

I know it’s short, but we’re about to get to the good stuff!! Update on Thursday :)

Also, the song is "1985" by Bowling for Soup if y'all don't know it.
Chapter Notes

I know I said I wasn't updating until Thursday, but...SURPRISE!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Three hours.

That’s how long Steve and Tony had been behind closed doors. Pepper had wisely confiscated Tony’s repulsors before practically shoving them into one of the empty offices to “work out their issues”. Peter and Shuri had tried to eavesdrop on the conversation, but Pepper had dragged them into the kitchen by their ears almost immediately. Even Yoshi knew better than to disobey Pepper, and she fell asleep on top of the kitchen island. Pepper, Peter, and Shuri all sat on the island stools as they waited.

And waited.

And waited.

After Peter and Shuri looked at the closed door for what felt like the two thousandth time, Pepper grabbed her purse and motioned for them to follow her to the elevator. Peter quickly grabbed Tony’s laptop bag from the counter and gently placed Yoshi inside. She chirped sleepily, but put up no protest as he slung the bag over his shoulder.

“Shouldn’t we stay here?” Peter asked, trying to keep up with Pepper. She could really motor when she wanted to.

“And drive ourselves nuts?” she replied. “Nope. I’m pregnant, and I’m craving food.”

Shuri cleared her throat politely. “Peter and I could stay here and wait in case-” Pepper’s glare and arm pointing forward shut Shuri up immediately.

They continued to follow her out of the Tower and the two short blocks to Walgreens. Peter had never seen a Walgreens this huge before. It had two floors and an entire grocery section. Pepper hummed as she stood in front of the potato chip aisle.

“Can you two go upstairs and get blueberry yogurt?” she asked. “I don’t care what brand, but no Greek yogurt.”

“Sure.” Shuri replied. “How many?”

Pepper looked her square in the eye. “As many as you can carry.”

Peter looked at the bags of chips and wrinkled his nose at the idea of combining them with blueberry yogurt. “But isn’t that-?” He was cut off as Shuri yanked on his arm and dragged him towards the dairy section.

“Never, EVER debate a pregnant woman about her food!” Shuri hissed.
Peter sighed and accepted there were some things in life he was just never going to understand. When they got to the yogurt case, they reached out and began to grab any non-Greek blueberry yogurt they could find.

They met Pepper, whose arms were loaded with bags of Hot Cheetos, in front of the cash register. The cashier eyed them warily as all three of them dumped eight bags of Cheetos and twenty three cups of blueberry yogurt onto the counter. Pepper tapped her fingers on the counter impatiently as each item was scanned and bagged. Once it was all done, she quickly paid and headed outside, leaving Peter and Shuri to manage all the bags.

“You think she’s mad at us?” Peter asked, looping bags through each arm.

Shuri glanced at Pepper worriedly. “I don’t know. Maybe she’s just worried about Tony. If T’Challa was dealing with something like this, I’d be worried too even if I wanted it to work out.”

Pepper held the door open and watched as Peter and Shuri struggled with the bags. As soon as they got outside, she reached out her hands.

“Here I can take some,” she said, gently removing two bags from each teen’s arms. She watched their wary expressions as she readjusted the bags in her hands. “I’m sorry,” she sighed. “I’m not trying to take this out on you. Whenever Steve and Tony are involved…” She trailed off and let out another deep breath. “Are you two hungry?”

Peter and Shuri nodded quickly, their stomachs practically growling at this point. Pepper looked around the block and smiled as she spotted a pizza place tucked away across the street. “Pizza good?” she asked.

“YES!” they both exclaimed.

They headed over to the pizza shop, and Pepper gave them some money to order whatever they wanted.

“Just nothing with onions or peppers,” she warned, wrinkling her nose. “I can’t stand the smell of those up close right now.”

Peter and Shuri decided to split a large cheese pizza just to be safe, and they each got a cannoli and soda as well. They took their numbered placard from the cashier and placed it on the table Pepper had reserved for them. She had already opened one of the cups of yogurt and bag of Hot Cheetos when they sat down.

“So,” Pepper said, dipping a Hot Cheeto in the blueberry yogurt. “You two don’t seem particularly surprised to see Steve Rogers here.” It wasn’t so much an accusation as a statement of fact.

“Well...uh...” Peter stuttered. “I mean...”

“And you were gone for a while a few weeks ago,” she continued, eating another one. She let out a small sigh of happiness as her craving was finally being satisfied.

Shuri cleared her throat. “We were, um, busy?”

Pepper narrowed her eyes as Peter and Shuri wilted under her stare. “How did you find him?” she finally asked.

They all stopped talking as the pizza and cannolis were delivered to the table. Peter and Shuri eagerly grabbed a slice and began to dig in. Yoshi peeked her head out of the laptop bag, and Peter tore off a
piece of pizza for her to try. He promised himself he would clean any grease out of the laptop bag before Tony could find out.

Peter looked back up at Pepper, who was still waiting for their answer. “You want the long or short version?” he sighed.

“I think we have time for the long version,” Pepper replied dryly.

So, Peter and Shuri took turns telling Pepper how they had managed to hack around until they found Steve in Scotland. If she was surprised they had managed to find him and corral two superheroes to help them on their quest, she didn’t show it. She raised her brow when Peter told her about his argument with Steve, and she couldn’t help but feel a bit proud of his overprotective nature towards Tony.

“And then he said he would apologize eventually,” Shuri finished.

“We just didn’t think he’d show up unannounced,” Peter added.

Pepper sat back against the booth and licked the Cheeto dust from her fingers. “I’m just surprised he managed to break into the Tower alone,” she said, thinking of Steve’s lackluster technology skills.

“Oh, there’s no way he’s alone,” Peter replied quickly.

Shuri nodded in agreement. “I’ll bet you anything that Black Widow is here with him.”

“Of course,” Pepper whispered to herself. “Who else could get past FRIDAY?”

”Are you going to tell Tony about Scotland?” Peter asked.

Pepper shook her head. "That's your conversation to have, not mine."

They were all silent for a few moments, trying to digest everything (food and thoughts) in front of them. Yoshi snuck up out of the bag and licked up some cannoli cream before Peter swatted her back inside.

“Well,” Pepper finally said as she began to roll her bag of Cheetos closed, “let’s head back and see how they’re doing.”

Peter and Shuri helped clear away the pizza remnants and grabbed the remaining bags of Cheetos and yogurt. They obediently followed Pepper the two blocks back to the Tower. When they got inside, they helped her unpack the yogurt and stack it neatly in the fridge. Yoshi used her head to push the cups out of the bags and towards the teens while Pepper tried to clear space in the cabinets for the Cheetos.

Shuri glanced down the hall as the office door finally opened. She tapped Peter’s shoulder incessantly until he turned around too. Tony and Steve both appeared to be in one piece as they came into the kitchen.

“Well you three have been busy,” Tony said, raising his brow at the absurd amount of yogurt and Hot Cheetos in the room.

“You too?” Peter asked softly.

Steve gave them all a small smile. “We’re...talking,” he said carefully.

“Still?!” Shuri asked, exasperation evident in her voice. “It’s been forever!”
“We have a lot to talk about,” Tony replied, giving her a smirk. “We’re working through our issues.”

“But we also have other things to consider,” Steve added. “Technically I’m still a war criminal.”

Peter’s eyes widened in realization. “The Accords!”

Tony and Steve nodded. “We’ve got some stuff to figure out on that end,” Tony said. “But, we have a plan.”

Pepper crossed her arms over her chest. “And that is…?” she asked, trailing off at the end.

Tony cleared his throat and looked sheepishly at his wife. “Well, uh, in order to make sure everyone...gets it all out, if you will...we kind of need to be in the same space.”

“Uh huh.”

“So,” Tony gulped, “Cap was thinking we get everyone here for a little while.”

Steve’s eyes took on a panicked expression. “My idea! It was your idea!” he protested.

Tony mimed zipping his lips as Pepper narrowed her eyes. “So let me get this straight,” she said slowly. “You want to bring all of the Avengers to the Tower to live in secret while you all sort out your problems?”

Peter, Shuri, and Yoshi’s heads swung back and forth as they tried to keep up with the banter between Tony, Steve, and Pepper.

“Yeah, basically,” Tony admitted.

“Tony, I’m pregnant! And we just got married! I want you to work all this out, but did you really think it through?”

“We’ll be on our best behavior,” Steve promised. “You won’t even know we’re here.”

Pepper let out a snort. “That’s bullshit and you know it.”

“Well we can’t ignore our problems if we’re living under the same roof,” Tony reasoned.

“Actually-” Steve began to say before Tony cut him off.

“Nope, there will be no ignoring,” he promised. “We’re getting a mediator.”


“T’Challa,” Tony replied.

“T’Challa?!” Peter and Shuri repeated. The adults looked over at them, finally remembering that they weren’t alone.

Tony nodded. “Yeah, I texted him about an hour ago. He’ll be here tomorrow.”

“With Bucky,” Steve added, his smile growing wide.

Tony rolled his eyes. “Was that a heart eye emoji look, Cap?” He looked at Peter and Shuri. “Did you two just see that?”

The teens giggled as they nodded. “What about Thor and Dr. Banner?” Peter asked.
“I need Thor’s number,” Tony replied. Peter quickly forwarded the contact to Tony from his phone. “Thanks, kiddo.”

“So what can we do?” Shuri asked. “How can we help?”

Steve and Tony gave each other a look. “About that…” Steve said slowly.

Tony brushed Steve aside and gently wrapped his arms around Peter and Shuri before guiding them away. “Listen,” he said, “things are going to get pretty heated around here. It’s unavoidable, but it’s gotta happen. If there’s two teenagers in the building, people might hold back. And to move forward, people need to be able to get it out.”

“So you need us to leave?” Peter asked, slightly disappointed.

“Just for a week or two,” Tony promised. “If we can’t get through our basic issues by then, we’ve got a problem.” He squeezed their shoulders. “We okay?” he asked nervously.

Peter and Shuri looked at each other and then at Tony. They smiled and gave him a thumbs up.

“We get it,” Shuri said.

“Can we get our stuff from the lab and our rooms before we leave?” Peter asked.

Tony nodded. “Of course! I’ll keep an eye on Yoshi while you go get everything.”

Peter and Shuri rushed down to the lab so they could pack up. Even though they were bummed they couldn’t stay, they knew it was for the best.

“So what are we going to do for two weeks?” Peter asked, shoving his web slingers in a bag. “Hang out at my apartment?”

Shuri shook her head as she scooped up her tablet and VR blueprints. “I was thinking we could take Doctor Strange up on his offer,” she replied.

“To train at the Sanctum?”

“Yeah,” she nodded. “It would give us something to do, and it would definitely keep our minds off of stuff.”

Peter smirked at his best friend. “And you really want to learn mystic arts.”

“And I really want to learn mystic arts,” she grinned back.

“Well then,” Peter said, nodding firmly,

“Let’s do it!”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so I have my reasons for not writing out Steve and Tony’s whole discussion...I tried to write it, I really did, but nothing sounded right, and I hated how choppy the dialogue sounded. So, we’re left with a bit of ambiguity, but I hope y’all get the general sense of it. They still have a lot to work out, but at least they’re talking. And no, Tony
still doesn't know the teens went to Scotland.

Also, Steve's excitement over Bucky is platonic. He's just super psyched to see his best friend for the first time since leaving him in Wakanda.

And you know that Tumblr post about how IW doesn't exist and all the Avengers still live in the Tower? Yeah, that's how the last half of this book is going to be, and I'm really psyched about it! :D
Chapter Notes

Enjoy this fluff cause the next two chapters are angsty as hell. >.<

Also, I completely forgot about Pepper's allergy to strawberries!! Tbh, Iron Man 2 was not a fav of mine, so I don't remember a lot from the movie (I actually saw 1 and 3 before I saw 2 lol). I'll edit the chapter so it's blueberry yogurt instead! Thanks for pointing it out for me!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Again,” Strange commanded, looming over Peter.

Peter groaned and pushed himself up on his elbows. “Seriously?” he gasped, his ribs already aching.

“Yes.”

“But aren’t you supposed to be training her too?” Peter asked, pointing a shaky finger at Shuri. She was sitting on the stairs, her legs crossed and hands resting gently on her knees. She hadn’t moved from her spot since he and Strange began sparring almost two hours ago. Yoshi was currently curled up on the step beside her, asleep and bathing in the sunlight shining down from the Window of the Worlds.

“She’s meditating,” Strange replied without even looking back. “She’s definitely working harder than you at the moment.” He smirked down at Peter and then reached out a hand to help hoist the bruised teen off the floor.

Peter widened his stance and held up his fists. Strange raised an eyebrow at Peter and glanced down at his right hand. Peter quickly lifted it an inch higher, earning a nod from the wizard.

When Peter and Shuri had showed up at the Sanctum eight days ago with eager smiles and packed bags, Strange shockingly didn’t turn them away. He wasn’t even phased by the alien lizard he hadn’t seen in months. He merely let Wong show them to a shared guest room and began their training at once.

And it didn’t seem to ever stop.

Wong and Strange must have had some killer free time in the summer because they were both working the teens to the bone. Lessons started bright and early for both Peter and Shuri. Strange would give Shuri stacks of books to get through and then quiz her on them at dawn. Wong took Peter to the ever-changing portals to do some type of endurance training. For example, he had done sprints up and down the hills near Machu Picchu until he thought his legs and lungs were going to burst. He really hated running.

Afternoons were dedicated to sparring (Peter) and learning the mystic arts (Shuri). Peter’s strength was distance, so Strange focused on tightening up his close combat skills. His first few days were nothing short of disastrous. Despite his healing factor and Strange’s additional spells, Peter still went to bed sore almost every night. Shuri wasn’t allowed to wield any major spells, but both Wong and
Strange agreed to let her try to learn to use the sling ring. Despite hours of practice and the right hand motions, she had yet to have any success in summoning the transporting portal. Considering how long it took Strange to get to that point, though, it wasn't a complete surprise. But Shuri was not one to give up easily.

Peter and Shuri had to help out with chores as well. It was supposed to help “build their character”, but the teens were pretty sure that the adults just didn’t want to clean the dirty dishes.

By the time lights out rolled around at 10pm (Strange’s orders), Peter and Shuri were both so exhausted that they always passed out immediately. They had been so busy that they really hadn’t had time to think about Tony, Steve, or any of the Avengers apparently working through their problems at the Tower. Peter hadn’t gotten a text from Tony since they left, and Shuri also had radio silence from her brother. Besides checking in with May every night, neither teen had any contact with the outside world. Ned and MJ were both busy until the end of July, so they hadn’t done a game night since their time at the Tower either.

“Focus,” Strange said, snapping Peter out of his thoughts.

Peter shook his head and tightened his fists. Training without the suit had taken some getting used to, but he knew that if he was able to get the moves down without the suit, he’d be even more powerful with it. He smiled as he compared himself to Goku in his mind. This entire training kind of reminded him of Master Roshi’s regimen, and it only made him more determined to succeed. If not for himself, then why not for the anime?

“I’m ready,” Peter said firmly.

Strange nodded and then attacked without warning. Peter almost felt like he was in slow motion as he took a deep breath and watched Strange’s fist make its way towards his gut. He turned his body to the right to avoid the initial punch and grabbed Strange’s wrist. Anticipating this, Strange suddenly brought his other fist towards Peter’s chin. Peter quickly yanked Strange’s arm up, effectively blocking the second attack. The teen then kicked Strange’s feet out from under him and used the momentum to swing him onto the floor.

Strange gasped as the wind was knocked out of him. “Better,” he croaked, a small smile on his face. Peter felt the hair on his neck stand straight up and managed to duck just in time to avoid Wong coming at him from behind. Unfortunately, he was so busy dodging the surprise attack that he missed Wong’s second fist right in his stomach. He stumbled a bit, but was able to recover. He jumped and flipped upside down in the air. As he somersaulted, he kicked out, launching Wong right into the pedestal holding a cauldron of the cosmos. Thankfully, the Cloak of Levitation swooped in to keep it from falling, its fabric "glaring" at Peter as it dusted off the relic.

“Sorry!” Peter exclaimed sheepishly. He ran over and helped Wong up.

“Nice recovery,” Strange called over, tugging at the ends of his sleeves.

“But?” Peter asked, knowing a lecture was coming.

“You tell me.”

Peter sighed. “I let my guard down once you were on the floor.”

Strange nodded. “If you’re fighting someone close up, you cannot let that happen. People are dangerous, especially when they’re right in your space.” He glanced at Peter’s hands, which were resting gently on his sore torso. “Let’s get you healed up.”
“Shuri!” Wong exclaimed, snapping the princess out of her meditation.

“How?” she asked, gently opening her eyes. “What happened to you?” she asked Peter. “Did you lose again?”

“He actually won,” Strange replied with his signature smirk.

Shuri grimaced as Peter hobbled over. “Geez, I’d hate to see what you look like when you lose. Oh wait! I have!” She laughed as Peter shot her the death glare.

“How did you meditation go?” Wong asked.

“Really well!” Shuri exclaimed. “I didn’t even hear you sparring this time!”

“We should try the sling ring again after lunch,” Strange noted, leading the way to the kitchen. Shuri scooped up Yoshi since Peter was still sore, and they all made their way to take a lunch break.

Wong got Peter some ice while Strange pulled out a takeout menu. “Deli today?” he asked.

“You know,” Peter observed while Wong nodded, “if you went grocery shopping, we could actually make food instead of buying it.”

Strange snapped the deli menu shut. “So what I’m hearing is that you don’t want food?”

Peter gulped and quickly gave Strange a thumbs up. “Deli takeout is fine!”

“Wong, it’s your turn to pay,” Strange said, opening the menu and scanning the options.

Wong chuckled lightly. “About that…”

“Seriously?” Strange asked while Shuri and Peter suppressed giggles. “You have no money again?”

“We shouldn’t hold onto the metaphysical,” Wong merely replied.

“I’ll tell the guys at the deli,” Strange shot back, not calling his bluff. “Maybe they’ll make you a metaphysical ham on rye.”

Wong quickly fumbled at his clothes. “Ooo, wait, wait!” He pulled out some crumpled bills. “I think I’ve got 200-”

“Dollars?”

“Rupees,” Wong replied with a sheepish grin.

“Which is?” Strange sighed.

Wong waved the bills around. “Uh, buck and a half?”

Strange groaned. “What do you want?” he asked, giving up at this point.

Wong clapped his hands together. “I wouldn’t say no to a tuna melt.”

Strange nodded and then looked at the teens. “You two?”

“What’s our budget?” Peter asked quickly, remembering an unfortunate incident from their second day. When Strange had told them to order whatever they wanted for dinner, he was not anticipating the teens taking it so literally. He had the largest take out bill of his life, but Peter and Shuri managed
to eat almost all of the food in one sitting. Where they stored it, Strange had no idea. Now, he imposed a food budget on the teens so he didn’t go completely broke. He wasn’t a complete asshole. Since he was working them pretty hard, the least he could do was pay for their food...within reason.

“$25.”

“Each?” Shuri asked hopefully.

“Total.”

Shuri motioned for Strange to give her the menu, and she and Peter quickly conferred on their food choices.

“We’ll do two Italian hoagies,” Shuri decided. “With a side of fries for me and onion rings for him.”

“And two cannolis please,” Peter added.

“What about Yoshi?” Strange asked, glancing over at Peter’s pet.

“She’ll have a salad and I’ll give her some of the meat from my hoagie,” Peter decided. He had no idea what kind of diet alien lizards got, but between greens and the random insects and small animals Yoshi found, she seemed to be happy and healthy.

Strange called in the order, and Peter and Shuri took advantage of a rare break to just relax. It was a rainy day in New York, so they lounged under the Window of the Worlds and watched as the rain droplets raced each other down the glass. Yoshi kept trying to eat the rain, making Peter and Shuri giggle.

By the time the food arrived, all three stomachs were growling loudly and ready to eat. Casual conversation filtered between the adults and teens. Shuri was always fascinated to hear about Strange’s work before he became a Master of the Mystic Arts, so Strange regaled them of his most successful surgeries.

All in all, it was a really good morning.

“…You’re not trying.”

“Yes I am!” Shuri insisted with a huff, her face wrinkled in concentration. She gritted her teeth and focused as she held her right arm out and created a circle in front of it with her left. A few golden sparks showered the air, but the circle didn’t hold. She let out a groan of frustration and dropped her arms.

Peter absentmindedly pet Yoshi’s head as he watched. While the sparring may have taken a physical toll on his body, he had no doubt the mental toll his friend was experiencing was way more intense.

Strange’s harsh expression softened as he watched Shuri’s confidence crumble. “Listen,” he said quietly, “you are well beyond where I was at this point. I know you can keep going, but you have to unblock your mind. You have to believe in magic.”

“I do!” Shuri exclaimed quickly.
Strange shook his head. “No, you believe in your technology. That it can help create or explain magic. You need to let go of all those notions and believe in actual magic. Unexplainable, unpredictable magic.”

Shuri opened her mouth to protest, but she knew he was right. This was beyond anything she had ever dealt with before. She was the smartest person she knew, and she could solve any problem given the time and resources. She worked hard enough, and she was giving this training as much, if not more, effort than her usual endeavors.

Shuri really hated not being good at something. Especially when she practiced.

“Maybe you need some extra motivation,” Strange hummed, tapping his fingers against his chin.

Wong’s head shot up from the book he was reading on the steps above Peter. “Strange…” he warned slowly.

“Peter, come here,” Strange said, ignoring Wong and waving the boy over.

Peter got up without hesitation and let Strange lead him right next to Shuri. Strange stood back and began circling his arms.

“Strange,” Wong said forcefully, “I really don’t think-”

“Shuri, you can do this,” Strange promised. “You just need to focus.”

And with that, he thrust the portal towards Peter and Shuri, sending them tumbling into a world unknown.

Chapter End Notes

Wong and Strange are literally the best. This whole training chapter could be its own arc. Speaking of...if anyone wants to write it out in more depth, I think that would be super cool!! Y’all have been coming up with some epic extensions to this fic! :D
Part 49

Chapter Notes

I realize I haven’t said this in a while, but thank you all so much for your kind comments and kudos!! Your love for this fic has continued to amaze me, and I am so happy to be writing it!

To anyone new reading, thanks for stopping by and welcome to this wild ride! :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Peter noticed three things when he looked up at the scenery around him.

One, they were definitely not in New York anymore. A vast, sandy landscape surrounded them on all sides while the intense sun beat down on them from above.

Two, his phone exploded with text messages and missed calls as they came pouring in from the last eight days. Peter’s thigh buzzed incessantly until he pulled out his phone and turned off the notifications. When he looked over at Shuri, he saw look down at her pulsing kimoyo beads, no doubt getting just as many messages as he had.

Three, there was a massive sandstorm heading right towards them.

“Oh shit!” Peter exclaimed, his eyes widening in fear. “Shuri!” He pointed his arm behind her at the impending storm.

Shuri whirled around and let out a stream of similar curses. “Okayokayokay,” she whispered nervously. She felt sand particles prick her skin as the storm moved closer. It looked almost like a solid wall of sand moving towards them, and the sky began to darken as it blocked out the sun.

Peter’s phone suddenly rang, the “Iron Man” ringtone just barely audible through the storm. Peter looked at the phone in his hands and debated whether or not to pick up considering their current predicament. He decided to answer.

“Hel-” he started to say.

“PETER!” Tony screeched from the other end. “Why the hell is FRIDAY tracking your cell phone to a desert in EGYPT?!”

“It’s a long story!” Peter shouted over the wind.

“Pe- -arker you ha- some ex-a-ining to-” Tony’s voice crackled as the interference became too much.

Peter knew he was going to pay for hanging up on Tony Stark again, but he ended the call an turned his focus to his friend. He knew why Strange had sent them here.

“Shuri, you’ve gotta do it!” he yelled over the wind. “You can do it!”

Shuri looked scared but determined as she closed her eyes and held out her arms. She made the circle, and a few sparks shot out, but the circle didn’t hold. She let out a yell of frustration as she tried
again. She took a deep breath and focused her mind like she did during her meditations.

Suddenly, the roar of the wind died down, and all was silent. Her body hummed with energy, and each breath felt fluid, almost like she was floating. Shuri let go of everything.

“Shuri!” Peter shouted, the sandstorm just meters away. He coughed, covered his eyes and ducked down. “SHURI!”

Shuri’s eyes snapped open, and she drew another circle in the air. It was weak, but it held. She could see the Sanctum steps on the other, and she quickly grabbed Peter’s arm and jumped through.

They both landed on the tile floor, gusts of sand streaming in from the storm as the circle closed. Peter manically swatted at his head, trying to get the sand out of his curls. Shuri panted and coughed, but a huge smile practically split her face in two.

She had done it.

Meanwhile, Wong was arguing with Strange, his face beet red and furious.

“Are you INSANE??” Wong screamed. “What an idiotic, DANGEROUS thing to do!”

“I would have brought them back if it didn’t work,” Strange replied calmly, picking at a random thread on his shirt.

“What if it had been too late?!”

Strange pointed to the teens, who were still sprawled out on the floor. “They came back! The method worked on me, and it worked on Shuri. She just needed the right motivation.”

Wong shook his head and crossed his arms. “That doesn’t make it right.”

Strange walked over and knelt down, helping both Peter and Shuri up off the floor. “You two okay?” he asked.

Peter ignored Strange and turned to Shuri. “That was AMAZING!” he exclaimed, hugging his friend. “You did it!”

Shuri laughed and squealed as Peter practically lifted her off the floor. “I know! It was a weak circle but-”

“It was a start,” Strange finished. “You know you can do it, now you just need to get better.”

Before Shuri could say anything, Wong cut in. “Not today,” he said sternly. “We’re done for today.”

Strange knew better than to irritate Wong when he was already annoyed, so he conceded. “Right,” he added. “Take the rest of the day off.” He turned around and began to walk away.

Peter reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone. “Hey wait!” he called out, remembering his short phone call with Tony. “Why did I get a bunch of texts and stuff while we were in the desert?”

“I blocked your cell phone signals,” Strange replied, as if it were obvious. “You needed to be devoid of any distractions.”

Shuri wrinkled her nose in confusion. “But we’ve been talking to Aunt May all week!”

“I can control which signals come in and out,” Strange shrugged. The teens looked at him in
disbelief. “Listen,” Strange sighed. “I know who’s in town, and when you showed up at my door, I had a pretty good idea about why you were here. Tell me, would you really have been focused if you were worrying about them all week?”

“Is that why you’ve been working us so hard?” Peter asked.

Strange scoffed. “No, I’ve been working you so hard because you need the work.” He revealed a small smile as the teens rolled their eyes. “Take the afternoon, catch up with your texts,” Strange said. He gave them a small nod before disappearing with Wong up the staircase.

Peter looked down at his phone and gulped at all the missed texts. Shuri tapped her own beads and sighed.

“Most of mine are hologram calls from T’Challa,” she said. “You?”


7/20 IronDad: So everyone made it in here in one piece. Don’t worry, I didn’t let them touch your rooms. Vision has a problem with doors, so when you come back again, get ready for that.

7/20 IronDad: I think Pepper is truly going to kill me this time. Steve made German sausages with onions and peppers for dinner, and she puked all over Barnes on her way into the kitchen. My god, his face!

7/21 IronDad: This might actually work. Steve and I had a good talk today.

7/22 IronDad: Screw that no good, stubborn asshole with his perfect teeth.

7/23 IronDad: Thank god Clint is staying at his place in Brooklyn. He snuck up into my vents this morning and scared the shit out of the other birdman. He played bird calls because he insists Sam needs to “loosen up and find a mate”.

7/23 IronDad: Apparently that last text would make no sense to you because Steve says you haven’t met Sam yet. He’s a joy, trust me.

7/23 IronDad: Listen, kid, I know I told you we needed some space to work things out, but you’re allowed to text back you know.

7/24 IronDad: Thor says he wants to bring Loki over when you and Shuri get back. Although if you ask me, we really don’t need any more mischief in the Tower right now.

7/24 IronDad: Also, Thor with a phone is priceless.

7/25 IronDad: Amnnnddddd Loki’s here. With the cat. Bucky’s pissed because I made him leave the goats and tiger in Wakanda.

7/25 IronDad: Before you ask, no, the goats and tigers cannot stay here.

7/25 IronDad: THE TIGER PLAYS WITH THE GOATS BE STILL MY BEATING HEART!!

7/16 IronDad: Seriously, Pete, where are you? T’Challa’s been trying to get in touch with Shuri, but no answer. I tried calling May, but you know she likes to ignore my calls about as much as I like to
put Secretary Ross on hold.

7/26 IronDad: May just texted me back and said you’re “busy”. You’re, like, 12! Busy with what?!

7/27 IronDad: Pepper wants to paint the nursery gray. I’m thinking more of a red and gold combo. Wanna weigh in here?

7/27 IronDad: Peter?

7/27 IronDad: Helllllooooo?

7/27 IronDad: Anyone there?

7/28 IronDad: So I just had a really interesting convo with Cap…

7/28 IronDad: We need to talk. Now.

“Peter?” Shuri asked, interrupting Peter as he continued to scroll through his texts. She waved him over and held out a projection of T’Challa above her palm.

“Listen,” the hologram spoke, “I know I told you in my last message to call Tony, but you might want to give him some space. I know he didn’t mean what he said in that voicemail. Just give him some time, and he’ll come around. Love you.”

The hologram faded, and Shuri looked at Peter nervously. “Did Tony leave you a voicemail?” she asked.

Peter tapped his screen and saw a voicemail from a few hours ago in his inbox. He gulped and nodded as he played it on speakerphone.

“You. Are. UNBELIEVABLE!” Tony roared, his voice echoing loudly in the Sanctum foyer. “You and your friends went to Scotland behind my BACK to find Cap?! And here I thought he was coming because he WANTED TO, not because a couple of teenagers guilted him! How DARE you break my trust like that!”

“Tony, I-” Peter could hear Steve in the background trying to reason with him.

“Stay out of this Steve! I’m already pissed at you for not telling me about this sooner!” Tony took a shaky breath and turned his attention back to Peter. “You know how I’ve been asking you to text me back? Don’t.”

Pepper’s voice cut through. “Tony, you don’t mean-”

The voicemail ended.

Peter felt his throat start to close up as his body shook. He had only ever heard Tony that angry once,
and that had practically devastated him. Tears pricked his eyes as Shuri stared at the phone clutched in his hand in shock.

“Y-y-you...you heard T’Challa,” she said shakily. “He didn’t mean it. He couldn’t…” Her voice trailed off as she watched Peter break in front of her. Tony meant a lot to her, but she knew he meant the world to Peter.

Peter swallowed thickly as a few tears escaped and rolled down his cheeks. “I just wanted to help,” he whispered. “I didn’t mean to…I just wanted to…”

“I know,” Shuri replied softly. “He didn’t mean it. He cares about us. He loves you.”

“Not anymore,” Peter said, his mouth forming a grim line on his face. His throat burned and he roughly palmed his eyes trying to force the tears to go back.

Shuri’s chin wobbled too. She knew they had done the right thing, but maybe there could have been another way. Maybe they really did mess up.

Suddenly, the hair on Peter’s arm stood up, and he had enough sense to grab Shuri and duck down as the door to the Sanctum was blown off its hinges. Wood splintered everywhere as the teens were knocked back. They slid across the slick tile floor until they bumped into the umbrella rack against the far wall.

Strange and Wong wasted no time in jumping down from the second floor, golden circles in front of their fists, ready to attack. Yoshi scampered over to Peter and hid under his shirt, shaking against his skin. When the dust from the explosion cleared, they could finally see who was waiting for them on the other side.

It was none other than Tony Stark.

Chapter End Notes

YAY SHURI!! :D

Okay, so, to be fair, I did say there was going to be angst. Tony's reasoning will be revealed...on Wednesday (please don't be mad at the wait!).

Also, I honestly lost track of the time, so I'm guessing that it's approximately July 28th at this point. They went to Scotland in the very beginning of July and it's been at least three weeks since then (two weeks with Tony, eight days at the Sanctum). So, for my sake, I'm just gonna say it's officially July 28th. :P
Part 50

Chapter Notes

So I know I said no update until Wednesday, but I felt really guilty about leaving y'all with that mess, so here you go! I got some extra writing done so I could post this.

Thanks for putting up with my shenanigans. I promise a ton of fluff is coming your way next.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“PETER! SHURI!”

Peter and Shuri carefully untangled themselves from each other and sat up. Rubble littered the floor, and Tony stepped out of his Iron Man suit, his face etched with worry. Strange and Wong lowered their hands, and the gold protective spells fizzled into the air.

Peter felt his breathing speed up as he tried to process everything. The voicemail. The door being blown off. It was all so contradictory, so opposite. Tony sounded so angry mere minutes ago, yet here he was ready to blast down a building to find them. Peter wanted to make himself move, but he couldn’t. His hands shook so much that he accidentally hit the play button again on his voice mails since the screen was still pulled up.

Tony’s furious voice shouted through the phone and seemed to permeate every surface of the Sanctum. The real Tony’s face went ashen, and he walked slowly to the teens before dropping on his knees in front of them. He gently took the phone out of Peter’s hand and deleted the offending message. The new silence cut through the air, everyone waiting for someone else to make the first move.

“Peter,” Tony whispered softly, “I-”

“We’re sorry!” Shuri exclaimed suddenly. “We’re so sorry!”

Peter found his voice as well. “We were just trying to help! We swear!” His voice lowered. “It wasn’t Steve’s fault. Please...it wasn’t his fault.”

Tony felt like the smallest person in the world. He leaned forward, and when neither teen flinched at the closer contact, he gently wrapped his arms around them and pulled them in for a tight hug.

“I never should have said that,” Tony rasped. “I am so, so sorry.” He kept repeating the phrase over and over again as Peter and Shuri clung to him.

“We just wanted to help,” Peter said after a while, his voice muffled in Tony’s shirt.

Tony pulled back and looked both of them in the eyes. “I know. Peter, I know.” He wiped a thumb across each of their cheeks to get rid of their tears as if they were little kids. “I just-”

“You know,” Strange coughed, interrupting their moment, “we do have more comfortable seats if you want to, you know, talk all this out.” Tony glared at Strange, who merely held up his hands. “Or sit on the floor.”
Wong yanked Strange’s shirt collar and began dragging him up the stairs. “Excuse us,” he said, giving Tony a strained smile. “We’re going to be busy for as long as you need.” He waved his hand at the destroyed door, and the wood began to repair itself. Strange continued to protest until Wong shoved him inside the library on the second floor and slammed the door shut.

Tony scoffed in disbelief. “Is he always like that?” he asked to no one in particular.

Shuri and Peter gave him watery smiles. “Pretty much,” they replied unanimously.

Tony moved so he was sitting with crossed legs on the floor. “I know I don’t deserve it,” he sighed, “but I owe you an explanation. And a better apology.”

The teens moved to mimic Tony’s sitting position across from him. “We need to apologize,” Peter said quickly. “We should have told you-”

Tony held up his hand, effectively silencing Peter. “Me first.” Peter nodded, giving Tony permission to continue. “After I sent the...message,” he choked out, as if remembering the event physically pained him, “a lot of people chewed me out. Pepper first. I really thought she was going to kill me. And it would have been well-deserved.”

“Tony-” Peter tried to interrupt.

“Nah uh!” Tony held up his finger. “The adult is talking.” Peter sat back, so Tony continued. “But then Steve dragged me outside. And I was seeing red. I really thought we were going to duke it out again.” He took a deep breath and let it out. “But instead...he tells me this story about how four teenagers went through all the effort to track him down in a foreign country. How they took a huge risk in finding him. And he had been feeling a lot too. Guilt. Anger. But he was letting it all build up.”

Tony paused and looked Peter right in the eyes. “And then,” he continued, his voice cracking with emotion, “he told about a young man who stood up to him. And this kid made him realize that he couldn’t keep running. So he decided it was time to change.” Tony’s jaw clenched as he swallowed. “And...and he told me that this kid would have made me a really proud father.”

He sniffled and a few tears leaked from his eyes. “I was upset that you didn’t tell me because I was scared. What happened between Steve and I after Germany...I realized how dangerous he could be. And to know that you dealt with him alone...I don’t think I could live with myself if anything happened to you. Both of you,” he said, looking to Shuri as well.

“I wanted Steve to apologize because he wanted to,” Tony added. “And he did. But, according to him, he needed a kick in the ass first. So, yes, I was upset. And a little angry. We don’t keep secrets from each other. But none of that justified what I said on the phone. None of it.”

“And I really hope you can forgive me,” he finished, his voice lowering to a whisper.

Peter and Shuri looked at each other briefly before acting. After listening to his explanation, there was no question in their mind what their answer would be. They launched themselves at Tony, practically knocking him backwards as they hugged him.

“So much,” Shuri added.
Tony could have sobbed, he was so happy. He had been terrified of being just like Howard his entire life. That phone call was so classically his father, he was certain Peter and Shuri would never want to see him again. Good god, he had never been so happy to be wrong in his entire life.

“I love you too,” Tony promised, giving them another quick squeeze.

Shuri pulled back suddenly. “Wait!” she yelped. “Did you blow the door down just to apologize to us?”

Tony’s eyes widened as he suddenly remembered why he had been in such a frenzy in the first place. “No!” he exclaimed. “I blew the door down because Peter’s cell phone was off the grid for eight days then turns up in freaking Egypt! And then all of a sudden you were back in New York! There’s only one person who could have pulled that crap off.” He narrowed his eyes at the teens. “Care to explain?”

“We’ve been training with Doctor Strange since we left the Tower!” Peter said excitedly.

“Training?” Tony asked.

“Yeah!” Shuri added. “I’ve been learning to control the mystic arts!”

“And I’ve been learning how to fight!” Peter chimed in. “Well, fight more.”

The teens began to talk over each other as they tried to explain as much as they could about their eight days at the Sanctum in as little time as possible.

“So I meditate now which is really cool, but super boring—”

“Wong had me swimming in the Adriatic Sea at one point! It helped build up my endurance!”

“And I know all about the history of the mystic arts! You could quiz me on anything!”

“And Doctor Strange kept beating me up because I really suck at close combat sparring, but I totally took him down today!”

“I was trying to make a portal with the sling ring—”

“Oh yeah! That was so epic!”

“But I couldn’t get it to work, you know?”

“So Doctor Strange decided Shuri needed motivation—”

“And he sent us right in the middle of a sandstorm!”

“I wasn’t worried at all! Okay, maybe a little worried, cause, you know, sandstorm. But I knew she could do it!”

“And I did!”

“We made it back just in time! Isn’t that epic?!”

“I mean, I still have to practice, but I DID IT!”

Tony blinked once, twice, then three times as he stared at Peter and Shuri. Their eyes were glistening with excitement as if nothing was remotely wrong with anything they had just told him.
“So...let me get this straight…” Tony said slowly, trying to remain calm. “Strange has spent the last eight days encouraging you to fight close combat?” He looked at Peter as he asked this.

Peter nodded enthusiastically. “Yeah!”

“And he’s been teaching you,” Tony continued, moving to Shuri, “how to use an ancient form of magic that lets you transport yourself anywhere in the world?”

“Cool, right?!” Shuri replied with a wide smile.

Tony laughed maniacally as he nodded his head in shock. Then, his expression sobered up and he shook his head. “NO!” he shouted, clutching his heart as if preparing for an impending anxiety attack. “NOT COOL!” He pointed to Peter. “Your close combat sucks! There’s no way you’ve been unscathed this entire time.”

“Well, no,” Peter admitted.

“He got his ass kicked every day,” Shuri giggled. “You should have seen the bruises!”

That did not help ease Tony’s already elevated anxiety. “THE WHAT?!” he yelled, his eyes practically popping out of his head.

“It was never anything too serious, and I heal fast!” Peter defended. “I was fine! I am fine!”

“And you!” Tony exclaimed at Shuri. “A sandstorm in the middle of Egypt?! How is that responsible?!”

“I wasn’t clearing my mind,” Shuri said calmly. “I needed a little extra motivation.”

“A DANGEROUS SANDSTORM IS NOT PROPER MOTIVATION!”

Tony practically growled as he hopped up and took the steps two at a time to the library, leaving Peter and Shuri in his dust. They quickly followed after him, Yoshi scampering at their heels.

“STRANGE!” Tony screamed. “GET YOU ASS OUT-”

Tony disappeared before their very eyes he could finish his sentence. Peter and Shuri looked upstairs as something thudded above them.

“DAMMIT STRANGE!” Tony’s angry footsteps clomped their way towards the stairs again, when his screams died down. Another thud resounded from the left side of the Sanctum.

They really shouldn’t have found it so funny, but Peter and Shuri stifled giggles as Strange kept making Tony’s location within the Sanctum change.

“You rang?” Strange called out, stepping out from the library. Tony let out a stream of colorful curses from downstairs in the kitchen now. Pots and plates crashed from below, and Wong glared at Strange from behind at the thought of his kitchen being ruined.

“You really need to learn boundaries,” Wong said dryly.

The Cloak of Levitation floated down the hall carrying Peter and Shuri’s bags with it. The teens’ faces fell as they realized what it meant.

“But we just started getting better!” Peter exclaimed sadly.
“We can’t stop now!” Shuri added, her eyes pleading. “I still have so much to learn.”

Strange gave them a genuine smile. “And you will. But I think it’s time you went home for a while.”

Home.

Peter and Shuri couldn’t help but smile at the thought of returning to the Tower with Tony and seeing everyone again. They picked up their bags and tackled Strange and Wong into a group hug before they could protest. Everything they could have wanted to say was communicated in the way they wrapped their arms tightly around their new mentors. Yoshi jumped up with more height than an average lizard should have been able to and nestled herself on Peter’s shoulder. They could still hear Tony yelling downstairs (although now he was on the opposite side of the floor) as they began to head to the front door.

Yeah, home sounded like a really awesome idea.

Chapter End Notes

And the award for most overreactive parent award goes to TONY STARK! He cares, he really does. But the doofus 100% did not think that through :P

Also, kids are super resilient, which is why they forgave him so easily. Plus, THAT is how you apologize to someone (*cough* *cough* Steve Rogers).
So credit for this bonus chapter goes to Evan!!! She created some dialogue that was based off the "Where's My Super Suit" scene from the Incredibles, and she graciously let me write it!

This is during the eight days where Peter and Shuri are MIA, and it is from Tony’s perspective.

Thank you so much, Evan!!! I hope I did your idea justice!

Tony sighed as he left what felt like the tenth message on May’s cell phone. He flopped back against his pillows dramatically and pouted.

“Still no answer?” Pepper asked without looking up from her book.

“No!” Tony whined. “I don’t get it!” He sat up and stared at his phone again, willing for a message to come through. “I know I told them we needed space, but they always text!”

Pepper peeked up over her book. “I’m sure May will call you back. She’s busy too, you know.”

Tony knew Pepper was right, but it still didn’t make him feel any better. He was used to Peter and Shuri texting him constantly, so the silence was a bit unnerving. Part of him thought he should be grateful the teens actually listened to him for once, and another part of him found something seriously wrong with that.

“Hey FRIDAY-” Tony started to say.


Tony grumbled as he buried himself under the covers, acting like a toddler having a temper tantrum. Pepper took a deep breath and tried to regain with little sanity she was left with after dealing with the Avengers all day, every day for the last four days.

“Tony,” she said sternly. “I am already carrying one child. I’m not dealing with two.”

“Sorry,” Tony mumbled, peering out from under the covers. “I’m just worried about them.”

Pepper smiled softly, running her fingers through his hair. “I know. If it makes you feel any better, I am too. But,” she added before Tony could open his mouth, “May will call if there’s anything wrong.”

Tony nodded his head and laid back down so he could try and get some sleep. Pepper marked the page in her book before quickly grabbing her phone and sending off a quick text. With any luck, Tony might calm down by tomorrow.
TS: May???? Where are the kids?

MP: They're busy.

“Aha!” Tony exclaimed, practically jumping out of his chair. The eyes of every single superhero in the room were on him, but he didn’t care. He whipped his phone out from under the table where he had been trying to hide it, and quickly dialed May’s number.

“What on Earth-” T’Challa said, a scowl on his face. “Have you been listening to a word we’ve said this entire time?”

“Multi-tasking!” Tony whispered loudly as the phone rang.

“Unbelievable,” Steve muttered, rubbing his hands over his eyes. He was getting too old for this. “Tony, take it outside.”

Tony didn’t need anymore prompting, and he quickly bolted out of the room and slammed the door shut. He practically held his breath until May answered the phone.

“Dammit!” she cursed. “I knew I shouldn’t have texted you!”

“Hi May,” Tony said sweetly. “Where are my kids?”

“87 text messages, Stark! 87!” May huffed in annoyance. “And that doesn’t even include the 17 voicemails!”

“18,” Tony corrected. “I called again this morning.”

“You’re not helping your case.”


“What?” she asked, pretending not to hear him.

“WHERE. ARE. MY. KIDS?!”

“I, uh, told you they’re busy,” she replied. Tony could hear papers shuffling in the background, and he knew she must be at work.

“What do you mean, busy?” Tony asked incredulously. “So busy they can’t even text back?!”

May sighed in exasperation. “Why do you need to know?”

“I want to talk to them!”

“Oh, uh!” she snapped back. “You’ve needed to hold this make-up session of yours for months! Get your shit sorted out first!”

Tony let out a silent scream in the empty hallway, waving the phone angrily in the air before putting it back to his ear again. “But what if they’re in danger?” he asked.
May let out a sharp laugh. “From what I hear, the only thing that’s in danger is Pepper’s sanity!”

Tony could not help the words that came out of his mouth next. He really, truly couldn’t.

“You tell me where my kids are, Parker! This is about the greater good!”

“Greater good?!” May exclaimed, her voice going up about three octaves. “You and everyone else are talking! That is the greatest good you are ever going to get right now!”

“May, c’mon!”

“Stop calling, Tony! They’re fine! Our kids are fine!”

And with that, May Parker unceremoniously hung up on Tony Stark. He held the phone away from his face and stared at it as if it were a completely foreign object. He was used to hanging up on people, not the other way around.

Tony muttered a string of curses as he opened up his text conversation with Peter that was currently one-sided. He quickly typed another text before shutting off his phone and heading back into the conference room.

Spideyson: May just texted me back and said you’re “busy”. You’re, like, 12! Busy with what?!
The Tower was an epicenter of chaos when Peter, Shuri, and Tony walked inside. Tony had spent the entire way back lecturing them about taking lessons from the “asshole in the floating cape”, and the teens were relieved for the new distraction. As soon as the elevator doors dinged open to the common room, a wall of people was waiting. Yoshi managed to scamper right through everyone’s legs as she headed straight for Peter’s room.

Pepper was the first person they saw. Well, actually, she elbowed her way through the crowd and wrapped Peter and Shuri up in a tight hug. “Thank god you’re okay,” she whispered, giving them both a kiss on top of their heads. Peter and Shuri’s faces turned bright red at the sudden affection, but they didn’t quite mind it either.

“We’re fine!” Peter promised. “We’ve been fine!”

Pepper glared at the teens. “Don’t you EVER go eight days without talking to us again!” she ordered sternly. “I don’t care what he says.” Pepper’s “he” had so much venom in it, that Tony actually shrunk back. Apparently, he was still in the dog house over the voicemail.

“We talked it out,” Shuri said quickly, coming to Tony’s defense. “Everything is okay.”

“Uh huh,” Pepper replied, clearly not convinced.

Peter surprised her by giving her another hug. “Please be nice to him,” he said softly in her ear. “He feels really bad, and he knows he messed up.” He pulled back and looked her in the eyes. “We’re okay.”

Pepper’s expression softened, and she stroked Peter’s hair just like Aunt May would do. “You’re a really good kid. Both of you are.”

“Not to interrupt…” a voice said from behind them. Pepper graciously moved out of the way to reveal T’Challa.

“Brother!” Shuri exclaimed, a huge smile taking over her face. She gave T’Challa a quick hug before doing their secret handshake and ending with the “Wakanda Forever” symbol. He reached out and gripped Peter’s shoulder affectionately before ruffling his hair.

“So, Scotland, huh?” he asked the teens, a stern expression crossing his face.

“Are you going to tell mother?”

“Absolutely not. I’ll think of some punishment, don’t you worry.” He tried to keep the serious expression, but he caved and gave them another hug anyway.

Once the hugs started, everyone wanted in. Peter felt like he was on an episode of Oprah where he got a hug, and she got a hug, and they all got hugs!

Bucky and Loki fussed over the teens the longest. Peter and Shuri were shocked to see Loki there in the first place, but Thor had apparently made quite a convincing argument that he needed to be involved in the apology process. Bucky and Loki were still both pale as always, but their skin wasn’t
sallow or sunken in. They both looked...healthy, happy even.

Shuri spotted Frigga curled up on the leather couch, and she beamed knowing that Loki had been
able to bring his pet with him. Bucky, on the other hand, gave them a quick update on the goats and
Tigger, all of whom were left behind in Wakanda. Peter noticed Bucky’s face fall as he talked about
his companions, and he knew the super soldier really missed them.

Thor, of course, provided a bear hug that could have actually squished an actual bear. They barely
had time to catch their breath before Clint barreled in, practically taking them off their feet. The fact
that Clint was there wasn’t so shocking...it was that he had appeared out of the ceiling vent that made
Peter and Shuri stare at him with their jaws dropped.

“I can get around faster,” was his only response when they asked.

Wanda, Vision, and Nat greeted Peter and Shuri from a distance, still new to their friendship. Vision
had given up his human disguise and was back to his original red self, the Mind stone glimmering in
the center of his forehead. Wanda still seemed to read Peter and Shuri’s souls, and Nat’s smile
seemed like it had as many secrets as she did.

Bruce couldn’t escape a quick hug from Peter and Shuri, and he actually blushed when they pulled
away. They tried to grill him about his research, but their attention was diverted away as Steve
Rogers coughed politely to greet them.

Steve still had the beard, but he didn’t look quite as exhausted as when they had seen him in
Scotland. He gave them both a firm handshake and a warm smile. Peter and Shuri shared a secret
glance, determined to get a genuine hug out of him by the end of the summer.

“Listen,” Steve began, “about Tony-”

“It’s okay,” Peter assured him.

Steve didn’t seem convinced. “I’m still sorry-”

“Hey!” a familiar voice interrupted in the whirlwind. Peter and Shuri looked around for the voice
until Steve gently turned them to the right. This talk could wait for another time.

“Scott!” both teens yelled, their jaws dropping in shock.

Scott Lang tripped over his own two feet as he came over to say hello. He gave them both a wide
smile and an excited wave.

“Does Hope know you’re here?” Shuri asked with a sly grin.

“Yeah!” Scott replied defensively.

“Does Hank?” Peter asked, crossing his arms and raising his brow.

Scott chuckled nervously and let out a cough. “Well...he might think I’m meeting new investors in
New York for a few weeks,” he admitted. “He’s still a little sore over the-” he lowered his voice to a
whisper “-Germany thing.” He cleared his throat and straightened up. “But when Captain America
calls, you don’t say no,” he added in a deep, confident voice.

“Hold up!” an unfamiliar voice exclaimed. “They know Tic Tac?!”

Scott rolled his eyes at the nickname. “Seriously?!” he muttered under his breath.
A tall man nudged Scott out of the way and looked the teens up and down. He had dark skin, and his arm muscles bulged as he crossed his arms. His eyes glinted mischievously, and he cracked a smile at Peter and Shuri.

“Sam Wilson,” he said kindly, holding out his hand. “Nice to meet you. Steve’s told me a lot about you. But he didn’t mention your lack of judgement when it comes to the company you keep.” He glanced back at Scott and Bucky, who were both practically scowling at him.

Peter and Shuri both held out their hands and shook Sam’s. “That’s funny,” Shuri said, wrinkling her nose. “Steve hasn’t told us anything about you.” Peter hummed in agreement as they gave him their famous “you don’t impress us” stares.

Bucky was able to disguise his laugh as a cough, but Scott busted out right in the middle of the common room. Sam pretended to be offended, but he gave them an appreciative nod.

“Okay, I see how it is,” he smirked. “This is gonna be fun.” He rubbed his hands together and wiggled his eyebrows at the unspoken challenge.

Tony wrapped his arms around Peter and Shuri’s shoulders and started to lead them out of the common room. “You can harass them more at dinner!” he called over his shoulder.

Various “goodbyes” followed them as they headed down the hallway to the elevator.

“So how have things really been going?” Peter asked, shifting his bag on his shoulder.

Tony took a deep breath as he nodded. “It’s been okay,” he replied honestly. “Having this many people has been...interesting. But we’re talking.”

“Still?” Shuri asked, feeling a wave of deja vu. “How much do adults need to talk anyway?”

“You’ve got a lot to learn,” Tony smirked. “So how long will May let you stay?”

Peter shrugged. “I mean, she said we could stay at Doctor Strange’s as long as we wanted. So we’re probably good for a while.”

“You can invite her over for dinner one night,” Tony suggested. “So I stay off her shit list.”

Shuri grinned as she reached the door to her room. Yoshi was just a few steps down the hall curled up in front of Peter’s door. “I don’t think you ever made it off her shit list,” she replied cheekily.

Tony merely shook his head. “God, you two are going to be the death of me. Dinner’s in about an hour.” And with that, he walked away and waved goodbye.

Shuri and Peter each grabbed the handles to their own doors.

“This is going to be insane isn’t it?” Shuri asked.

Peter picked up Yoshi, who yawned sleepily, her sharp teeth glinting under the hallway lights. He gave his best friend a wide grin.

“Oh yeah, it definitely is.”
It was Vision’s night to cook, which meant Wanda had really done most of the actual cooking. Apparently, the android’s culinary skills left much to be desired, especially when it came to his use of spices.

Wanda made Porkolt, a pork stew embellished with peppers and paprika. Peter greedily slurped the noodles since he really hadn’t eaten anything since lunch at the Sanctum. Idle chatter filled the space around him, and everyone seemed to be getting along fairly well. For the most part.

Bucky and Sam glared daggers at each other through the whole meal, and Steve looked like an overworked mother sitting between the two of them. Loki just looked plain bored, and he rolled his eyes as Thor told stories about Norway. Frigga perched on his shoulder and ate small scraps of food he fed her between his own bites.

“So,” T’Challa said to Shuri, “how was your time at the Sanctum?”

“It was amazing!” she replied, her eyes bright. “I’m learning how to use magic!” She explained her studies to her brother, and he nodded as he tried to comprehend it all.

“Go ahead,” Tony said at one point. “Tell him about the sand storm.”

“What sandstorm?!” T’Challa shot back.

Shuri glared at Tony, who merely rested his hand on his chin and stared at Shuri expectantly.

“So how’s the team building going?” Peter asked loudly, trying to change the subject and save Shuri.

The whole table became silent as they all looked at Peter. He blushed under the intense gazes of the various super heroes.

“What do you mean?” Steve asked.

Peter gulped. “Well, uh...I mean, you all have been talking right? And working out your issues? How’s the team building stuff?”

Shuri placed her fork on her plate and looked around at everyone. “You are doing team building exercises, right?” she asked.

Their silence was her answer.

“Why not?!” she admonished.

Tony cleared his throat. “We’ve been a bit busy with the talking and working on amendment ideas to the Accords.”

“That stuff takes time,” Steve added.

“But ultimately you want to be a team again, right?” Peter asked. “I mean, that’s the big goal, isn’t it?”

Tony looked at Steve, who looked at Bucky, who looked disapprovingly at Sam, who glared at Scott, who gave starry eyes to Nat, who glanced at Wanda, who looked to Vision, who looked to Bruce, who…

“That is not everyone’s goal,” Loki spoke out, interrupting the silent stares.

“Sure,” Clint muttered, “some of us want evil domination. Hey!” He yelped as a piece of bread
smacked him right in the side of the head. He glared around the table. “Who threw that?!?”

Loki nodded his head slightly at Peter in thanks before resuming his own meal.

“Okay, so maybe not everyone,” Peter conceded, continuing with his point. “But most of you are gonna have to work together at some point.”

“Plus you’re already living under the same roof,” Shuri added.

“What’s the point of doing team building?” Wanda asked, genuinely curious.

Peter stared thoughtfully at his plate for a few moments. “Talking and apologizing is one thing,” he said softly.

“But trusting each other again is going to take more time,” Shuri continued.

“Team building exercises can help you build that trust,” Peter finished.

“And how do you know that?” Tony asked.

Peter grinned. “Well, for academic decathlon, Liz-she was our captain-made us do a bunch of different exercises before we went into drills. Since we knew each other better, it helped us when we competed.”

Pepper leaned forward and gave Peter and Shuri a grateful smile. “I think that sounds like a great idea,” she said.

“You do?” the rest of the table asked.

Pepper nodded. “I know I’m just an outside observer, but it might not hurt to get to know each other again. Besides, for the most part, you were originally just thrown together to fight aliens. How well did you really know each other anyway?”

Steve nodded. “She has a point.”


“And you do a great job,” Pepper cooed.

Loki rolled his eyes and practically choked on his food at the affection. Nat kicked him under the table, and he sent daggers at her, his eyes piercing and dark. She raised her brows in a “try me” kind of way, and he grudgingly backed down.

Thor slammed his hands on the table, causing everyone else to jump. “Well that settles it!” he exclaimed, his voice booming. “Peter and Shuri will be in charge of these team building exercises!”

The teens quickly looked at each other and then at everyone else.

“I don’t think we-” Peter started to say.

“Don’t you want someone with more-” Shuri spoke at the same time.

“You will be brilliant!” Thor praised. “And clearly you have more experience than the rest of us. Any objections?”

“None here,” Tony smirked.
“I say we let them be in charge,” T’Challa grinned back.

“I’m cool with it,” Clint said.

Vision nodded his head. “I would be willing to participate in such an activity.”

The rest of the group continued to voice their agreement, while Peter and Shuri shrunk down in their seats. While the idea had been theirs, they really didn’t feel qualified to handle building the trust of Earth’s mightiest heroes.

Steve smiled appreciatively at the teens. “Well, we’ll leave it to you to plan for tomorrow, then,” he said. “Thanks for the idea!” He and the others began standing up, now finished with dinner.

Tony held back at laugh at Peter and Shuri’s terrified expressions. He cleared his throat to hide the giggle threatening its way up his throat. “Oh by the way,” he said, “the dishes are your responsibility.”

Peter and Shuri stared at the mass expanse of plates, silverware, and serving platters in front of them. “WHAT?!” they exclaimed in horror.

“Didn’t I tell you?” T’Challa asked innocently. “As punishment for running off to Scotland without telling us—”

“And not telling us about it yourselves,” Tony added sternly.

“-You’re on dish duty,” T’Challa concluded. “For a week.” His expression was playful, but it left zero room for negotiations. “And everyone has been ordered not to help, so don’t even bother asking.”

“Cheerio!” Tony called out as he slung his arm around T’Challa’s shoulders and walked with him out of the dining room.

Peter and Shuri groaned and banged their foreheads against the table at the task in front of them.

“I don’t suppose Doctor Strange taught you anything that can help us with this?” Peter asked hopefully, lifting his head up to look at Shuri.

She shook her head. “No,” she replied glumly.

Peter sighed and stood up so he could begin clearing the table. As he stacked the plates one on top of the other, a plan began to formulate in his head. When he glanced over at Shuri, a devious smile had taken over her face, and he knew she had the same ideas as him.

Peter and Shuri would get back at them tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so there are literally 16 characters living in the Tower right now, and that doesn't even include Doctor Strange, Wong, the Guardians, and Rhodey (who will all make appearances at some point). Sooooo...I'm going to do my best to give everyone equal playing time, but it might not happen with each chapter going forward. The main focus will still be Peter, Shuri, T'Challa, Tony, and (now) Pepper.
Chapter Notes

Shuri looked at the superheroes nervously from across the gym floor. “I know we said we weren’t going to help them,” she whispered to Peter, “but do you think we should?”

Peter shook his head firmly as he fiddled with the web slingers on his wrist. “Nope. They’ve gotta figure this out on their own.”

Everyone was currently trapped on a tarp in the middle of the Tower’s gym. Their task was simple: fold the tarp four times with everyone standing on it, no superpowers allowed. If anyone touched the floor, they had to start over. It was a classic team building exercise that Peter remembered doing for academic decathlon. He even found some debriefing questions online to help them break down the exercise and analyze their strengths and weaknesses.

Shuri set the timer for an hour, convinced they wouldn’t need that much time. It had been thirty minutes, and they had already started over five times without even folding the tarp once. Tempers were high, and Peter was pretty sure Tony and Steve were going to kill each other before time ran out.

Steve came up with the original idea to get everyone step to the edge of the tarp while someone else dragged the other side over. Then, they could all step over together for the first fold. Tony agreed, but they were having trouble trying to figure out how to get everyone to fit on the edge. Thirteen people were a lot to fit in one small space. Pepper was excused because she had to, as she put, “run a company”. Peter was texting her updates, her replies including more curse words each time.

“We need to split in half,” Tony argued. “One wave can step over first, then the other can!”

“But how can we pull the tarp with people standing on it?” Steve repeated for what seemed like the fifth time.

“Do you have any better ideas?” Tony huffed. “We tried your way, and we’ve had to start over five times.” Tony crossed his arms in defiance. “In case you didn’t notice.”

“We need to line everyone up around the edge,” Steve instructed. “They can go around the corners too.”

“Let’s try Steve’s way one more time,” Sam said. “Maybe if people focused a little more, we wouldn’t keep getting out.”

Loki scowled. “And who, exactly, isn’t focusing?” he challenged. “For the record, I never agreed to any of th-”

Thor banged his fist on top of Loki’s head, effectively shutting him up. “Let’s try again,” the Asgardian suggested, moving Loki in position. But the impatience on his face was seeping through, and it was clear that the activity was wearing on him as well.

Nat walked over to one edge of the tarp while everyone else lined up along the opposite side. She gently picked up the crinkly material and dragged it towards the others. Scott and Bruce were standing on the long side of the tarp, and they tried to time so they stepped over at the same time as the people standing on the opposite edge. But, their feet got caught, and they tripped, both of their
hands falling out of bounds.

Peter gulped, as expressions turned murderous. “Um, you have to start over!” he called out. He winced and braced for impact.

The Avengers did not disappoint.

“See, this is why nothing gets done!” Tony exclaimed. “We do the same things over again even though we get the. Exact. Same. Results.”

Steve rolled his eyes. “It was a solid plan! We just needed to execute it better!”

“No,” Tony replied, poking Steve’s chest. “You just don’t know how to take orders from other people!” He got right up in Steve’s personal space. “You can’t compromise.”

Sam sliced his hand between the two men. “Back off, Stark,” he practically growled.

Tony scoffed. “Of course. Take his side.”

More voices joined the argument now. Insults were hurled at each other, and nothing got remotely close to being solved. Peter and Shuri looked at each other in disbelief. The Avengers may never have been a perfect team, but had they always been this dysfunctional?

“You ready for this?” Peter asked.

Shuri nodded then took a deep breath. “THAT’S ENOUGH!” they both shouted over the madness.

Thankfully, everyone else went silent. Steve and Tony had particularly guilty looks as the teens stalked over.

“Listen up,” Peter said, his patience officially done. “You’re both wrong.”

Shuri nodded her head. “Tony’s idea was good.” Tony let out a light chuckle and smirked at Steve. “But,” she continued, glaring at Tony. “Steve was right too. You wouldn’t be able to get the tarp over far enough with people stepping on it.”

Steve stared down at the tarp thoughtfully. “So what’s the answer?” he asked.

Peter pointed behind the super soldier as if it were obvious. “Did you even try asking them?”

Steve and Tony both turned around to look at the rest of their teammates. Most of them shared a similar expression of annoyance and exhaustion.

Steve cleared his throat, a tinge of red creeping up his neck and into his cheeks. “Do...does anyone, uh, have other ideas?”

“Ohhhhhhh,” Nat drawled out, crossing her arms over her chest. “Now you want our opinions?”

Bruce chuckled dryly. “Thanks for including us in this.”

“Punk,” Bucky muttered under his breath.

Peter stepped forward again. “This isn’t just the Tony and Steve team,” he reminded them gently.

“It’s not always about you,” Shuri said.
“Thank you!” Clint exclaimed. “The voices of reason!”

Peter looked back up at the timer. “You have nineteen minutes left,” he said. “You can figure this out.” With that, he and Shuri stepped back, letting the others continue.

Tony sighed. “I’m sorry,” he said first, shocking everyone. “What’ve you got?”

Nat smirked. “It’s simple.”

“We need to partner up,” Wanda added. “Try to find a decent match in height.”

After a bit of shuffling on the tarp, everyone found a match: Scott and Tony, Loki and Thor, Bruce and Clint, T’Challa and Steve, Bucky and Sam, Wanda and Nat. Vision was the only one left without a partner due to the odd number.

Nat nodded approvingly. “Okay, now figure out who can handle holding the other and hop on their back.”

“What?!” Steve asked incredulously.

“See, you were both right,” Wanda commented. “Sort of.” She used her powers briefly to create red lines to demonstrate. “Steve was right that two groups of people wouldn’t make it easy to get the tarp over.” She moved her hands so the two red lines stood parallel to each other. “But, Tony was right that you can’t fit everyone on the edge.” The two red lines merged into one long one. “So, you combine the ideas.” The red line split once more, and the two shorter lines blended over top each other.

“You decrease the amount of people in the space without letting anyone fall off,” Nat finished. She clapped her hands. “Let’s go! Clock’s ticking, people.”

Thor couldn’t keep the smile off his face as he turned around and offered his back to his brother. He waved his hands forward in a “come hither” motion near his hips. Loki grimaced as if he was about to make contact with a vile creature from the underworld. He looked back at Peter and Shuri, who had their hands clasped together in a pleading motion. He sighed and gave in because of his allegiance to the teens.

“I swear to god, if you drop me Barnes…” Sam muttered as he braced his hands on the super soldier’s shoulders before hopping up.

Tony and Scott were standing toe-to-toe arguing over who was taller. In a rare act of defiance, Bruce reached out and kicked Scott in the butt from Clint’s back. Scott, none too pleased, finally got on Tony’s back. With Nat perched on Wanda’s back and T’Challa on Steve’s, they were ready to give it a shot.

Vision took his responsibility as tarp-carrier very seriously. He was slow and methodical as he pulled the tarp back over to the waiting duos. With the exception of the crinkling tarp, there was hardly a sound out of any of them.

The carriers did their jobs well as they gently stepped over the tarp and onto the folded side.

“Nice!” Scott exclaimed, wiggling against Tony.

“Knock it off!” Tony chided. “We’re not done yet.”

“Okay,” Steve said calmly. “We should all move to one end while Vision goes to the other to get the
“Tarp again.”

“I’ll go first,” Thor replied, slowly backing up. “I’m closest to the outside.”

“We should go next,” Bruce said, poking Clint’s shoulder.

And so, for the first time in fifty minutes, they began working as a team. Each person communicated with another, and no one shouted or yelled out any insults. It was calm, yet tense, as the tarp got smaller with another successful round.

Personal space was non-existent by the time they were ready for the last fold. Tony’s arms began to shake as he continued to hold Scott’s weight. He smushed himself right up against Thor’s chest.

“So,” Scott said slowly, his forehead nearly touching Loki’s. “How’s the view from up here?”

Loki rolled his eyes. “Please do shut up,” he retorted.

“Brother!” Thor admonished. He looked at Scott. “I apologize. Loki’s people skills leave much to be desired.”

“You’ve got that right,” Clint whispered to Bruce.

“He’s actually made a lot of progress,” Bruce whispered back.

“I can hear you!” Loki exclaimed loudly.

“Focus,” Steve ordered. “We’ve got one more.”

Vision looked at the tiny space before him. “Captain, we might need—”

“Time’s up!” Peter and Shuri yelled. Sure enough, the timer flashed one hour above their heads.

Everyone groaned and dropped their partners unceremoniously on the floor.

“Awww man!” Sam groaned. “We almost had it!”

“Well, now we know how much time we lose when we argue,” Wanda reasoned, trying to see the bright side.

T’Challa looked up at Peter and Shuri, who were grinning from ear-to-ear. “Why are you two so happy?” he asked, pushing himself up to a standing position.

“Because you did it!” Peter exclaimed.

“How?” T’Challa tilted his head to the side in confusion. “We didn’t fold it four times.”

“Well,” Shuri beamed, “the fourth time was just a bonus round.”

“The real challenge was three,” Peter said. “And you did it!”

Tony sighed in relief and flopped on the floor. “You little sneaks!” he laughed, staring at the ceiling. Suddenly, the mood of the group brightened considerably. They all helped each other up with wide smiles on their faces.

Tony glanced at Steve sheepishly. “So, uh...I guess we still have some work to do, huh?” he asked with a light laugh.

“Me too.”

Sam walked past them. “Get a room!” he whispered loudly. He let out a loud chuckle as he tried to walk past Peter and Shuri.

Peter held out his arm and knocked into Sam with a strong force despite his age. “Hold on!” the teen exclaimed. “Where are you going?”

Sam pointed to the door. “I’m leaving. We’re done, right?”

Shuri shook her head. “You think we only planned one exercise? Do you consider us amateurs?”

Peter crossed his arms and pointed his own arm back towards the group. “We’ve got two more to do before you can leave,” he informed them.

Everyone looked to Tony expectantly. “Uh, kid,” he said, “don’t you think we’ve done enough for-”

The glare that Peter and Shuri sent his way was strong enough to melt the polar ice caps. Tony quickly backed away and cleared his throat authoritatively.

“Yup, we’re doing two more!” he exclaimed.

Peter and Shuri grinned mischievously as they prepared the team for their next task.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so in my head, this idea worked (mostly because that's how the group I did it with solved it). I'm not going to post the other two exercises because I want to keep the plot moving, but if you have ideas, feel free to write them! :D
Part 54

Chapter Notes

I've seen this prank around so much, I just had to do it. The Internet made me do it :P

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“I can’t believe you’re doubting me right now!” Shuri exclaimed as she clutched her hand to her chest.

Sam merely rolled his eyes as he drank his coffee. “I’m not doubting you per say...I’m just doubting the magic.”

“Therefore doubting me,” Shuri protested, “since I can do magic!”

Tony walked into the kitchen and held up his hands. “It’s way too early for you to be fighting,” he yawned, grabbing a mug out of the cabinet. He smacked Peter’s shoulder to get him to scoot down the counter so he could reach the coffee maker. “Counters are for glasses, not for asses,” he smirked at the teen.

Peter grinned back. “This is the best vantage point,” he whispered, nodding towards Sam and Shuri. “They’ve been arguing about this since last night!”

“Look, kid, I think it’s adorable that you think you can do magic,” Sam continued. “But there is no way in hell you can make me invisible.”

Shuri crossed her arms defiantly. “Oh, yeah? Well Bucky thinks I can do it, don’t you?” She turned and stared at the super soldier expectantly.

Bucky was currently perched on one of the island bar stools trying to enjoy a peaceful breakfast of cereal and milk. All had been going well until Peter, Shuri, and Sam came arguing into the kitchen.

“Um, sure?” he half-asked, half-replied.

Shuri’s eyes narrowed at his traitorous response. “Un. Be. Lievable.”

Peter cleared his throat, drawing their attention to him. “I mean, there is one way to settle this you know…”

Tony shook his head. “No, absolutely not!” he exclaimed.

“FRIDAY!” Peter called up to the ceiling, ignoring Tony’s protests. “Can you get everyone to come in the common room?”

“On it, boss,” FRIDAY replied.

Tony’s ears perked up. “Wait a second! I’m the boss!” He glared at Peter. “I’m the boss!” he repeated more indignantly.

“Of course you are,” FRIDAY replied, as Peter patted him on the shoulder sympathetically.
“Thank you all for being here today!” Shuri announced dramatically. She waved her arms above Sam and Bucky, who were both sitting in two dining room chairs that Peter had dragged into the common room.

Everyone else was scattered about the room, sitting on either a couch or the floor. Bucky squirmed uncomfortably under everyone’s gazes, but he refused to chicken out in front of Sam.

“No!” Peter exclaimed, taking on the role of the host. “Shuri has been practicing the mystic arts, and she can make people—” He paused for dramatic effect. “-turn invisible!”

The crowd oooed and ahhed politely, but it was clear they believed him about as much as Sam and Bucky believed Shuri. Peter used his web slingers to grab two blankets off the couch. He shook them out and draped them over Bucky and Sam.

“Once Shuri uses her powers,” Peter explained, “they’ll become completely invisible to us. They’ll be able to see and hear each other, but we won’t be able to see or hear them.”

“Thank god,” Nat muttered. “Maybe now it’ll be quiet around here.”

“I heard that!” Sam yelped from under his blanket.

Shuri took a deep breath and walked behind Sam and Bucky. She gently placed her hands on top of their blanketed heads before closing her eyes. She focused her energy and felt a warmth radiate from her hands. Even though it was darker under the blanket, both Bucky and Sam could make out a golden light coming from above.

Peter nodded at Shuri. “Ready...and...NOW!”

Shuri yanked the blankets off of Sam and Bucky, revealing them to the rest of the room. Both men looked at each other and smirked, seeing as they were still completely visible. However, when they turned to look at their friends, they did not expect their reactions.

“Holy shit!” Clint yelled, jumping on the back of the couch, his mouth open in horror.

T’Challa stared at the chairs in horror. “Shuri! What did you do?!”

Shuri grinned proudly. “I told you! I made them invisible.”

Sam chuckled. “Nice try, kid. We’re still here.”

But everyone else completely ignored them.

Scott practically hopped off the floor and raced over behind the chairs. “I want a picture!” he exclaimed, tossing his phone to Peter.

Bucky rolled his eyes. “What is it with people and selfies these days?” he grumbled as Scott posed behind him. “I swear, Steve,” he said, looking at his best friend, “if you turn into one of these phone obsessed people, I’m going to put you back on ice myself.” He waited for Steve to respond, but he was completely ignored. “Steve?” Bucky asked, as Peter took the picture.

Scott made a grabby motion with his hands. “Lemme see!”
Peter turned the phone screen to face Scott, Sam, and Bucky. In the picture, Scott was grinning widely as he held two bunny ears over the chairs.

Which were both completely empty.

Sam’s eyes widened in shock. “Aw hell no!” he shouted, falling out of his chair. “No! No!” He shook his head. “Uh uh!”

Bucky’s heart dropped to the bottom of his chest. “Steve?” he asked again, more insistently. “Steve?!”

“Oh my god,” Bruce said, coming up to examine the chairs. He got right in Bucky’s face and examined the air closely. His eyes never met Bucky’s as he scanned the chairs. “They’re actually invisible,” he whispered in awe.

“No we’re not!” Sam yelled, waving his arms wildly. “I’m right here!”

Vision floated forward and looked down at both chairs. “I cannot detect any trace of them,” he confirmed. “Well done, Shuri.”

Shuri gave Peter and high five. “Told ya!” she exclaimed.

Sam grabbed Bucky’s shoulders. “You can see me, right?” he asked desperately.

“Yeah!” Bucky shook Sam’s hands off. “She said we’d be able to see each other!”

“Oh god!” Sam cried. “We’re both invisible, and I’m stuck with your ugly mug!”

Scott, meanwhile, was practically glowing. “I’ve got a picture with two invisible people!” he laughed. “Cassie is going to love this!”

“You can bring them back, right?” Thor asked, looking nervously at the empty chairs. By now, Sam and Bucky were both out of their seats and wandering around the room. They kept standing in front of people, but no one saw them.

Loki rolled his eyes. “I say let them stay invisible.”

“Ditto,” Nat chimed in. “They argue all the time.”

“It would be much quieter,” Loki added, nodding at Nat.

Nat raised her brows in shock. “Did you just agree with me?” she asked incredulously.

“I...I...” Loki stammered, unsettled by the thought. He and Nat grimaced at each other before turning to Shuri.

“Bring them back,” they demanded in unison.

Bucky, meanwhile, grabbed the remote off the table just to test out a theory.

“Oh my god!” Pepper exclaimed, pointing to the remote. “It’s floating!”

Bucky was so startled that he dropped the remote on the floor and quickly backed away. Tony glared at the fallen object. “Hey!” he yelped. “You assholes better not mess up any of my stuff!”

Sam was still trying to get the attention of anyone standing in one place. “Hello?” He waved his
hands vigorously in front of Thor’s face. “’C’mon, man, you’re a freaking god! You really can’t see
me?!”

Tony sighed and looked at his watch. “Listen, we’ve got to get started soon. Maybe you should
bring them back.”

“YES!” Sam and Bucky shouted.

Shuri frowned. “But maybe they need more time. They might not believe me yet.”

“We believe you!” Bucky promised, gripping the back of the chair so hard that he practically
splintered the wood. “We swear!”

“You’re a magician!” Sam added. “A great, freaking magician! Now make us visible again!”

Tony waved his hand in a circular motion. “’C’mon, kiddo, we don’t have all day.”

“Shuri…” T’Challa said sternly. “Now.”

“Ugh, fine,” Shuri replied, rolling her eyes.

Peter cupped his hands around his mouth. “BUCKY! SAM!” he yelled. “SIT BACK IN THE
CHAIRS!”

Sam and Bucky both glared at Peter. “STOP! YELLING!” Sam cried. “We’re right here, man!”

“You think we’ve given them enough time?” Peter asked.

“YES!” the men screamed as they scrambled to sit down.

Shuri nodded. “Probably.” Peter tossed her the blankets, and she draped them over Bucky and Sam
once more. A murmur traveled through the crowd.

“Holy crap, they’re still here!” they heard Wanda whisper.

“Oh my god,” Bucky groaned, ready for this mess to be over with.

Sam tapped his foot impatiently on the floor. “Let’s go, let’s go, let’s go.”

Shuri closed her eyes and both Sam and Bucky saw the same golden light from before. Suddenly the
blankets were ripped away, and everyone cheered.

“Can you see me?!” Sam asked. “Please, dear god-”

Peter nodded enthusiastically. “Yeah! We can see you!”

Sam groaned in relief and practically melted onto the floor. “Thank the LORD!”

Bucky looked curiously at the others. He had expected their facial expressions to be ones of awe at
his return, but instead he saw people...laughing?

Clint was practically in tears rolling around on the floor in the back of the room. Loki looked quite
smug as he and Thor shared a secret grin. Nat’s shoulders shook with silent laughter as Wanda hid
her smile behind a cough. Steve, meanwhile, looked impish as he shrugged at Bucky guiltily.

“Hang on a second…” Bucky said slowly. “What’s going on?”
Peter pulled out his phone and played back a video he had recorded mere moments ago.

“We believe you!” Bucky promised.

“You’re a magician!” Sam added. “A great freaking magician! Now make us visible again!”

Peter snickered as Bucky and Sam gathered around his phone. He played the recording again, and this time, he showed the phone screen to them. Bucky and Sam’s eyes widened in disbelief because…

They were both completely visible on the screen.

“Wha-?” Sam asked, his jaw dropping open.

“I…” Bucky said in disbelief.

Tony clapped a hand on both of their shoulders. “Congrats, gentlemen,” he smirked, “you’ve officially been initiated.” And with that, he headed out of the common room into the hallway.

T’Challa just shook his head. “It really was quite funny,” he admitted to a stunned Sam and Bucky.

Bruce sighed in relief as he collapsed onto the couch. “Thank god it’s over!” he cried. “I almost couldn’t keep a straight face!”

Clint held out a fist for both Peter and Shuri. They bumped their against his. “So, how’d I do?” he asked.

“Amazing!” Peter praised. “You all did!”

Sam clutched a hand against his heart. “So you’re telling me...this whole thing...was a JOKE?!”

Shuri nodded and smiled proudly. “Yup. Everyone was in on it.”

Sam made an almost inhuman whine. “But, why?!”

Peter shrugged. “Everyone else gets along here.”

“For the most part,” Shuri clarified, shooting a glance at Loki who whistled innocently.

“Consider this a bonding experience,” Peter finished.

“You suck,” Sam declared. “All of you!”

Bucky crawled out of his chair and landed with a thud against the carpet. “Unbelievable,” he whispered. “My best friend...betrayed me.” He looked up at Steve, giving him his best puppy dog eyes to make the bastard feel guilty. Truth be told, Bucky had experienced so much in his life, that being invisible really didn’t phase him like it did Sam. Thinking he was actually invisible had been a shock, but he had to admit it was a pretty funny joke.

Steve blushed. “Aw geez, Buck. I’m sorry!”

He looked so guilty that Bucky couldn’t help but chuckle. “So gullible.”
Steve scoffed. “Jerk.”

“Punk.”

Peter and Shuri waved as they each grabbed a chair and headed back to the dining room. “See ya!” they both called.

Everyone else filed out of the common room, leaving Bucky and Sam alone. Sam had almost fully recovered from his shock and stood up. He reached out a hand and helped Bucky off the floor.

“We’ve gotta get them back,” Sam declared. “You in?”

Sure, the joke may not have gotten under Bucky’s skin, but the super soldier wasn’t going to say no to a little mischief. He gave Sam a devilish grin.

“Absolutely.”

Chapter End Notes

The payback will come later, don't worry! Any ideas on what Sam and Bucky should do?
Okay, so this is NOT the revenge chapter (that'll be next). Sam and Bucky need some time to coordinate. In the meantime, enjoy some angst that turns into fluff.

Also, y'all need to RUN (don't walk) over to Lyuvano's Instagram (same handle as what I just typed). She made an AMAZING fan art of Loki and his ugly Christmas sweater from the Christmas in July chapter (book 1). I'm dying, it's so perfect. Give her some love!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shuri woke up gasping for breath in the middle of the night. Sweat beaded along her forehead as she tried to take deep breaths of cool air. She furiously kicked her blanket and sheets away, her heart practically beating out of her chest.

The nightmares had died down over the last year, but when they came back, they came with a vengeance. They were always the same...she was rooted to a spot in the ground while she watched her brother disappear, bloodied and bruised, down Warrior Falls. When she turned around to scream, her father watched her with pitying eyes. His eyes were blank and dead as he reached out to grab her.

And that was when she always woke up.

Shuri’s breathing slowed down but turned into quiet sobs as she grabbed her pillow and buried her face in it.

“Baba!” she cried to herself. She clutched the pillow as if she were hugging her father one more time. She missed him so much.

“Princess Shuri?” FRIDAY asked softly from her ceiling. “I am sensing you are in distress. Would you like me to contact T’Challa?”

Shuri took a sniffling breath as she shook her head. “N-n-no,” she replied. “Pl-please don’t b-both-bother him.”

FRIDAY stayed silent, and Shuri rubbed her hands across her cheeks. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath as she leaned back against the headboard. There was no way she was going to be able to get back to sleep anytime soon.

“Peter’s awake too,” FRIDAY announced. “You might benefit from each other’s company.”

Shuri looked up curiously at the ceiling. “Why?” she asked.

At first, FRIDAY didn’t answer. Then, its voice spoke again. “Because he doesn’t want me to contact Boss either.”

The dots connected in Shuri’s mind. Peter must have had some kind of nightmare just like she did. She sighed and scooted off the bed. After pulling her out favorite t-shirt and pajama bottoms from the
dresser, she went into the bathroom to wash her face and change out of the sweaty clothes.

Shuri turned the doorknob and peered out into the empty hallway. There was no sign of life anywhere, so she quietly closed the door behind her and knocked on Peter’s door.

“Peter?” she whispered. “It’s me.” Shuri knew the chances of him hearing her through the solid door were slim to none, but she was banking on FRIDAY helping her out a bit.

A few moments later, she heard the door click as it opened to reveal a boy who looked just as worn out and distressed as she was. Peter’s eyes had dark bags under them, and his chest was still moving up and down wildly. His jaw was clenched, and he looked like he was on the verge of tears too.

Peter took in Shuri’s own sad expression and gave her a wry smile. “Look at us,” he said. “We’re a mess.”

“We can be a mess together though, right?” Shuri asked, giving him a small, sad grin in return.

Peter nodded. “Nightmare?”

“My father and brother,” Shuri confirmed. “You?”

“My uncle,” Peter replied. “And the building. Double whammy for both of us, huh?”

Shuri nodded her head towards the other end of the hall. “Hot chocolate and movie?” she asked. “I don’t think I could go back to sleep otherwise.”

“I could go for that,” Peter said.

“Change first,” Shuri ordered. “It’ll help you feel better.”

Peter obliged and came out a minute later in a new set of pajamas carrying Yoshi in his arms. He grinned as he pointed to her shirt, noticing it for the first time. They had both put on the oversized NASA t-shirts that Aunt May had gotten them for Christmas.

“Great minds think alike,” he chuckled, some of the tension leaving his shoulders.

Yoshi chirped happily, but Peter and Shuri quickly shushed her as they moved down the hall to avoid waking anyone else up. The lizard yawned as she climbed over Peter’s shoulder with her two front legs.

When they finally got to the kitchen, they were shocked to discover that they were not the only ones awake. The light was already on, and both Steve and Bucky were occupying two of the barstools at the kitchen island.

“Um, hi,” Peter said shyly, stepping onto the tile floor.

Steve looked up from his mug of tea, surprise written all over his face. “Hey,” he replied. “What are you two doing up?”

Peter and Shuri glanced at each other. “Couldn’t sleep,” they replied at the same time.

Bucky took in their worn expressions, nervous energy, and fresh clothes. It didn’t take a super soldier to know they were lying. He gently nudged Steve’s ankle with his foot, and the other man looked at the teens thoughtfully.

“Why are you two up?” Shuri asked.
“Nightmares,” Bucky replied honestly, shocking both teens. “Couldn’t fall back asleep.”

Shuri’s eyes widened. “Are you okay? The treatments should have helped with-”

Bucky held up his hands and let out a small laugh. “It’s okay, it’s okay. They only come once in a blue moon now.”

“Are you sure?” she asked.

“Yeah,” Bucky replied. He drummed his fingers against the marble island. “You want to tell us why you’re really down here?”

Peter and Shuri both responded with a classic teenage shrug. Yoshi wiggled in Peter’s arms until he put her on the island. As soon as she was free, she bounded over to Steve, who stared at her apprehensively.

“She likes to have the top of her head scratched,” Peter suggested helpfully. He breathed an internal sigh of relief at the distraction from Bucky’s question. He could still feel the man’s gaze on him as Steve tentatively reached out and scratched Yoshi’s head. She shook her whole body in ecstasy, and nudged her head under his hand so he could pet her even more.

“I’ll get the water started,” Shuri said softly. She walked over to the kettle and filled it with water before putting it back on the stove.

Steve glanced at the teens, and made the executive decision not to push them. He and Bucky sat in silence while Peter and Shuri prepared their hot chocolate. Peter hopped up on the counter to reach the top shelf in one of the cabinets that held the tea mugs. He grabbed his favorite Darth Vader mug and pulled out a Pokemon mug for Shuri.

Shuri, meanwhile, had found the box of hot chocolate that Tony kept stashed in the pantry. She held up the bag of marshmallows for Peter.

“How many do you want?” she asked.

Peter hummed thoughtfully. “I think it’s a “bring the whole bag” kind of night, don’t you?”

“Definitely,” Shuri agreed.

The whistling kettle pulled their attention towards the stove as Steve and Bucky shared another knowing look. The teens quickly poured the hot water into their mugs and mixed the sweet powder with a spoon. They said goodnight to Steve and Bucky before taking Yoshi and their bag of marshmallows away.

As soon as he was sure they were out of earshot, Steve looked up at the ceiling. “FRIDAY?”

“Yes, Cap?” the AI replied.

“Are Peter and Shuri okay?”

FRIDAY paused a moment before responding, as if deciding where its loyalties were. “Peter and Shuri aren’t having a very good night.”

Bucky cleared his throat. “Does this happen often?” he asked.

“It happens enough.”
“Enough that they have a hot chocolate routine,” Steve said softly. “Do Tony and T’Challa know about this?”

“Both know Peter and Shuri have had nightmares,” FRIDAY replied. “However, I have been asked by the teens not to tell them the frequency. You, however, are not the Boss or His Highness.”

Steve sighed and rubbed his hands wearily over his eyes. “Thanks, FRIDAY.” He stared down at the countertop, a plan forming in his mind.

“I know that look,” Bucky said with a small smile. “What are you thinking?”

Steve returned the smile and looked up at the ceiling once more.

“So this is probably going to be the most important question of your life,” Peter said dramatically as he stood in front of the huge movie screen. “Mulan or Moana?”

Shuri giggled as she bounced on the cushy recliner seat. “What a choice!” she gasped. “Two daring heroines trying to save the world with the help of their trusted animal sidekicks? How ever will I choose?”

Yoshi was too busy running across the backs of all the seats to help them with their decision.

“Well,” Peter replied with a sly grin, “what can I say except you’re welcome?”

Shuri made sure Peter’s hot chocolate mug was well out of the way before she threw a pillow at him. Both teens giggled, happy for the distraction. They had dragged in as many blankets and pillows as they could carry from their rooms, and they put them all in a pile in front of the first row of seats. Their hot chocolate mugs were already half drained, but there were still plenty of marshmallows to go around.

“Hey!” Peter yelped. “Stop!” He held up his hands as a pillow pet went soaring over his head. “This is as far as I’ll go, I promise!”

“Oh my god!” Shuri exclaimed, burying her hands. “The puns! They’re too much!”

“So Moana?” Peter asked with a grin.

“Moana,” Shuri confirmed with a nod.

Before they could get the movie started, someone knocked on the movie room door. Peter, Shuri, and Yoshi looked up curiously.

“Uh, come in?” Shuri called.

The door opened to reveal Steve and Bucky grinning sheepishly.

“Hey,” Bucky said.

“FRIDAY told us we might find you here,” Steve added. He cleared his throat. “So, uh, we were wondering if we could...well, you see...”
Bucky sighed impatiently. “Can we join your movie?” he asked, rolling his eyes at his friend.

“Of course!” Shuri replied.

“Yeah, definitely!” Peter smiled. “We’re getting it all set up now.”

“What movie is it?” Steve asked, settling into one of the seats.

“Moana,” the teens replied together.

Steve snapped his fingers and pointed at the screen. “I’ve heard of this one! It’s one of the Disney movies, right?” He turned to look at Bucky. “It’s on my list. Well, most of the Disney movies are.” He looked quite pleased that he was actually checking something off.

Shuri nodded. “And we make no apologies for singing.”

Bucky smirked. “Has anyone ever stopped you from singing before?” He remembered T’Challa’s stories about their antics in the lab, and singing was definitely on that list.

Peter and Shuri chose to finish setting up the movie instead of responding. Everyone curled up in their respective blankets and seats and began watching the Pixar short. They were so engrossed in the movie that they barely even noticed Tony, Pepper, and T’Challa come in the room.

“Hey,” Tony whispered to Steve, moving to the seat next to his. “They okay?”

“I think so,” Steve replied.

“Thank you for letting us know,” T’Challa said quietly to Bucky. The super soldier just nodded in response, too occupied by the short to really pay attention.

Shuri and Peter both turned around from their spots on the floor to chastise whoever was talking. When they saw it was Tony, Pepper and T’Challa, their expressions brightened considerably.

“Couldn’t sleep,” Tony offered as an explanation before anyone could ask.

Peter started to reply when the door opened yet again. His jaw dropped when he watched Aunt May walk into the room.

“Hey kiddo,” she said with a sleepy smile. She walked over to a stunned Peter and Shuri and pulled them in for a group hug.

“What’re you...how’re you…” Peter stuttered.

“I was having a bad night,” May admitted. “Couldn’t sleep. I tried texting you, and FRIDAY called me back. I may have heard about a movie night…”

“You’re staying right?” Shuri asked. “You need to stay! We’re watching Moana!”

May nodded and took the seat right behind the teens. Peter grabbed his pile of blankets and scooted back so he was sitting in between May’s legs. She immediately smiled down at him and began running her fingers through his hair. Peter practically purred as he leaned back, the tension leaving his body. He could always count on his aunt to be there for him when he needed her most. Yoshi hopped up and sat in May’s lap before curling into a ball and falling asleep. May looked over to Pepper and mouthed “thank you”. Pepper responded by reaching out and squeezing May’s hand.

With the space by Shuri now open, T’Challa migrated onto the floor next to his sister. She grinned
and nudged him with her shoulder before settling in next to him.

"I miss him too," T'Challa whispered. Shuri stiffened at her secret being found out, but T'Challa kept talking. "We don't have to talk about it now," he said, "but if you ever want to, I'll always be here."

Shuri felt tears sting her eyes as she readjusted her position on the floor. Without disturbing anyone else, she climbed over T'Challa's knees and settled into his lap, something she hadn't done since she was a little girl. He immediately wrapped a strong arm around her as he covered her with a blanket. She swallowed thickly, but the sadness began to pass as he silently comforted her. T'Challa gave her a gentle kiss on the top of her head and whispered "I love you" before turning his attention back to the screen.

One by one, other people began to sneak into the movie room for the late night show. Wanda and Vision both brought huge bowls of popcorn that made their rounds around the room. Nat dragged in Clint by his blanket burrito, and a sleepy Bruce followed them. Scott had managed to dig out packages of Twizzlers from the kitchen before making his way into the movie room, and Sam silently replaced Peter and Shuri’s hot chocolate mugs thanks to a heads up text from Steve. Thor and Loki were the last to arrive, and they followed Frigga to the last empty seats. She waited for Loki to sit down before climbing up and nuzzling against his shoulder. She quickly licked his cheek and burrowed herself in his lap.

There was singing, of course there was. Peter and Shuri were the most enthusiastic about it, and the whole room erupted in laughter at the movie. All fears from earlier were checked at the door, and they didn’t bother anyone for the rest of the night.

When the end credits finally rolled, almost everyone was asleep. Pepper knew it probably would have been a good idea to wake them up and send them back to their rooms. But the more she looked around the room, the more she realized how peaceful everyone was.

So, she quietly stole a blanket off the floor, curled up against her husband, and went to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

So, it's late at night in this chapter, so we're going to assume May was able to make it to the Tower in record time. :P

And T'Challa is the best big brother, you can't convince me otherwise.
“PETER! SHURI!” Sam shouted from the common room. “YOSHI’S TAKING A SHIT ON TONY’S CARPET!”

“What?!” the teens screeched from the kitchen.

Sam looked over at Yoshi who was sitting peacefully on the couch watching Animal Planet. She stuck her long tongue out at Sam before going back to the screen.

“Yeah! oh god!” he yelled again, ducking his head to avoid laughing out loud. “She won’t stop!”

Footsteps thundered through the hall as Peter and Shuri desperately ran to the common room to stop Yoshi from bringing their ultimate demise. Tony had almost gone nuclear after Yoshi had chewed his lab goggles, and they couldn’t even imagine what he would do if she messed up his perfect carpets.

“YOSHI NO!” Peter cried, his voice getting closer.

“STOP!” Shuri begged.

They rounded the corner and made a mad dash into the common room…

…and fell right into Bucky and Sam’s trap.

Peter and Shuri ran headfirst into the Glad Cling Wrap that Sam and Bucky had taped in the doorway earlier. Bucky had his phone out and recording as the teens made impact. Their faces were frozen in pure confusion as they slammed into the translucent material and fell to the ground.

“Awww man!” Peter groaned, clutching his nose. “That really hurt!”

Shuri rolled over and sat up on her elbows. She yanked down the tattered Cling Wrap that still stuck to the wall and glared at Bucky and Sam.

They were both practically rolling on the floor with tears streaming down their faces because they were laughing so hard. Yoshi hopped off the couch and scampered over to Peter to say hello.

Bucky stopped laughing long enough to tap his phone screen a few times and create a slow motion video of Peter and Shuri’s epic fail. Their falls look even more ridiculous slowed down, causing Bucky and Sam to laugh even more.

“Oh just wait,” Shuri threatened, already getting back to her feet. “Just you wait.” She jabbed her index finger in the air as Peter scooped up Yoshi.

Bucky and Sam were cackling hysterically on the floor as Peter and Shuri ran off to plan their
Sam scoured the fridge for his favorite snack, and his eyes brightened when he found the container of blueberries. Nothing got him craving blueberries more than boring meetings with a lot of legal jargon. And considering the team had spent the entire morning doing just that, Sam was starving.

He carefully avoided the stacks of Pepper’s blueberry yogurt as he pulled out on the container and sat at the counter. He joined Tony, T’Challa, Steve, Wanda, and Vision as they each grabbed their own snacks. Well, Vision didn’t really grab a snack so much as follow Wanda to her seat.

Sam took a deep breath as he got ready to enjoy some of the best blueberries Tony’s money could buy. He opened up the container, and a sudden burst of blue powder shot up and covered his face.

Sam coughed as some of the powder creeped between his lips and into his mouth. His face scrunched up in disgust while the others snickered around him.

“I didn’t know you still played with your food, Wilson,” Tony chuckled,

Sam unsuccessfully wiped the powder off his face and peered inside the container. All of the blueberries were covered in the same blue powder. If the bitter taste on his tongue was any indication, his snack was now ruined.

“My blueberries!” Sam whined, slamming the lid on the countertop.

Wanda patted him on the back sympathetically as he pouted his lower lip out. She opened her mouth to respond, but something else caught everyone’s attention.

“WILSON!” a voice yelled from the hallway. Shortly thereafter, Bucky Barnes came running in the kitchen. He had a towel wrapped around his waist, and his bare torso still had water droplets running down it. Steve’s eyes widened as he realized the water running down his best friend’s chest was…

“BLUE!” Bucky exclaimed, pointing to his head. His wet hair had a distinct blue sheen to it, and the dye was currently pooling at the top of the towel.

*Yo listen up, here's a story*

*About a little guy that lives in a blue world*

*And all day and all night and everything he sees is just blue*

*Like him, inside and outside*

Music began to blare out of the kitchen speakers as Sam and Bucky’s eyes widened in realization. Tony and T’Challa both groaned, knowing exactly who was responsible for this entire mess.
Blue his house with a blue little window
And a blue Corvette
And everything is blue for him
And himself and everybody around
’Cause he ain’t got nobody to listen

Bucky’s eyes narrowed as he gripped his towel tighter. “Shuri,” he growled.

Sam’s lips curled into a snarl as he stood up and abandoned his blueberries. “Peter,” he muttered angrily. He looked over to Bucky as the song continued to play above them.

I’m blue da ba dee da ba daa
Da ba dee da ba daa, da ba dee da ba daa

“Oh it’s on,” Sam declared. “You in?”

Bucky nodded, his blue hair shining under the kitchen lights. “You know it.”

Then they both disappeared down the hall and out of sight.

“Not again,” Tony sighed. “I don’t know if I can live through another prank war.”

“Another?!” Steve, Wanda, and Vision asked.

T’Challa nodded. “There were Furbies involved,” he shuddered.

Steve cleared his throat. “Is...uh, is Bucky’s hair going to stay blue?”

“And Sam’s face?” Wanda asked, a smirk playing on her lips.

T’Challa looked to Tony. “Knowing them…”

“The effects will probably linger,” Tony admitted.

“Oh geez,” Steve replied, shaking his head. “You better hope the Tower is still standing when they’re all through.”

Tony and T’Challa just gulped, knowing that Steve was probably right.

Prank wars were insane enough on their own. But when one has access to all of the latest and greatest Tony Stark technologies under one roof, the stakes get raised.
Bucky and Sam managed to take all of the furniture in Peter and Shuri’s room and screw it to the ceiling. For Peter, it wasn’t such a huge inconvenience since he could walk on the ceiling, but it took him almost two hours to help Shuri get hers down.

They retaliated by putting Shuri’s new powers to the test. She created a portal that led to the kitchen, and Peter snuck through to steal Sam’s dinner. He then went through another portal to put it in front of Bucky’s all the way in the common room where he was watching TV.

The teens could hear Sam shouting at Bucky for being a “traitorous food stealer” from down the hall. After he had stolen his plate back and gone to the kitchen, he plopped down on one of the chairs. The whoopie cushion that Peter had placed there in his absent went off at an embarrassing volume. Loki, who had just walked through the doorway to get his own dinner, blinked a few times before promptly walking out. Sam pulled the now deflated cushion out from under him and chucked it out of the room.

A few hours later, when Bucky went to look for his cell phone to post an update to his Tumblr, he couldn’t find it. After he practically tore his entire room apart, he finally asked FRIDAY to ping it for him, and the AI’s directions led him all the way to the pantry. He tore through six bags of Cheetos before he managed to dig out his cell phone from the bottom of the bag. Pepper chose that exact moment to walk into the kitchen, and when she saw her precious pregnancy cravings scattered all over the floor, she gave Bucky an earful that would have made the Howling Commandos blush.

When Peter and Shuri woke up the next morning, they both ran right into a complicated mess of webs thanks to some stolen cans of Peter’s web fluid. They tried to escape without waiting for it to dissolve, but they only managed to get completely stuck in their doorways. Steve took mercy on them and cut them down. Before he could convince them to put the prank war to an end, they were already off and running to plan their next attack.

Oh yeah, it was so on.

“Yoshi?” Peter called, checking under his bed. “Time for lunch!” He ducked down, but besides a few stray socks, his lizard was nowhere to be found.

He huffed as he carefully checked the rest of his room before going over to Shuri’s. He quickly knocked on her door and then let himself in when he heard the lock click open.

“Have you seen Yoshi?” Peter asked.

Shuri looked up from her holographic blueprints and shook her head. “No, why?”

“I can’t find her,” Peter replied, an uneasy knot forming in his stomach. “She usually comes when I call, especially around lunch.”

Shuri quickly hopped off her bed and waved the blueprints away before heading towards the hall. “I’m sure we’ll find her,” she said. “Let’s check her usual spots.”

Peter and Shuri checked the common room, kitchen, lab, and movie room thoroughly, but Yoshi wasn’t there. Now Peter was really starting to get worried.

“FRIDAY?” Peter asked the ceiling.
Shuri wrinkled her nose. “FRIDAY?” she tried. “Hello?”

“Stark said he’s doing system upgrades,” Sam said from behind, causing both teens to jump. He and Bucky walked around to their line of vision. “What’s wrong?”

“We can’t find Yoshi,” Peter replied. He narrowed his eyes at the two men, an idea suddenly coming to mind. “What did you do to her?” he asked accusingly.

Bucky held up his hands. “Nothing, kid. We swear.”


“Please,” Peter practically begged.

“Hey,” Sam said softly, putting a hand on Peter’s shoulder. “We didn’t mess with your lizard. We promise. We like a good joke, but we’d never do that.”

“You seriously can’t find her?” Bucky asked. Both teens shook their heads. “We’ll help you,” he replied. “Truce?”

“Truce,” they both replied.

“Why don’t we check around this floor again,” Sam suggested, already heading towards the other end of the hall. “Maybe she got stuck in a room somewhere.”

“We literally checked everything already,” Peter said. “Movie room, common room, the lab, the kitchen…”

“The library?” Bucky asked. “Does she know how to get in there?”

Shuri gasped. “We forgot the library!”

Sam and Bucky had to practically sprint to keep up with Peter and Shuri as they bolted down the hall towards the library. Peter almost tore the door off its hinges trying to get inside. He let out a surprised yelp when he saw what awaited him inside.

Loki sat cross-legged on the floor with a book open in his lap. Yoshi and Frigga sat patiently in front of him as if they were listening to a really interesting story. Which, from Peter and Shuri’s viewpoint, they were.

“Wha-?” Peter asked, his jaw dropping open. “Wha-?”

Shuri grinned widely. “Are you...are you reading to Yoshi and Frigga?” she asked in disbelief.

Loki’s cheeks turned scarlet as Bucky and Sam created a larger audience than he wanted. The Asgardian cleared his throat as he tried to play it cool. “Yes, well...animals need stimulation too,” he defended.


Bucky, meanwhile, looked like his mind had been enlightened. “Read to them? Do they like it?”

Loki waved his hand out towards Yoshi and Frigga. “Well they certainly don’t hate it.”
“Huh,” Bucky replied, rubbing underneath his chin. “Any book works?”

“Considering Stark’s about to have a baby, his picture book collection is quite paltry, but I’ve found they—”

Sam held up his hand and cut Loki off. “Dude!” Sam exclaimed, staring at Bucky. “Seriously?”

“You try keeping two goats and a tiger entertained all day!” Bucky shot back. “I need ideas!”

“They’re wild animals! Let them find their own entertainment!”

“Oh my god, this is brilliant!” Peter whispered to Shuri.

“At least they’re getting along better,” Shuri replied. “Well, mostly better.”

Peter chuckled and crossed his arms over his chest as Sam, Bucky, and Loki continued to have a heated debate over the merits of reading to animals. It was definitely a refreshing change from the cruel arguments they had just a few weeks earlier.

“Hey,” Peter said, nudging Shuri’s shoulder. “We just made a temporary truce, right?”

Shuri grinned mischievously. “Well we never said it was permanent…”

Peter wiggled his eyebrows. “What if we go take all their clothes and put them on the roof? While they’re distracted?”

Shuri shoved her fist into her mouth to keep herself from squealing out loud. She nodded vigorously, and she let out a soft whistle, catching Yoshi’s attention. The lizard snuck away from the adults, and the three of them disappeared, closing the door softly behind them.

Bucky was the first one to notice the teens had disappeared. He tapped Sam on the shoulder and pointed towards the closed door. “They’re gone,” he noted.

“Thank you, Captain Obvious,” Loki replied, rolling his eyes.

Sam rubbed his chin thoughtfully. “You know…we never said it was a permanent…”

They nodded a quick goodbye to Loki and bolted. But when they opened up the door, they were greeted by Pepper Potts, who quickly grabbed both of their ears with her left hand. Peter and Shuri had been captured with her right, and she ignored their meager protests to be released from her bonds. Their heads knocked together as Pepper dragged them down the hall with more power than a normal, pregnant woman should be able to wield. Sam and Bucky were both twisted at awkward angles as Pepper stomped on.

“Ow, Pepper, c’mon!” Peter yelped, as he tried to right himself from tripping over Shuri.

But Pepper’s grip was vicelike, and she was determined. She yanked them all the way into the common room and practically tossed them on the couch. Steve, who had been busy reading a book, barely had time to get out of the way before Sam and Bucky crashed down on the cushions.

Sam, Peter, Bucky, and Shuri tried to protest, but Pepper merely held up her hands. They all got silent as they tried not to wilt under their gaze. Pepper took her cell phone out of her pocket and held it up for everyone to see.
“Do you know what this is?” she growled.

Peter gulped and slowly raised his hand. “Y-your cell phone?”

Pepper turned it around and revealed two large googly eyes stuck to the back. “Guess where I left my phone?” she asked. She didn’t bother waiting for a response. “Tony’s lab.” She jabbed the cell phone at the four of them, and they all flinched. “Guess what Tony’s ENTIRE LAB is covered in right now?!”

Bucky cleared his throat. “Googly eyes?” he replied.

Pepper let out a loud laugh. “Ding, ding, ding! We have a winner!” She pinched the bridge of her nose and took a deep breath. “This prank war is over! I’m too hot, too tired, and too nauseated to deal with this right now!”

“It wasn’t us!” Shuri promised.

“Well it sure as hell wasn’t us!” Sam protested.

“Nope! Zip it!” Pepper demanded. “All four of you better get that mess cleaned up before Tony gets back from his meeting.”

“But-” Peter started.

“Now!”

“Yes ma’am,” Bucky said quickly, pulling Sam up by his shirt. He glared at the teens, and they quickly followed suit.

“I mean it!” Pepper called after them. “No more!” She could hear them arguing as they rushed to the lab about who would be dumb enough to mess with Tony’s stuff. She heard Steve stifle a laugh from his new spot on the couch.

“I don’t want to butt in,” Steve said, “but Peter and Shuri know better. It was probably Sam and Bucky trying to get them in trouble.”

Pepper gave Steve a wide grin. “Steven Grant Rogers! Ratting out your own friends!”

Steve blushed as he cleared his throat.

Pepper giggled and kicked her feet up on the couch. “Actually, I know it wasn’t any of them,” she admitted.

“Oh yeah? How?”

“Because it was me,” Pepper replied simply.

Steve’s jaw dropped open. “You?!” he gasped.

“Yup,” Pepper nodded, drawing out the ‘p’. “We all know this Tower wouldn’t be left standing if the prank war went too much farther. Besides,” she chuckled, “do you have any idea how much fun it was putting all the googly eyes on Tony’s robots? DUM-E looks hysterical!” She clutched her stomach as she laughed.

Steve merely shook his head. “Pepper Potts you are something else.”
Pepper shrugged and smiled.

“I know.”
Okay, so remember how I said the pregnancy reveal chapter was probably the most cheesy, fluffy, tooth-rotting chapter I've ever written? I think I may have lied because...well...you'll see.

NO REGRETS!

Peter and Shuri had the entire kitchen to themselves for once. Tony, T’Challa, and the others were all busy meeting with lawyers about creating amendments for the Accords. So, the teens took advantage of the quiet to make a new cookie recipe they had found on Pinterest.

Shuri pulled out the flour and sugar while Peter dug around looking for vanilla. They both looked up when they heard someone’s sneakers squeak against the tile floor. Pepper came walking in carrying huge stacks of paper.

Pepper took a deep breath and sighed as she dumped the papers on the counter. “Hey there,” she yawned.

“Hey Pepper!” Peter replied cheerily.

Pepper glanced at the growing list of ingredients on the counter. “Are you two making chocolate cake?” she asked, her eyes full of hope.

Peter and Shuri quickly looked at each other and then back at Pepper. “Yeah!” Shuri lied enthusiastically.

“Do you want some when we’re done?” Peter asked.

“Oh my god that would be AMAZING!” Pepper practically groaned. She rested her head on the counter.

Peter gently patted Pepper’s shoulder. “Are you...are you okay?”

Pepper looked up with a tired smile. “I’m fine,” she promised. “I’m just so tired. And between the nausea at night and the cravings...” She waved her hands over the mess of papers. “And these contracts. And the company...” She sighed again. “It’s just been a lot.”

“Can we do anything?” Shuri asked.

Pepper shook her head. “No, but you’re so sweet for asking.” She glanced at her watch and let out a breath. “I’m going to head up to my office. Do you mind bringing me a slice of cake when it’s done?”

Peter gave her a thumbs up. “No problem!”

It was clear that Pepper had a lot on her plate. Not only did she have to deal with growing a child
inside of her, but she was also putting up with a full house on top of it. As soon as she was gone, Peter and Shuri began scheming. Well, first, they looked up an actual chocolate cake recipe, and then they planned their mission. Its name?

Operation Pamper Pepper.

Peter and Shuri stared in awe at the aisles in front of them.

“Oh-” Peter whispered.

“My-” Shuri gasped.

“God!” they both exclaimed.

Rosie Pope Maternity was crammed with every possible maternity and baby outfit possible. Rows of strollers peeked out of a second room, and the whole place oozed elegance. A chandelier hung from the ceiling, and the dark wood floors gave the whole store a homey feel.

“Where do we start?” Peter asked, thumbing Tony’s credit card in his pocket. Once they had they told FRIDAY their plan, the AI gave them permission to use Tony’s money and helped them find his spare Amex card. Their budget? According to FRIDAY, it was unlimited.

“I don’t...I don’t even know,” Shuri admitted. “I know we Googled stuff, but there is so much in here!”

A cheery woman in a sharp pantsuit came up to the baffled teens. “Hi there! I’m Lexi! Welcome to Rosie Pope Maternity! Can I help you find anything?”

Shuri nodded and pointed at Peter. “His mom is pregnant, and we’re trying to find some stuff to kind of pamper her.”

Peter’s cheeks turned scarlet as Lexi hummed thoughtfully at him. Her eyes brightened. “Well, first, congratulations on becoming a big brother!” she exclaimed excitedly.

“Thanks,” Peter mumbled, shooting Shuri a death glare. She grinned, thrilled to bring up Peter’s familial status with the Starks yet again in conversation.

Lexi clapped her hands together. “Okay, first thing’s first. How far along is she?”

“Almost three months?” Peter asked, looking to Shuri for clarification.

“Yeah,” Shuri agreed. “Like ten or eleven weeks by now, I think.”

“Okay,” Lexi nodded. “So it’s still early. Any morning sickness?”

“Yes!” Peter and Shuri said simultaneously.

“So,” Lexi said, motioning them to follow her. “Right now, you want to focus on comfort. Creating as much of a stress free environment as possible.” She giggled as Peter and Shuri both wrinkled their noses. “Or at least a space that is stress free,” she clarified. “Follow me!”
She led Peter and Shuri towards a rack of what looked like really fancy sweatpants. She pulled out a pair of grey ones and held them out for the teens to feel.

“So soft!” Shuri squealed.

Peter thumbed the material and then rubbed it up against his cheek. “These are awesome!”

“Right?” Lexi asked. “These are our most popular pants. Super comfortable AND they have pockets!”

“Sold,” Peter said immediately.

Lexi pulled out a large and handed it to Peter. “I know she’s still early, but get a large. She can tighten the drawstring. And when she does get bigger, the waistband will expand quite a bit.”

Peter nodded and obediently followed Lexi away from the clothing and towards the back of the store. Shuri stopped in front of the bath and body products and grabbed some bath bombs off the shelf before catching up with Peter and Lexi.

She held the bath bombs up so Peter could examine them. “Okoye LOVES these things,” she said. “They’re super fun, and they smell really good.”

Lexi smiled approvingly. “Perfect for some alone time!” She pulled a bag off the shelf and showed it to the teens. “This might be more than you’re looking for, but hear me out,” she said, unzipping the bag. “We just got these in. It’s called a Push Pack, and it literally had just about everything you need for the hospital already packed inside of it. Completely takes the guesswork and stress out of the entire process.”

Shuri took the bag without asking any questions. “Tony overthinks everything,” she said to Peter. “At least this way, Pepper will have everything she needs.”

Peter shrugged. “Sounds good to me. Anything else we should get her?” he asked Lexi. “Anything that will make her life easier?”

Lexi smiled warmly at Peter and Shuri. “Honestly? Buying her things is great, but find other ways to show her you care too. Clean the house, make her favorite food, give her some quiet time...I’m sure she’ll love all those things just as much.”

“We can do that,” Shuri replied, nudging Peter. He nodded, coming up with a bunch of different plans in his mind already.

They paid for all of the items and headed outside into the summer heat. Shuri dragged Peter down an alley and had him carry all of the goodies while she used her sling ring to open a portal to the Tower. She had to concentrate really hard, and the circle was still weak, but she was able to summon it right away. They both hopped through and landed inside Shuri’s room.

“Welcome back,” FRIDAY greeted the teens. “How did the shopping trip go?”

“It was awesome!” Shuri exclaimed.

“We’ve got a lot of work to do though,” Peter added, gently placing all of the items on Shuri’s bed. “Do you know where Tony keeps his cleaning stuff?”

Peter and Shuri spent the rest of the afternoon cleaning the common areas around the Tower. They blasted music and danced around as they did dishes, vacuumed, and dusted, and tidied up. FRIDAY
helped identify which random belongings scattered about the Tower belonged to which Avenger, and the teens placed them in front of the appropriate door. Since there was an influx of slightly "criminal" guests now, Tony had cancelled the weekly maid service due to security issues, and the lack of regular cleaning was starting to show.

“Do you think you can make a portal to my apartment?” Peter asked, shoving the vacuum back in the closet.


Peter grinned sheepishly. “Well, I kind of want to clean my apartment as a surprise for May. You don’t have to come though! Our place is way smaller, so it shouldn’t take me long.”

Shuri was already up on her feet circling her arms. “Of course I’m coming! May’s done so much for us! Let’s go!”

So, they repeated the exact same process at Peter’s. Shuri tackled the bathroom while Peter braved the kitchen. May hadn’t tried any crazy new recipes lately, so he barely had to wipe down the oven, and he finished up the dishes that were still in the sink. Shuri refused to clean Peter’s room, which had begun to develop a bit of an odor since he hadn’t cleaned it or done the majority of his laundry that was still on the floor. He Febrezed the entire space before stuffing all the laundry into a trash bag so he could just do it at the Tower. He made a mental note to find out when May’s next day off was so he could spend some time with her too. Finally, he stashed a few books into the trash bag for later.

“Is your room decontaminated yet?” Shuri called dramatically from the hallway.

Peter threw one of his dirty socks out the door, and laughed as she screamed in protest. He hefted the bag over his shoulder and ducked as she threw it right back at him. They didn’t even notice May come inside the apartment until she slammed the door shut.

“Well this is a surprise!” May exclaimed. Peter and Shuri dropped everything and came to give her a hug. “How are my two favorite people doing?”

“Good!” they both replied.

May looked around and noticed the clean apartment. “Did you...is this...is it my birthday or something?” she asked, completely shocked by their kindness.

Peter shook his head. “We just wanted to say thank you.”

“For everything,” Shuri added.

“And,” Peter admitted, “we were already in a cleaning mood.”

May could have cried, she was so touched. “Thank you! Seriously, this is awesome.” She giggled and pressed her fingers to her lips. “You know, I was actually going to clean tonight, but now I’m thinking red wine and a Brooklyn 99 binge.” She gave them another big hug. When she looked down, she saw Peter’s trash bag.

“It’s my laundry,” he explained, seeing her confused expression. “I was going to do it at the Tower so you didn’t have to worry about it.”

May dragged the bag away from him. “I’ve got this, kiddo.” Peter started to protest, but she cut him off. “Seriously, I want to.” She pushed his hair out of his face. “You heading back now?”
Peter nodded. “If that’s okay.” His eyes widened in worry. “Is that okay? I know I’m there a lot, and I don’t need to be if you want me here-”

May cut him off by placing a soft kiss on his forehead. “Honey, you are exactly where you need to be right now. I get you the entire school year. I can share you for the summer.”

Peter gave her a wide smile. “Thanks, Aunt May.”

“Of course,” she replied softly. She paused for a moment, then gasped. “You know,” she said, her eyes shining brightly, “there’s that new Color Factory exhibit in SoHo. Why don’t you invite Tony, T’Challa, and Pepper, and we can check it out over the weekend?”

“What’s that?” Shuri asked as Peter nodded enthusiastically.

Peter waved his arms around as he tried to explain. “It’s this huge thing that’s built around color! The different exhibits are super interactive, and you can even play in some of them! It’s supposed to be epic!” He turned back to May. “Can we really?”

“Yeah!” May replied with a laugh. “It’s a date.”

“Awesome,” Peter whispered. He gave May a quick kiss before standing next to Shuri. “I’ll text you once we ask!” he promised as Shuri created a portal.

May’s jaw dropped open in shock as Peter and Shuri waved goodbye before disappearing into the hole that had appeared in her living room.

“Wow,” was all she could say as she pushed Peter’s laundry aside for later and prepared for a night to herself.

“Miss Potts?” FRIDAY asked.

Pepper barely looked up from the papers she was reviewing at her office desk. “What’s up FRIDAY?” she asked.

“Peter and Shuri want to know if you could meet them in the common room.”

Pepper sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose. She still had a lot of work to do, but she really needed a break…

“I’ll be right there,” she replied, her mind made up. She quickly stacked the remaining papers together and headed to meet the teens.

When she got to the common room, the first thing she noticed was the lack of objects lying all over the place. The carpet had fresh vacuum lines on it, and she could faintly smell lemon disinfectant coming from the kitchen. Peter and Shuri were anxiously waiting on the couch, each one holding a bag in their hands.

“Did you clean everything?” Pepper asked incredulously.

“Kind of,” Peter blushed.
“And we got you some stuff too!” Shuri handed Pepper her bag.

Pepper glanced curiously at both of them before pulling out a pair of grey sweatpants and bath bombs. She could clearly tell they were maternity pants based on the wide elastic band, but they looked much more stylish than what she was expecting. She held the bath bombs up to her nose, and inhaled a summery scent. She couldn’t wait to put them to good use later.

“The pants are so soft!” Peter promised. “And they even have pockets!” Shuri gave Peter a gentle jab with her elbow, and he handed Pepper the bag he was holding. “So, we know Tony can be a bit...intense...when it comes to baby stuff,” he explained. “So we got you a Push Pack.”

“A Push Pack?” Pepper asked, an amused smile on her face.

“Yeah,” Shuri replied. “It had almost everything you’ll need for the hospital already in the bag. You just need to grab it and go.”

“This way Tony isn’t freaking out over packing a bag,” Peter said.

Pepper stared at both her gifts in awe. “These are...these are incredible,” she said. “Thank you so much.”

Peter and Shuri looked at each other before looking back at Pepper shyly.

“‘There’s one more thing,’” Peter said. He pulled out a book Pepper hadn’t noticed was sitting on the couch the whole time. “So, uh, this is my copy of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone.”

“We did some research,” Shuri continued, “and we learned that babies can hear sounds starting at six weeks.”

Peter cleared his throat and held the book out to Pepper nervously. “We thought you might want to have something to read to the baby,” he finished softly.

Tears formed in Pepper’s eyes at Peter and Shuri’s amazing gesture. Her chin wobbled, causing the teens to pull back.

“It’s okay if you don’t want to!” Shuri promised.

“Yeah!” Peter added. “There’s lots of other things you can read! Or even just talking to the baby works too!”

Pepper shook her head as she wiped a few of the tears that had managed to leak onto her cheeks. “No that’s not...I didn’t mean...” she stuttered, trying to find the right words to say how much she appreciated their thoughtfulness. “I mean...” She paused and took a deep breath. “Would you like to read to the baby?”

It took a few moments for the teens to formulate a response to her question.

“R-R-Right now?” Peter finally asked, completely stunned.

Pepper nodded.

Shuri was equally as shocked. “Are...are you sure?”

Pepper nodded one more time and headed over to the couch. She sat down in the middle and propped a pillow on either side of her. She gestured for Peter and Shuri to come and join her, so they quickly took a spot. If Peter tilted his head back enough, he could just make out Shuri’s braids past
Pepper’s stomach.

They sat together in silence for a few moments, neither teen sure where to start. Finally, Peter cleared his throat.

“H-h-, um, hi baby,” he stuttered nervously. “I’m Peter.”

“And I’m Shuri,” Shuri said. “We’re really excited to meet you.”

“So excited,” Peter agreed. “But we’ve got something to keep you occupied until you get here.”

“It’s a book called *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,*” Shuri continued. “It’s about a boy who learns he’s a wizard!”

“And he has all sorts of adventures,” Peter said. “Anyway, we’re going to take turns reading it to you, so, uh, enjoy, I guess?” He opened the book as he and Shuri settled into the couch, both of them finally gaining some confidence. “Chapter 1, The Boy Who Lived. Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive…” He continued to read, handing the book off to Shuri at the end of the page.

They continued on, reading for almost an hour. They paused every now and again to tell the baby about different facts of what they were reading. They talked about the Jacobite train they had ridden, and which houses they were sorted in. Pepper was glad they were so engrossed in the reading and the story because she was an emotional hot mess. Maybe it was the extra hormones, but she couldn’t stop crying because she knew her baby was going to be so lucky to have Peter and Shuri in its life.

When she wiped the tears off her cheeks for what felt like the hundredth time, she looked up and spotted Tony. He was rooted at the entryway to the common room, and he had his phone out recording the entire exchange. When he met Pepper’s eye, he put the phone away and gave her a solid nod.

He knew now, with 100% certainty, that he wanted Peter and Shuri to be his kid’s godparents.

Chapter End Notes

Also, I am totally aware that Shuri could 100% create awesome maternity stuff for Pepper, but this was kind of a whim thing.

I hope you enjoyed it! :)

“Does anyone have any questions?” Tony asked, clapping his hands together.  

Even though it was completely unnecessary, Peter raised his hand and waved it around.  

“Go for it, Parker,” Tony said, pointing to the teen.  

“Okay,” Peter replied seriously, putting his hand down, “if you water an apple tree with apple juice, is it forced cannibalism?”  

Tony wrinkled his nose and tilted his head at Peter. “Wha-?” he asked, blinking slowly. “I meant questions about the mission!”  

“Yeah, but-” Peter started to say.  

Tony yanked at the vest on his chest. “This was your and Shuri’s idea, you know!”  

Peter’s eyes widened as he gasped. “Shuri!” he exclaimed. “Good idea, Tony!” He cupped his hands around his mouth and poked his head out of the group huddle. “HEY SHURI!” he shouted across the room. Tony winced at the loud volume so close to his ears. “IF YOU WATER AN APPLE TREE WITH APPLE JUICE, IS IT FORCED CANNIBALISM?”  

“What?!” Shuri exclaimed, pulling away from her own huddle.  

“I SAID-” Peter shouted again. Tony shoved him in the back so he was at least out of eardrum-bursting distance.  

“Jesus,” Tony groaned, putting his head in his hands. He looked around at his teammates. “You see what I deal with?” he asked.  

Scott hummed thoughtfully. “It is a good question though,” he admitted. “I’m a bit stumped, to be honest.”  

“I mean,” Bruce said, “technically, plants absorb water through their roots, so they’d be ”drinking” the juice.”  

“Yeah, but vampires drink human blood,” Wanda pointed out. “That doesn’t make them cannibals, does it?”  

Bucky glanced at Wanda sharply. “Wait, vampires don’t actually exist now too, do they?”  

Tony looked up at the ceiling in despair. “Why me?” he whined.
“Peter! Shuri!” Steve snapped from across the room. “Focus!”

“But it’s a legitimate question!” Peter protested.

Sam yanked Shuri back into their circle. “Kid, you better get your head in the game,” he said to her. “Because I am not losing to Tic Tac or the Metal Armed Wonder over there.”

“For once, I agree with you,” Loki replied, wrapping an arm around Shuri’s shoulder so she couldn’t escape. T’Challa just buried his head in his hands like Tony, questioning how on earth he was related to his sister.

Clint wrapped Peter in a headlock and dug his knuckles into the teen’s skull as he dragged him back to the group. “Yeah, Spiderling! Focus! We’ve got to beat them!”

Laser tag had been Peter and Shuri’s idea. They argued that it was a great way for everyone to work together again in a combat-style situation. Tony had rented out an entire laser tag/bowling alley/arcade facility outside of the city so they wouldn’t be bothered during the event.

Everyone’s name had been written on a piece of paper and placed into a hat to form teams. Peter and Shuri were both team captains, but now there was slight doubt as to the credibility of that decision. Peter’s team consisted of Tony, Clint, Bucky, Wanda, Bruce, and Scott, while Shuri’s team consisted of Steve, T’Challa, Nat, Sam, Vision, Loki, and Thor.

Peter escaped Clint’s hold and pointed towards the doors leading into the laser tag area. “Okay, does everyone know the rules?” he asked one last time as he tried to neaten his hair.

“No powers,” Thor answered, gripping his gun and saluting the teen.

“No physical contact allowed,” Nat chimed in, a slight frown on her face. She had quite been looking forward to giving Clint a little payback after Germany.

“And the team with the most points at the end wins,” Shuri finished, checking her vest one last time.

Peter pumped his fist in the air. “Let’s do this!”

The doors unlocked and a timer counted down from thirty as everyone split up and his inside the arena. Peter’s team had decided to divide and conquer while Shuri’s team was clustered in small groups. The lights dimmed, and a buzzer sounded off to signal the start of the game.

Peter took off like a dart, shooting anything and everything in his path. He heard Loki let out a string of curses as the god collided with Wanda. She managed to shoot him in the chest from the floor before scampering off to hide behind an outcropping. Bucky ran by him and shot his shoulder as soon as the vest reactivated.

“Oh COME ON!” Loki shouted, slamming his gun against the ground. He rolled on the floor and managed to get behind a wall.

Thor snickered from the other side. “Wanna do get help?” he asked with a grin.

Loki growled as he peeked around the corner and shot Thor in the chest. The vest didn’t recognize the shot since they were on the same team, but Loki got some satisfaction out of it anyway.

In order to avoid temptation from using his phasing powers, Vision had transformed back into a human. He took great pride in the three shots he managed to get on Tony. It took Tony almost a whole minute to find his android son hiding behind a wall with a window cut out of the center.
T’Challa got him back with a nice shot to the chest, though.

The game was well-matched, and Shuri and Peter were facing off against each other on the opposite side of the arena. They had backed themselves into a corner when Shuri suddenly put her gun down. Peter couldn’t believe his luck as he got a clear shot at her shoulder piece. But instead of reacting, Shuri pushed past Peter and headed towards the corner.

“Shuri, wha-?” Peter asked, turning to follow her. He gasped when he saw who was practically cowering in the corner.

“Dr. Banner?” he asked, kneeling down.

Bruce was sitting in the corner with his head between his knees. His gun was sitting on the ground next to him still attached to his vest by the bungee cord. He groaned as he held his hands up to his head and gripped his hair tightly. Shuri wasn’t sure whether his face was turning green, or if it was just a trick of the lights.

Bruce’s breath came out in heavy spurts. “I-I’m, argh!” he yelped, his voice deepening by about four octaves.

“Is it the lights?” Shuri asked.

“Maybe the noise?” Peter suggested. He tucked his gun in his vest and quickly put his arm around Bruce’s shoulders to hoist him up. He could feel Bruce’s muscles bulge under him as Shuri looked around for the emergency exit.

“He...he wants out,” Bruce said as his eyes popped out.

“Oh shit!” Peter exclaimed, trying to hustle. “Mr. Hulk, hang on just another minute!”

Shuri and Peter ignored the game going on around them as they pushed Bruce through the nearest exit. The noise died down, and Bruce blinked in the white light. Shuri carefully unbuckled the laser tag vest and tossed it to the side.

“Tell us what to do,” she said softly to Bruce. “What do we do?”

Bruce’s eyes looked pleadingly at the teens. “I don’t...I don’t-” He let out an inhuman roar as his entire body turned green. His t-shirt ripped at the seams as he grew in size and stature. Peter yanked Shuri back as one of the Hulk’s arms swung forward in his chaotic transformation.

“Holy shit!” Peter shouted. He grabbed Shuri’s arm and pulled her away as Hulk stumbled forward. They both slid across the tile floor, practically hitting the air hockey machine behind him.

“Take off the vest!” Shuri commanded. “He won’t be able to grab the cord!”

Peter nodded and quickly shed his vest. He tossed it away with Shuri’s, and they looked up in half fear, half amazement as Bruce disappeared before their very eyes.

“Hulk!” Shuri shouted. “Hulk, it’s okay!”

Hulk blinked slowly as his eyes focuses on his surroundings. His head darted from side to side until his eyes landed on Shuri and Peter on the floor. Hulk locked in on them and stomped over. He knelt down as the teens shook nervously, trying not to make any sudden movements that might startle him.

“Banner’s friends?” Hulk asked, his hot breath blowing against their faces.
Peter and Shuri quickly looked at each other and then back at Hulk. “Y-Y-Yeah,” Peter stuttered.

Shuri nodded. “We’re...we’re Dr. Banner’s friends.”

Hulk gave a bit of a scowl as he continued to stare them down. He plopped on the ground, the entire building shaking in response. “Hulk’s friends too?” he asked hopefully.

Peter swallowed and carefully sat up. He reached out a hand and saw Shuri do the same from the corner of his eye. Both of their hands were dwarfed by Hulk’s. His skin felt rough and scratchy against their own palms as he shook their hands.

“Nice to meet you, big guy,” Peter said softly.

“Likewise,” Shuri added.

Hulk broke out in a huge smile as he practically hopped up from the floor. He began jumping up and down excitedly.

“FRIENDS! FRIENDS!” Hulk yelled. He scooped up Peter and Shuri and hoisted them off the ground. They let out sharp yells as Hulk promptly carried them away, the automatic doors opening effortlessly to let them outside.

Tony was just about to serve sweet, sweet payback to Steve when he felt the entire floor rumble beneath him. He wobbled and tripped, almost colliding with Clint.

“What the hell was that?” he groaned, rubbing his elbow where it had hit the wall.

T’Challa ran over. “Did you feel that?” he asked.

“No,” Tony replied sarcastically. “The earth always feels like it’s coming off its axis.”

T’Challa responded by shooting Tony with his gun. He looked around the arena and watched as the other came out of their hiding spots to investigate the mysterious tremors.

“Has anyone seen Banner?” Thor asked. He cupped his hands around his mouth. “BANNER!” he yelled. He and Loki exchanged a look as Bruce did not respond back.

“I’ll check outside,” Loki said, his mouth forming a grim line on his face. He and Thor went out the exit, and for a brief moment, a bright flash of light invaded the playing space.

It was way too quiet for Tony’s liking. He glanced around and noticed two other people who were noticeably absent from the fray.

“Where are Peter and Shuri?” he asked nervously.

Sam turned around in a circle. “They were here not that long ago,” he promised. He nodded at Bucky and Steve, and the three of them fanned out to check the arena in case the teens were trying to hide.

Tony couldn’t wait. “Peter? Shuri?” A sinking feeling pooled in the pit of his stomach as he put two and two together. He tapped T’Challa’s shoulder, and they rushed outside where they practically ran into Loki and Thor.

“Did you find them?” Tony asked, his heartbeat pounding faster.

Thor and Loki gripped two vests in their hands and held them out to T’Challa and Tony.
“They were on the floor,” Loki said, his eyes filled with concern.

Thor cleared his throat. “There was another vest on the other side of the room. We think it was Bruce-”

T’Challa didn’t wait to hear the rest of the sentence. He and Tony brushed past them and practically bolted out of the laser tag room. Their eyes widened as they saw huge cracks and holes in the floor from Hulk’s feet. The facility was eerily empty, the only noise coming from the arcade were the games in the back.

Peter and Shuri were gone.

Chapter End Notes

We have a Hulk!
Part 59

Tony and T’Challa burst outside into the sunlight looking for Peter and Shuri. They desperately craned their necks around the entire parking lot, their heartbeats getting faster by the second. But there was nothing. The lot was empty except for the cars the Avengers had used to get there earlier in the day.

Tony gripped his chest as he tried to calm down while T’Challa wracked his brain for possible ideas.

“Cell phones!” he exclaimed, turning to Tony. “We should try their cell phones.”

Tony nodded, thankful for a task, and the two of them hurried back inside. Steve was already holding his ancient cell phone to his ear, and Tony’s heart sank when he heard the Star Spangled Banner ringtone echoing from inside one of the lockers. T’Challa suddenly remembered both Peter and Shuri locking up both their cell phones and wallets before playing laser tag. He cursed silently, and rubbed his hands over his face.

“Of course they’d actually listen to the rules,” Tony chuckled, banging his head against the lockers. “God damnit!” he shouted, slamming his hand against the metal. He whirled around and stalked over to Thor and Loki. “Is the Hulk still dangerous?!?” he asked, his voice tight.

“He’s different,” Thor promised, holding up his hands. “He’s got...emotions, a personality.”

“But is he dangerous?” T’Challa asked, glaring at the Asgardian.

“He can be,” Loki replied quietly. He glanced quickly at Thor. “You can’t deny that he can be. Especially with people he sees as a threat.”

“Okay,” Steve said, stepping between Tony and Thor. “We’ll check the parking lot-”

“It was empty,” Tony and T’Challa said.

Steve nodded at Nat, Sam, and Clint, and the three of them left to go outside. “There might be other clues,” he reasoned. “If we can’t track them with cell phones, we need to be creative.”

“Sir,” Vision said, stepping forward, “it is logical to assume that two teenagers and a large, green Hulk would not go unnoticed. Perhaps you should use FRIDAY to check for any abnormalities in the area?”

Tony could have kissed Vision, but he managed to refrain himself. He quickly tapped his watch and the nanites crawled up his wrist. He began giving instructions to FRIDAY while Steve and T’Challa went outside to check on the others.

Clint and Nat were standing at the edge of the parking lot near an empty field, while Sam was currently bent over looking through the grass. Steve and T’Challa had to avoid huge Hulk-sized cracks in the blacktop to reach them.

“Find anything?” Steve asked.

Nat pursed her lips as she crossed her arms over her chest. “Hulk clearly stomped his way over here,” she said, pointing at the cracks.

“But the tracks end right at the field,” Clint added. “The ground over here isn’t even disturbed.”
Sam popped up and shook his head. “Nothing! It’s like they just disappeared!”

T’Challa’s eyes widened. “Shuri!” he exclaimed suddenly.

“What about her?” Nat asked.

“Shuri can create portals,” T’Challa explained. “What if she took them somewhere so Hulk couldn’t hurt anyone?”

Clint raised his brows. “You seriously think she would risk trapping her and Peter with Hulk all alone somewhere?”

T’Challa looked him square in the eye. “If it meant preventing someone else from getting hurt, yes, without a doubt.”

“Peter would’ve been on board too,” Tony’s voice said from behind. The others turned around as the inventor and the rest of the Avengers joined them outside. “And considering FRIDAY can’t find them anywhere, I’d say that’s our best bet.”

“But where would they go?” Bucky asked. “Can’t she only make portals to places she’s been before?”

Loki let out a sharp breath. “Call Heimdall,” he whispered to Thor. “I have an idea.”

Thor nodded and walked away as he pulled out his cell phone.

“Would she go to Wakanda?” Steve asked.

“I don’t think so,” T’Challa replied, shaking his head. “They would definitely set off the security, and she wouldn’t risk Hulk getting instigated by an attack.”

“And she’s smart enough not to go back to the Tower,” Sam reasoned. “Hulk would tear that place apart, plus Pepper’s there.”

“They would never put Pepper at risk,” Steve agreed. He watched as Tony’s face fell. “We’ll find them Tony,” he promised.

“I think I know where they are!” Thor exclaimed, running back over to them. “I just talked to Heimdall and asked him to find them. He tried, but he can’t see them!” He let out a laugh. “This is great news!”

“How?” Scott asked incredulously.

Loki grinned, his mind drawing the exact same conclusion as Thor’s. “No, this is good. There are only a few places where Heimdall can’t see.”

“And when he can’t see,” Thor continued, “it’s because his target is either off Earth or concealed by magic.”

“And since Shuri can’t take them into space…” T’Challa gasped. “Strange!”

Sam nodded. “Yeah, this whole thing is very strange.”

“No!” Tony shook his head. “They’re with Strange!” He tapped the modified arc reactor on his chest, and his suit quickly formed around him. He looked at T’Challa just as the last piece closed around his face. “I normally buy someone dinner first, but do you want a ride?”
T’Challa let out a scoff before walking behind Tony and gripping his shoulders.

“We’ll meet you there,” Clint promised. “I remember the address.”

“Really?” Wanda asked, her eyes full of surprise. “You remember something important?”

Tony blasted off before he could hear Clint’s reply.

Stephen Strange was not having a very good day.

It started in the morning with a wicked headache from the summer humidity (even Masters of the Mystic Arts were prone to weather-related ailments) and it ended when a giant green man thundered into his Sanctum.

He had just been walking back up to the library with a plate full of snacks when a familiar golden circle began to draw itself in the air. Strange grinned, thinking Peter and Shuri had finally come back to visit. Boy was he wrong.

His plate crashed to the ground as he ducked out of the way to avoid the green monster. It carried Peter and Shuri in its arms as it whirled around in confusion.

“DOCTOR STRANGE!” Peter and Shuri yelled.

The monster stopped moving, and it glared down at the teens. “Where are we?” Strange heard it ask. Strange bumped his fists together, causing golden circles to appear above his knuckles. He leapt out from his hiding spot.

“Well you certainly know how to make an entrance,” Strange said dryly. He held up his fists as he carefully walked towards them. “Now who’s this?”

“Do you remember Dr. Banner?” Peter asked. He winced as Hulk gripped his waist tighter at the mention of his alter ego. Hulk felt Peter stiffen against his arms, and he quickly relaxed his muscles. The teen patted Hulk’s arm appreciatively. “This is him.”

“No!” Hulk protested loudly. “Hulk better! Hulk stronger! Banner puny!”

Strange stared at them in shock. “This is-” He stopped and cleared his throat. “Well, Hulk, I’m going to have to ask you to put them down now.”

Hulk backed away. “Who’re you?” he asked.

“My name is Doctor Stephen Strange and-”

Before Strange could finish, Hulk roared. Peter and Shuri both covered their ears at the noise as everything seemed to tremble around them.

“NO DOCTOR! HULK NOT SICK!”

“We know!” Shuri exclaimed.

“NO BANNER!”
“We know!” Peter promised. “We didn’t come here to bring back Dr. Banner!”

Hulk snorted as he looked away from the teens. He kicked his foot out and knocked over a pedestal, causing a vase to fall off. The Cloak of Levitation swooped in just in time to save the vase from an untimely demise.

“What’s the plan?” Strange asked.

Shuri pointed upstairs. “We need those window things.”

“I have a lot of windows,” Strange replied with a smirk.

Peter rolled his eyes. “The windows that lead all over the world,” he clarified.

“We need to go somewhere isolated for a while,” Shuri explained. “Somewhere with no people.”

Peter nodded. “We think he just needs time to calm down.”

Strange did not like this idea at all, but he had no other options where he wasn’t risking Peter and Shuri’s safety. Still facing them, he began to walk slowly up the stairs.

“Hey Hulk!” Shuri exclaimed. “We’re going on a trip!”

Hulk stopped trying to knock things down. “Trip?” he asked.

Peter pointed to Strange. “Just follow him!”

Hulk’s lip curled back as he bared his teeth. “Bad doctor,” he huffed.

“He’s not coming with,” Shuri promised, ignoring Strange’s glare. “He’s just helping us get there.”

“You can trust us,” Peter said softly.

Hulk paused a moment before giving them a stiff nod. He stomped up the steps, following Strange to four large windows on the second floor. Strange released the spell on his hands and pointed to the far left one. Shuri watched as a winter landscape transformed into a flat prairie with a huge mountain range in the background.

“That’ll take you to Oklahoma, I believe,” he said. “I’m coming with-”

“NO!” Hulk demanded. “No doctor! Just Hulk’s friends!”

Peter and Shuri both shook their heads. “Just tell Tony where we are,” Peter said.

“And T’Challa,” Shuri added.

Strange looked to the Cloak of Levitation. “Go with them,” he whispered. “Stay out of sight.”

The Cloak saluted and waited for the signal. Strange watched as Shuri and Peter gave him one last smile before he opened the “door” to the prairie. As soon as Hulk felt the warm breeze against his back, he jumped through. Strange nodded to the Cloak, and it followed after them before the portal closed and shifted to a new location.
Strange wasted no time in running back downstairs to get his cell phone and call Tony. Before he could even teleport, his front door was blown off its hinges.

“Not again,” Strange muttered.

He straightened his jacket and went to greet his guests.
Part 60

Peter and Shuri had a lot of pride in their abilities to be flexible in difficult situations. Getting lost in space? Hitch a ride with a bunch of aliens (and one Earthling). Get stuck under a waterfall in Wakanda? Ride a canoe out the other side. Track down a fugitive? Travel to Scotland and hunt him down.

But getting lost in a prairie with the Hulk? Now that was a new one.

The teens currently just stared in amazement as Hulk chased around the wild rabbits. His laughter roared in the open air as the rabbits hopped every which way. At first, Peter and Shuri were afraid he was going to squish the rabbits, but Hulk seemed more content with playing a game of tag than actually hurting anything.

The Cloak of Levitation tapped Peter’s shoulder and shrugged its fabric as if to say, “What’s the plan?”

“I have no idea,” Peter said, shaking his head. “I mean, he’s got to turn back into Dr. Banner soon, right?”

“He might not want to,” Shuri replied. She sat down in the grass, and Peter and the Cloak followed her. “You heard how he reacted when we mentioned Dr. Banner. He doesn’t like him.”

Peter hummed thoughtfully. “Maybe he just doesn’t like sharing.”

Hulk jumped in the air and crashed down against the ground. Peter could feel the vibrations of the earth from his spot almost ten meters away.

“He! he exclaimed. “Not so hard!”

“We don’t want to set off any seismometers!” Shuri yelled. “People will think it’s an earthquake!”

“Not earthquake! Just Hulk!” Hulk smiled proudly and poked his chest with his thumb. But he calmed down a little nonetheless. He glanced over and his eyes widened when he noticed the Cloak. “Funny cape!”

The Cloak floated over to Hulk and engaged him in a game of keep away. Hulk tried his best to capture the elusive fabric, but the Cloak was too smart to ever get caught. Eventually, it led Hulk over to Peter and Shuri once it was sure his energy had been run down a little.

Hulk collapsed on the ground and spread his arms out as he soaked up the sun. “Sun feels nice,” he sighed.

“Do you get to see the sun a lot?” Peter asked, already knowing the answer.

“No,” Hulk replied sadly. “Banner takes up too much time.” He opened one eye and looked at Peter and Shuri. “Hulk not going back.”

“See, here’s the problem,” Shuri said gently. “We need both of you.”

“You do?” Hulk asked, propping himself up on his elbows.

Peter nodded, understanding where Shuri was going. “Yeah! You see, Dr. Banner does a lot of research for the Avengers-”
“Puny humans,” Hulk scoffed.

“...and you are much stronger than Dr. Banner,” Peter continued. “So you help out with battles and stuff.”

Hulk smiled and patted Peter’s back at the compliment. Peter braced for a rough touch, but he was surprised how gentle Hulk was being with him.

Hulk stopped and laid back down. “Hulk want to do more than battle,” he said. “Hulk don’t always want to fight.”

Shuri pulled her knees against her chest and rested her chin against them. “What if you could share?” she asked after a few moments.

“Share?”

“Yeah,” Peter said. “You have time out-not battling-and Dr. Banner can have time out.”

Hulk said nothing. In fact, he was breathing so peacefully that Peter and Shuri both thought he had fallen asleep.

“What should we do?” Shuri whispered.

Peter shrugged. “I mean...we can’t really do anything right now.” So, he laid down and closed his eyes. The Cloak followed suit and spread out on the ground. Shuri, having no other ideas at the moment, also laid down. The dry grass was prickly against her skin, and she could smell the wildflowers in the air.

“Hulk will share.”

Peter and Shuri both quickly sat back up, surprised to hear Hulk’s voice cut through the silence. “What?” they both asked.

Hulk sat up as well. “Hulk will share.” He ducked his head shyly. “Hulk’s friends will make sure Hulk get time out?”

Shuri carefully wrapped her hand around Hulk’s pinky finger and motioned for Peter to do the same. “We pinky promise,” she said firmly.

“We’ll negotiate for you,” Peter added. “We’re really good at convincing people to do what we want.”

Shuri cleared her throat. “Listen, Hulk, I know we just got here, but we left in kind of a hurry. Our friends and family are probably really worried about us. Can we go back with Dr. Banner?”

“We’ll make sure you get time out really soon,” Peter said before Hulk could protest. “You can trust us.”

Hulk closed his eyes and let out a snort. Peter and Shuri were almost afraid he was going to throw a tantrum, and they held their breath in anticipation. Suddenly, Hulk’s green skin began to get paler and paler. His muscles seemed to deflate as Hulk’s large figure shrunk down. Peter and Shuri backed away to give him space, and soon, they watched Bruce reappear before their very eyes.

“Dr. Banner?” Shuri asked nervously.

Bruce practically jumped in the air, his tattered pants falling down his waist. Peter and Shuri both
looked up to avoid seeing anything awkward.

“Peter? Shuri?” Bruce put his head in his hands. “Oh my god, oh my god!” He scrambled up, looking wildly around him. “Did Hulk come out? Did I hurt you? Where are we?” He finally noticed Peter and Shuri’s gazes were pointed upwards. He looked up as well but saw nothing. “What are we looking at?”

“Pants,” Peter and Shuri replied.

“Pants?” Bruce asked. “Well, I mean, that one cloud kinds looks more like a dress than pants, but-”

The Cloak of Levitation politely tapped Bruce on the shoulder and gestured towards his naked torso. Bruce looked down and immediately turned scarlet as he gathered his pants and tied them around his waist. “You’re good,” he coughed.

Peter and Shuri smirked as they finally looked down. “Glad you’re back,” Peter said.

“Did I hurt you?” Bruce asked again.

“No,” Shuri promised. “Hulk was fine with us.”

“Well, he did kinda kidnap us from laser tag,” Peter admitted. “But we became friends!”

Bruce ran his hands through his hair incredulously. “Of course you did.” His eyes widened. “Laser tag! Tony! T’Challa! Oh my god!” His heart pounded in his chest, and his breathing began to pick up. “They’re going to kill me.” He slowly backed away from Peter and Shuri. “You need to stay away. I’m not safe.”

“Dr. Banner,” Shuri said calmly, “we trust you.”

“100%,” Peter added.

Bruce shook his head. “But I don’t trust me.”

“Then trust us,” Peter replied with a simple shrug. “Because we’ve got a plan.”

“What do you mean you sent them to Oklahoma?!” Tony’s face turned so red that T’Challa was convinced he was going to burst a blood vessel if he wasn’t careful.

Strange held his arms out exasperatedly. “There was a giant green monster in my foyer! He would have hurt them if I tried to subdue him!”

“You’re Harry freaking Potter!” Tony exclaimed. “You should have stopped them!”

“Tony,” T’Challa said, “I’m sure he did what he thought would keep Peter and Shuri safe.”

Strange nodded, his face dropping. “I swear, I thought I made the right call.” He glanced at Tony. “You don’t have a monopoly on who cares about them.”

Tony sighed. “I’m sorry.”
T'Challa pointed upstairs. “Can you send us to them?” he asked.

“Is that a good idea?” Strange asked. “What if our presence scares him? Hulk didn’t seem to be too thrilled with the idea of being turned back into Banner.”

“We can’t just leave them out there alone,” T'Challa said. “They’re just kids.”

“You got any other ideas, Strange?” Tony asked.

Strange opened his mouth to respond but was interrupted as a golden circle appeared in front of the stairs. Peter, Shuri, and Bruce walked through, completely unscathed. Well, Bruce was practically naked, but other than that, they were fine.

T'Challa and Tony both practically attacked the teens as they pulled them in for a group hug. Peter and Shuri both melted into the embrace, relieved to be back in one piece. Hulk may have been nice, but he was still unpredictable, and they would have been lying if they said they weren't a little bit scared.

“You’re gonna give me gray hair,” Tony chuckled, squeezing Peter tight.

“Why is it you two that always seems to get in these situations?” T'Challa asked, kissing the top of Shuri’s head.

“I’ll get you some clothes,” Strange said to Bruce before disappearing up the stairs.


Peter pulled away. “It wasn’t his fault!”

“The lights and noises in laser tag triggered it!” Shuri exclaimed.

“And we wanted to get him outside-”

“But we didn’t make it in time-”

“And then Hulk came out!”

“He just wanted to be friends, so we let him take us!”

“And then Shuri made a portal and brought us here-”

Tony and T’Challa both held up their hands, causing Peter and Shuri to stop talking. Bruce cut in before they could say anything.

“It is not your fault,” Bruce said firmly. “I should have known it could have triggered him. If anything had happened to you…”

“But it didn’t,” Shuri said softly.

“And besides, we have a plan,” Peter added. “One that helps keep Hulk under control.”

“Oh really?” Tony asked.

The teens nodded. “Hulk wants to be able to have time out where he isn’t battling,” Shuri explained. “But he agreed to share time with Dr. Banner as long as he can have time too.”
Bruce’s jaw dropped open. “Really? He agreed to that?” He tried to say more, but Strange appeared with clean clothes and ushered the scientists away to get changed.

“Yeah!” Peter exclaimed. “We convinced him.”

“Of course you did,” T’Challa replied with a wry smile.

Shuri waved her hands at the adults. “Don’t worry, we’ll take care of everything.”

“Now hold on-” Tony started.

“Ooo!” Peter exclaimed. “Aunt May wants to know if you, T’Challa and Pepper want to go to the Color Factory this weekend.”

“We still need to discuss-” T’Challa tried interjecting.

Shuri jokingly swatted Peter’s shoulder. “Of course T’Challa wants to come! Right, brother?”

“Well, yes, but we really need to talk about-”

“Please Tony!” Peter begged, clasping his hands together. “It’ll be so much fun!”

“I mean, sure, but about this Hulk thing-”

“YES!” Peter and Shuri shouted excitedly.

“Oh!” Shuri said, looking to Strange. “We definitely need to come visit. My portals are getting better, but Peter’s close combat still needs work.”

“Hey!” Peter protested, jabbing his best friend in the ribs.

“You’re welcome anytime,” Strange replied, a small grin tugging at his face.

Shuri and Peter carefully stepped over the debris and started walking outside back to the Tower, leaving the adults standing in the middle of the Sanctum’s foyer. The teens argued about who actually needed to improve their skill set until Tony, T’Challa, and Strange couldn’t hear their voices anymore. They all just stared at the gaping hole where Strange’s front door used to be, completely speechless. Bruce came stumbling out of the bathroom and noticed the odd silence hanging in the room.

“Are they gone?” he asked.

Tony just shook his head. “A whirlwind. They’re like a goddamn whirlwind.”

“They are something,” T’Challa hummed thoughtfully.

“Well buddy,” Tony said, clapping Bruce on the shoulder, “let’s get you home, shall we?”
“Um, Bucky?” Shuri asked warily. “Is that Loki’s cat?”

Busted.

Bucky Barnes hadn’t expected to find anyone in the library, but Peter and Shuri had been camped in there since lunch. He looked down at the black cat he was currently cradling in his arms as the teens continued to stare at him. Yoshi blinked curiously and hopped off the couch to investigate Bucky and his new friend.

“Ummm, no?” Bucky replied uncertainly. Frigga blinked slowly and let out a lazy “meow” as she snuggled into Bucky’s chest.

Peter put his book down and walked over to Bucky. He held his hand out for Frigga to sniff before scratching her head. Yoshi tried to climb up his leg, so Peter picked her up and stepped back so she could get a better look at Frigga. Cat and lizard both examined each other from afar before wiggling out of their respective handler’s arms and hopping down on the floor. They remembered each from Loki’s read aloud session and began engaging in a playful chase around the room.

“Aww!” Shuri cooed.

“So…” Peter probed again. “Why do you have Frigga?”

Bucky blushed fiercely as he scratched the back of his neck. “It’s just...okay, so hear me out,” he sighed. Peter and Shuri waited patiently for Bucky to continue.

“I miss Peggy, Steve, and Tigger,” Bucky finally admitted. “They’re so cuddly, you know? And they were with me all the time. And now I have to deal with people.” He wrinkled his nose at that last statement, causing Peter and Shuri to giggle. “So I just wanted some company, I guess.” Bucky sat down and let out a deep breath. “That probably sounds ridiculous.”

“That’s okay!” Peter reassured him. “It sounds totally normal.”

“I mean, they are your pets,” Shuri added. “Pets are basically family.”

Bucky pulled out his phone and showed it to Peter and Shuri. “I mean, the kids in the village text me pictures every day, but it’s not the same.” He scrolled through his photo album and smiled as he tapped through the different action shots of the goats and the tiger. Tigger had grown quite a bit at this point, and he was almost as tall as the goats now.

“Sorry to interrupt,” FRIDAY announced. “Loki is heading this way looking for Frigga.”

“Shit!” Bucky cursed. Before he could escape, the door to the library opened and Loki walked inside.

“There you are!” the Asgardian exclaimed, looking down at his cat.

Frigga and Yoshi stopped rolling around with each other and greeted Loki. He sat down on the floor and let both of them crawl into his lap.

“Has she been in here this whole time?” Loki asked. “I’ve been looking for her for almost an hour!” He tried to scowl at his cat, but as soon as she licked his face, his expression softened.
“She wandered in a little bit ago,” Peter lied.

Shuri noticed that despite finding his cat, Loki didn’t seem too happy. “Is everything okay?” she asked.

Loki shrugged. “I think she misses Norway. She had free-reign over everything, but here…” He sighed. “She’s trapped inside the whole time.”

“Hey,” Bucky said, “at least you were able to bring her with you.” He gave everyone a small smile before standing up and stretching his arms over his head. He playfully ruffled Peter and Shuri’s hair before leaving the library, shutting the door softly behind him.

Loki scooped up Frigga, the same scowl returning from before, and he left as well. Yoshi whined unhappily that her companion had left, and she crawled into Peter’s lap to sulk.

“Wow,” Peter said, after a few moments of silence.

“We should do something,” Shuri decided. “It’s not good for him to be this miserable. Either of them.”

Peter leaned back against the couch and wracked his brain for anything that might help make Bucky’s and Loki’s time at the Tower a little more enjoyable. His eyes widened, and he bolted upright, clutching Yoshi in his arms.

“Hey, FRIDAY,” Peter said. “Is Tony still using the 38th floor for anything?”

“No,” FRIDAY replied. “And as far as I know, he has no plans for it.”

“What’s the 38th floor?” Shuri asked. She followed Peter as he began to head out of the library.

Peter looked to make sure they weren’t being followed before he called the elevator to come get them. “It’s an empty floor,” he explained as the doors to the elevator dinged open. “Tony had a bunch of Avengers stuff in it before he moved it all upstate. I guess he never found a new purpose for it.”

Shuri leaned against the wall as FRIDAY set their destination to floor 38. “So why do we care about it?”

“Think about it,” Peter said. “Bucky misses his pets. We obviously can’t keep a tiger and two goats here permanently. But…” He gave her a wide smile. “We can make it so they can visit.”

The elevator doors opened to reveal a completely empty floor. The far wall was covered in floor-to-ceiling windows, and the tile floors squeaked under their sneakers. The ceilings were tall, and there was plenty of room to work with. Peter let Yoshi down, and she scampered all over the room, stopping to look down at the city below.

Shuri rubbed her chin and closed her eyes as she brainstormed how to transform the space. When she opened her eyes, Peter was staring at her expectantly.

“Let’s do it!” she exclaimed.
“Has anyone seen Peter or Shuri?” T’Challa asked as he walked into the kitchen.

Clint and Nat shook their heads from their perch on the kitchen counter. They were splitting a bowl of Lucky Charms, and they were currently saving the marshmallows for last.

Bruce looked up from some of the research he was reading at the kitchen island. “I haven’t seen them since…” He paused and pinched the bridge of his nose as he tried to remember. “Day before yesterday?”

“What?” Bucky asked from across the island. “That can’t be right.” He turned to T’Challa. “You’ve seen them since then, haven’t you?”

T’Challa shook his head. “I honestly don’t know. Things have been so hectic since laser tag, I haven’t had time to do much of anything.”

“I saw them yesterday,” Vision offered as he phased through the wall. Clint nearly fell off the counter, still not used to the android’s uncanny habit of appearing out of nowhere.

Wanda merely shook her head as she walked through the actual kitchen entrance. “Viz, we’ve talked about this,” she gently chided.

Vision lightly bowed his head. “My apologies,” he said.

“You said you saw Peter and Shuri?” T’Challa prompted.

“Ah, yes!” Vision replied. “They were both dragging supplies into the elevator, and I saw them go into Tony’s lab around 8pm. I don’t know if they ever left though.”

T’Challa knew they were up to something, but this time, he had no idea what.

Suddenly, Peter came running into the kitchen and slid across the smooth floor. He was completely drenched, and it looked like there were bits of grass stuck all over his clothes. He shook his head like a wet dog, and an earthy smell permeated the air as he dug around in the pantry. He grabbed as many paper towels rolls as he could carry and headed back out the way he came, leaving damp footprints on the floor.

“Do we wanna know?” Clint asked, shoving a spoonful of Lucky Charms in his mouth.

Before anyone could answer him, Shuri ran into the kitchen so fast she was like a blur. She quickly yanked open the cabinet under the sink and grabbed the fire extinguisher Tony kept there. A smoky haze seemed to follow her as she bolted into the hallway, and everyone stared at the entranceway to see what might come next.

“No,” T’Challa finally said, shaking his head. “I really don’t think we want to know.”

“Psst!”

Bucky’s head perked up as he toweled sweat off his face. He had just finished a workout session in the gym, and he was heading back up to his room to take a shower. He pulled one of the headphones out of his ear so he could hear better.
“Psst!” a voice hissed from behind him.

Bucky turned and found Peter and Shuri standing in the hall. They waved him over, and he smirked as he obliged.

“Well look who finally joined civilization again,” he teased.

But Peter and Shuri were so ecstatic, they didn’t even notice his joke. Their clothes were wrinkled and they had dark bags under their eyes, but they radiated happiness and excitement. They each merely grabbed one of his wrists and pulled him along towards the elevator. Peter set the destination for the 38th floor and leaned back against the elevator wall.

“So,” Bucky said, crossing his arms, “you plan on telling me why I’ve been kidnapped? Or where you two have been the last three days?”

“It’s a surprise!” Shuri replied enthusiastically.

Peter nodded. “It’s way better if we show you.”

Bucky just shrugged as he accepted his fate and patiently waited for the elevator to its destination. When the elevator finally dinged and the doors opened, Bucky’s jaw practically dropped to the floor. The entire 38th floor had been completely overhauled, and it didn’t even look like a space you would find in the Avengers Tower anymore.

Bucky tentatively stepped out of the elevator and his feet came in contact with sandy ground. The texture and smell took him right back to his village in Wakanda, and he could almost hear the water from the lake. In fact, the more he listened, the more he realized he could actually hear it. He turned clockwise and came face-to-face with a small pond on the far side of the floor. It was at least six feet wide, and it stretched another five or six feet long. It was surrounded by small, grassy area, and when Bucky knelt down and held his hands out, he could feel the grass tickle his palm. As he glanced up, he noticed a long shelf-type structure nailed to the middle of the wall. It ran around the entire room and changed height. There were even a few platforms settled in different spots on the wall.

“What is this?” he whispered, looking around in awe. Everything about it reminded him of home, and the nostalgia crashed over him like a wave.

“You should check that out,” Peter replied, pointing to his left. Bucky followed Peter’s arm to a replica of his hut in Wakanda. The thatched roof and mud-cement walls could have been a carbon copy of his hut. He grinned as he noticed the exact same goat “doggy door” he had sawed in his own door. He gently pushed the door open and gasped when he saw what awaited him inside.

Steve, Peggy, and Tigger sat patiently in the hut, but as soon as Bucky came inside, they all rushed him. Chuffs and bleats filled the air as the animals danced around and on Bucky. He giggled like a child on Christmas as he scratched each of their heads and hugged them. Tears pricked his eyes as Steve licked his nose.

“How did you-?” he asked, his voice thick. He paused and his eyes widened. “Wait, you didn’t actually take my hut and bring it here did you?”

Shuri cleared her throat as if she were about to give a presentation to a bunch of execs. “Well, FRIDAY helped us get the materials delivered. We used as many recycled materials as possible.”

“We built the pond, obviously,” Peter added. “It’s basically a couple of kiddie pools that we cut down and soldered together. There’s a built in water filtration system that works with the Tower’s
current water system.”

“Plus, we were able to get a recording of the natural environment,” Shuri said. “It plays on a loop.”

Bucky rubbed his palms against the grass again as Steve and Peggy began to munch on it. “How does this work?”

Shuri knelt down and smiled. “It’s a mat embedded with an accelerated fertilizer. The grass will keep growing as long as the original seedlings stay healthy. Our design.”

Tigger splashed around in the pond, letting out small snorts of happiness as he pawed at the water. Bucky watched as Yoshi magically appeared from somewhere on the floor and stood with her front paws resting on the edge of the pond walls. Tigger sniffed the lizard and then gave her a huge lick. Everyone giggled at Yoshi’s high-pitched chirp as she scampered to the opposite end of the floor to roll a ball over to Tigger. Soon, the two were engaged in a form of soccer.

The elevator dinged, signalling the arrival of a new visitor. They could hear Loki shouting before the doors even opened.

“No you incompetent robot! This is not my floor!”

As soon as the doors opened, Frigga ran out and eagerly sniffed her new surroundings. She let out an obscenely loud “meow” as she hopped on the wooden platform and found a perch near the top of the wall. She watched over her kingdom as the goats, tiger, and lizard all played below.

Loki curiously peeked his head out of the elevator. “What is this?” he asked, daring to step onto the mysterious floor.

“We built it,” Peter replied with a small shrug. “It’s for the animals.”

“You said Frigga missed the outdoors,” Shuri said to Loki. “And you,” she added, turning to Bucky, “said you missed having Steve, Peggy, and Tigger here.”

Loki swallowed thickly as Frigga purred loudly from above him. Bucky still looked like he was on the edge of happy tears.

“This is amazing,” the super soldier finally replied. “Right Loki?” He looked at the god expectantly.

Loki nodded. “This is...this is very...kind of you.” He felt his heart grow a few sizes as Peter and Shuri broke out in the widest grins Bucky and Loki had seen in a while.

“We rock!” Peter exclaimed, giving Shuri a high five.

“So Steve, Peggy, and Tigger can’t stay here full time,” Shuri warned. “But I’m going to ask Doctor Strange to set up a portal like the one in the Sanctum so you can easily let them in from Wakanda. But until then, I’ll bring them here for a few hours every day.”

Bucky gave Peter and Shuri a hug as his reply. The teens slowly backed away as Bucky and Loki settled in and began playing with their animals.

Peter waited until the elevator doors closed before letting out a huge sigh and sliding down the wall. “Thank god they liked it! Now we can finally sleep!”

Shuri yawned as she leaned against the opposite wall of the elevator. “Yessss,” she replied. “Let’s never go three days without sleep-” She paused and sniffed under her armpits, wrinkling her nose. “-
or a shower again.”

Peter merely held his thumb up and gave her a tired smile.

“Deal!”
“Holy cow,” May said, covering her mouth with her hand.

“It’s like…” Tony paused as he looked around the entire entryway. “I don’t even know what it’s like.”

“A unicorn,” T’Challa nodded firmly. “It’s like a unicorn had a baby with a rainbow.”

Tony, Pepper, and May all stared at T’Challa in shock, his connection completely unexpected. Meanwhile, Peter and Shuri were about to leave their adults behind.

“C’mon!” Peter called impatiently. He and Shuri stuck their heads through the long, thin pieces of fabric that hung down from the ceiling. “Let’s go!”

The Color Factory pop-up museum in SoHo was supposed to be an immersive, colorful experience. Tony had heard of the exhibit in San Francisco from some of his business partners out there, but he hadn’t gotten to experience it for himself.

When they had first walked into the building, they followed a rainbow staircase down to the check in room where they were greeted with free macarons. Peter and Shuri practically inhaled theirs before becoming entranced by the scratch and sniff color wall. Pepper knelt down and sniffed the “1st Trimester Pregnancy Craving” circle on a yellow strip of the wall. She sighed as a pleasant scent filled her nose. She couldn’t quite describe what it was, but it was accurate to how she was currently feeling. May skimmed the scents and headed right over to the “French Vanilla Pastry” on a purple wall.

T’Challa was used to the vibrant colors used in Wakandan rituals and traditions, but this was an entirely new experience altogether for him. Hundreds of colors he had never seen before were all around him. He let his hands flow through the fabric as he followed the others through the hanging pieces to get to the main installations.

Once they got inside, Tony felt his world go a bit topsy turvy as they stepped into a black and white room. Vertical stripes and checkerboard patterns decorated every surface, giving the room a surreal feel. Peter and Shuri found the charcoal lemonade bar and were currently daring each other to drink the black, murky liquid. May shocked both of them by grabbing a small glass and downing it like a shot.

“What?” she smirked as the teens gaped at her. “It tastes just like lemonade.”

“Your aunt is my hero,” Shuri whispered to Peter as May walked back to the others. With some additional confidence, Shuri took a quick sip of the black lemonade and hummed. “This is actually pretty good!” Peter, T’Challa, and Tony drank theirs next, but Pepper passed on hers.

The next room got Tony, May, and Pepper all in a groovy mood. Disco balls hung from every inch
of the ceiling, and the floor glittered in a rainbow design. Funky music pumped out of the room’s speakers as everything seemed to sparkle. May immediately grabbed Pepper’s hands and pulled her out into the middle of the floor for an impromptu disco session. Tony did a little booty shaking of his own, while Peter and Shuri’s faces burned with embarrassment.

“We’ll see you in the next exhibit!” Peter called, running away as fast as he could. Shuri followed him right behind, and they both disappeared around the corner.

T’Challa held up his hands as Pepper and Tony danced closer to him. “No thank you!” he said. “I don’t need to dance.”

“Actually,” Pepper said as she slowed her movements, “now that they’re gone, we have something we want to ask you.”

“What’s up?” May asked, joining them.

Tony cleared his throat. “So, first of all, Peter and Shuri mean the world to us. They’re practically family at this point.”

“And,” Pepper continued, “we want to ask them to be the baby’s godparents. Not their guardians!” she quickly clarified. “We have two other people in mind to take care of the baby if something happens to us.”

“But we want Peter and Shuri to be in the baby’s life,” Tony finished. “They’re such good kids, and it would mean a lot to us. We wanted to ask you first before we asked them and made it official.”

It took May and T’Challa a few moments for the shock of the request to subside. For May, it was a no-brainer considering how closely entwined Peter’s life now was with Tony. Wakanda did not have the same role in its culture because all of the adults played a role in the child’s development. However, T’Challa knew it was different in America and that godparents are chosen and not merely based on proximity.

“It would be an honor,” T’Challa finally replied. “Shuri will be thrilled.”

May nodded. “Absolutely! This will mean the world to Peter.”

Tony and Pepper sighed in relief. They didn’t think May and T’Challa would have an issue with it, but it was still nice to get their approval.

“How are you going to ask them?” May asked.

“Oh don’t worry,” Pepper grinned as they started walking out of the disco room. “There’s an exhibit coming up that will be perfect.”

When they turned the corner, they found Shuri chasing Peter around a green room with a ginormous marker that was almost as tall as her. The walls of the room were covered with coloring sheets, and green scribbles covered the surface. Peter yelped as Shuri jabbed at his shirt, while she laughed maniacally.

T’Challa put his head in his hands in embarrassment. “Are you sure you still want to ask them?” he groaned.

Tony took Pepper’s hand in his own and kissed her knuckles.

“Absolutely.”
After visiting an entire room covered in pink whoopie cushions (it went about as well as one would expect), Peter and Shuri spent an insane amount of time in a blue ball pit. They managed to get Tony and T’Challa inside with them, but May and Pepper decided to wait on the edge. Despite the balls being antibacterial, it still skeeved them out a bit. Tony and T’Challa had a blast pelting the teens with balls, while they shrieked and tried to duck out of the way.

When May and Pepper were finally able to coax the others out of the ball pit, it was time for the confetti room. Tony and T’Challa didn’t even hesitate before grabbing Peter and Shuri and carrying them away from the room.

“But confetti!” Peter protested, trying to wiggle out of Tony’s grasp. In all honesty, he could have easily overtaken his mentor, but he refrained.

“Nope,” Tony replied with a firm shake of his head. “Glitter and confetti are the STDs of craft supplies.”

“You will drag the mess all over the Tower,” T’Challa added, hoisting Shuri over his shoulder.

“Come on, brother!” Shuri exclaimed. “We just want to lay in it!”

“You know,” Pepper called, “they are completely capable of payback, right?” She winked at Peter and Shuri.

“Oh yeah,” Peter egged, wiggling his eyebrows. “We’re talking confetti cannons all over the kitchen counter.”

“And a glitter infestation,” Shuri added, sticking out her tongue.

With a glare, T’Challa and Tony dropped the teens while Pepper and May cracked up together. Peter jumped right into the center of the floor and started making confetti angels. Shuri threw handfuls of confetti over her head before laying down next to Peter.

“You’re how old, again?” Tony asked. “Five? Eight?”

“Everyone gets older, Tony,” Peter said, sitting up. “Doesn’t mean you have to grow up.”

“Exactly!” Shuri giggled, tossing some confetti at Peter. A few pieces got stuck in his hair, and he shook his head trying to get them out. Pepper dumped some confetti of her own over Tony’s head. She let out a half-scream, half-laugh as Tony chased her around to get some payback.

The final exhibit was a huge room with chalkboard paint on the walls. Pieces of chalk were scattered everywhere, and the walls were covered with artwork. There were smaller chalkboards laying around the room that people could draw on and take pictures with. While Peter and Shuri were busy at the walls, Tony and Pepper quickly got to work. They each created a sign and held it to their chests.

May walked over to the teens to help put Tony and Pepper’s plan in action. “Stand here,” she ordered, directing them to stand under a beautiful rainbow someone had drawn before.

“Don’t look at these,” Tony said, handing each of them one of the signs.
“Just hold it up,” Pepper said, pulling out her own phone.

“Why can’t we look?” Shuri asked.

“It probably has something goofy written on it,” Peter replied with a grin.

“Smile!” May said, holding up her phone.

Peter and Shuri leaned into each other and smiled widely as they held the mysterious signs up in front of them. Once Pepper, May, and T’Challa got their pictures, Tony cleared his throat.

“You can look at them now,” he said. His stomach churned in a nervous, excited anticipation.

Peter and Shuri both turned the chalkboards and quickly read the signs. They looked at each other, back to the signs again, and then to Tony and Pepper.

“What does it say, honey?” May asked, her voice cracking. She had switched her phone to record a video.

“#1 Godparent,” Peter replied in shock. He swallowed thickly and his grip tightened on the chalkboard.

“Shuri?” T’Challa asked.

“#1 Godparent,” Shuri said. She blinked a few times, wondering if this was a dream. “Are you…” She turned to Peter. “Are we…?”

“Tony?” Peter asked, his heart beating fast.

Tony and Pepper both walked over. “We’ve thought a lot about it,” Tony said, “and we can’t think of two people who would be better for the job.”

Pepper smiled warmly at them. “All you have to do is love this baby and be there for them. And,” she added with a laugh, “teach them the best nerd culture has to offer.”

For once, Peter and Shuri were stunned into silence. They continued to stare down at the signs like they had just been gifted the world’s greatest treasure. Peter finally looked up and pointed to Pepper’s stomach. “Can we…” he asked.

“Sure,” Pepper nodded, stepping back a bit to give them some room.

Peter and Shuri knelt down in front of Pepper. She had just started showing, and a little bulge peeked back at them from under her t-shirt.

“Hi baby,” Shuri said softly. “It’s me, Shuri.”

“And Peter,” Peter added. He glanced at Shuri, who gave him a watery smile and a nod. They both took a deep breath and spoke together.

“We’re your godparents.”

Chapter End Notes
The only exhibit that is NOT real from this chapter is the chalkboard one (but it worked so perfectly, I couldn't resist). The Color Factory is a real place in NYC, and all of the other things I talk about are real, and it sounds SO AMAZING!!! I've never been, but I plan on visiting when I'm in NYC in November!

Also...PETER AND SHURI ARE OFFICIALLY GODPARENTS!!! :D :D :D
Friends, I am continually BLOWN AWAY by your love for this fic! The original book has almost 60,000 views, and this one is up to almost 27,000!! THANK YOU SO MUCH!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“DUDE!” Ned exclaimed, jumping up and down on Peter’s bed. “You’re going to be godparents!”

“Really?” MJ asked dryly. “How ever could you tell?”

Ever since Tony and Pepper asked them to be godparents, Peter and Shuri may have gotten a little enthusiastic about their new role.

The first thing they did was steal the chalkboard signs from the Color Factory and hang them up on their bedroom doors in the Tower. The only thing differentiating their rooms was that Peter’s sign was written in purple chalk, and Shuri’s was written in silver.

Then, of course, they ordered matching t-shirts that said “I never dreamed I would be a super cool godparent, but here I am killing it”. They wore them for three days straight until Tony and T’Challa threatened to burn them if they didn’t wind up in the wash ASAP.

MJ and Ned were finally able to hang out again, and they were just as excited about the godparent announcement as Peter and Shuri. They were all currently chilling in Peter’s room, catching up and figuring out what kind of role Peter and Shuri will play.

Ned continued to bounce on the bed. “Do you even know how to take care of a baby? Are you going to have to change diapers? Oh my gosh!” He stopped jumping on the bed and waved his arms around. “Are you going to have to be in the hospital room while Pepper gives BIRTH?!”

“Dude!” Peter exclaimed, his ears turning scarlet. “No way!”

“Tony and Pepper said we’d just be there for the baby,” Shuri explained.

“Yeah,” MJ replied, “but being there is going to involve changing diapers. Unless you plan on only being there when it’s potty trained.”

“Have you ever changed a diaper before?” Ned asked.

Peter and Shuri both shook their heads. “You know,” Peter pointed out, “you and MJ are our best friends. Therefore, you’re going to be around the baby too.”

“So, do either of you know how to change a diaper?” Shuri asked with a sly grin.

Ned’s face fell, while MJ just glared stoically.

“So we all have a lot to learn,” Peter sighed, flopping down on his bed. “And only six months to learn it.”
MJ suddenly perked up. “We’ve gotta go to school!”

“Well yeah,” Peter agreed. “I wish there was a school for this stuff-”

MJ shook her head. “No, I mean we have to go to our school. I an idea!”

And with that, she rushed out of the room, Peter, Ned, and Shuri following her closely behind.

“People are staring at us!” Ned whispered, glancing sideways on the subway. An older woman with deep wrinkles frowned disapprovingly at the group of teens.

“Well,” MJ said nonchalantly, “we are currently perpetuating the teenage parent stereotype.” She lifted the baby carrier onto her lap and stared at the animatronic baby inside.

“But can’t they tell it’s not real?” Shuri asked.

“Oh god,” Peter groaned, “this was the worst idea ever!”

Shuri rocked her carrier on floor of the subway. “Hey! We need to learn how to take care of a baby! What’s better than practical experience?”

Ned shook his head. “You have no idea what we’ve just signed up for. The seniors do this project every year, and they hate it!”

MJ’s brilliant idea turned out to be their worst nightmare. She had dragged the others to their high school. It was open for professional development sessions, so getting inside the building was a breeze. The health room was unlocked, and MJ insisted on “borrowing” the school’s realistic babies to help them learn how to take care of the real thing. She gave each of them a wristband that matched the right baby. Shuri had taken care of activating them (aka hacking the software), and Peter had used his webs to rappel the babies, carriers, and diaper bags out the window to avoid being detected by other people in the building. Now, they just had to survive the torturous subway ride back to the Tower without wilting under the death glares of old people.

“What should we name them?” Ned asked. “I mean, we can’t just call them Babies 1-4, can we?”

“Well,” Peter said, “they are technically robots, so we could name them after Star Wars droids.”

MJ and Shuri blinked at him. “You...you want to name our babies after droids?” MJ asked, looking at Peter as if he had lost his mind.

Peter shrugged. “Do you have any better ideas?”

“Duh!” MJ exclaimed. “Pokemon!”

“Or, you know, normal names,” Ned suggested. “Like Sam or Steve.”

“We are not naming the babies after anyone living in the Tower,” Shuri shuddered.

“Yeah, but Pokemon?” Peter asked.

“Says the one who wanted to name them after droids!”
“Our stop,” MJ said, quickly standing up as the subway began to slow down.

They each grabbed their baby carrier and diaper bag and continued to bicker as they stepped back out into the sunlight.

Taking care of a baby was way harder than Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned had ever imagined. As soon as they made it back to the confines of the Tower, each baby decided to spontaneously cry. The ear-splitting screams seemed to echo off the walls of Peter’s room. Peter’s spidey senses went off like crazy, and he felt his entire body crank up to ten. He desperately grabbed his baby and began bouncing it on his knee in an effort to get it to stop crying.

“C’mon, BB8, it’s okay,” he cooed desperately. The others were trying, without much success, to get their babies quiet as well.

“Does Espeon need some milk?” MJ asked hers, rummaging through the carrier for the supplies.

“C3PO, stop crying! Please!” Ned begged. He picked up the baby and began walking with it around the room.

“Do you think Umbreon needs a diaper change?” Shuri asked. “Or do they need to eat first?”

“I don’t know!” Peter cried. “Let’s all try the food!”

MJ, Ned, and Shuri nodded as they took out the bottles and began to “feed” the babies. The only sounds now filling the room were tiny suckling noises as the hungry babies drank. Everyone let out a collective sigh of relief at the newfound silence.

It didn’t last long, though.

As soon as the bottles were finished, the babies each began to cry again. Shuri took a deep breath and tried not to cry herself. These weren’t even real babies, and she was already overwhelmed. How could they possibly handle the real thing?

“Deep breath,” she whispered to herself. “You’re a scientist, think through the problem.” She closed her eyes, sucked in a huge breath of air, and let it all out. “Try burping them!” she exclaimed. “They probably have gas.”

It was quite the sight with the four teens walking around Peter’s room burping the fake babies. Thankfully, it did the trick. After about five minutes, they all stopped crying. Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned carefully placed the babies back in the carriers and flopped down on the floor.


“This was your idea!” Peter exclaimed, poking her in the side. “You don’t get to complain.”

BB8 let out a small hiccup, and everyone’s heads shot up. They all held their breath, waiting anxiously for what was to come next.

“I think we’re safe,” Shuri whispered after a few moments of silence. They all sighed as laid back down on the floor.
“WAHHHH!”

“You just had to jinx us,” Ned whimpered. He lifted himself up, and the others followed suit, to try and figure out what was now wrong with their precious children.

Steve paused, holding his coffee cup mid-sip. “Do you hear crying?” he asked, putting the cup on the island.

Tony wearily rubbed his eyes and rested his hand under his chin. “And here I thought my tears of agony over another meeting were quieter this time.”

Bucky tilted his head to the side. “No, I heard it too.” They all stopped talking, but the only sounds they now heard were the munching of food and slurping of coffee.

“Where are the kids?” Nat asked. “Has anyone seen them since they rushed out of here yesterday?”

Loki and Thor shook their heads, while Clint merely shrugged. Pepper walked in with Scott and noticed the concern etched on everyone’s faces. “What’s up?” she asked.

“Spangles thought he heard someone crying,” Tony replied, earning a glare from Steve.

“And,” Clint added, “no one knows where the kids are.”

“They skipped dinner last night,” Bruce noted. “Although when they’re working on a project, that’s not too unusual.”

“FRIDAY?” T’Challa asked. “Are the kids alright?”

“Define ‘alright’,” the AI replied.

Everyone’s heads popped up at that remark. “I didn’t realize there were multiple definitions,” Tony shot back.

“Well,” FRIDAY replied, “they’re not in danger if that’s what you’re asking.”

“But…?” Pepper prompted.

“They’re sleep deprived, nutritionally compromised, and emotionally wrecked at the moment.”

“What the hell are they doing?!?” Tony exclaimed.

“Their current state might have something to do with the babies,” FRIDAY said.

“THE WHAT?!” everyone shouted.

“FRIDAY, where are they?” Pepper asked calmly.

“The movie room.”

In a flash, everyone was out of their seats and rushing towards the movie room. Shoulders pushed and shoved as they all tried to get in at the same time. Suddenly, the door opened to reveal Peter, and he looked murderous.
“Be quiet!” he hissed. “Please, for the love of god, be quiet!” He left them all standing there as he abruptly turned around and went back inside the room. Steve gently opened the door, and the large group gasped as they saw the four baby carriers on the floor. Right away, the super soldier could tell they were fake, but the teens stood protectively over the carriers as if they contained the real things. A calming river scene played on the large movie screen, the sound of rushing water coming through the high-tech speakers in the wall. The parenting books that Tony and Pepper had bought and stored in the library were littered all over the floor. T’Challa found some makeshift beds on the other side of the room made from piles of blankets and pillows.

Tony pointed at Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ. “You four, out here now,” he said quietly.

They all vehemently shook their heads. “No way,” MJ whispered. “We can’t leave them.”

Bucky carefully tiptoed his way into the room and motioned for the others to follow him. He ignored the silent protests from the teens and led the superheroes to empty spots on the floor.

“We’ve got this,” Scott promised, sitting right in front of C3PO’s carrier. “You’re okay.”

Pepper curled her index finger at the teens, motioning for them to follow her. With one last glance at their babies, they obeyed and followed her, Tony, and T’Challa out into the hall. Ned made sure to close the door behind him.

There were dark bags under their eyes as if they hadn’t slept much in the past 24 hours. Peter’s hair was a rumpled mess, and one of Shuri’s buns was coming undone. MJ could barely go two seconds without yawning, and Ned looked like he could fall asleep right against the wall.

“What is going on?” Tony asked, crossing his arms. “Why are there four fake babies in my movie room?”

Peter didn’t want Tony and Pepper to take back their offer of being godparents. “It’s nothing,” he replied. “Just something for school.”

“A project,” Ned yawned.

“It’s August,” T’Challa replied, raising his brow. “And Shuri doesn’t go to school with you.”

“A new learning experience?” Shuri half-asked, half-answered.

“Extra credit?” MJ tried.


Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ looked at each other before looking down at their shoes. “It’s just…” Shuri started. But, once she started, the four of them suddenly couldn’t stop.

“We have no idea how to take care of a baby!” Peter exclaimed.

Ned nodded. “And since, you know, you made Peter and Shuri godparents, we figured they’d need to know how to, right?”

“Which means we would too,” MJ added. “Since we’re kinda together a lot.”

“But none of us knows how to do anything with babies,” Shuri said. “So we’re using these robot babies to learn how to take care of them.”

“And it’s so hard!” Peter cried. “BB8 cries all the time! I try feeding him, then he cries because of his
“Whenever you burp C3PO, he just cries harder!” Ned exclaimed.

“Espeon’s needed to be fed almost every hour,” MJ complained. “It’s like she’s a bottomless pit! I’ve gotten almost no sleep.”

“And nothing seems to work on Umbreon!” Shuri said. “And the baby books said a dark environment with calming noise might help, so we brought them in here.”

“And they finally fell asleep,” Peter finished.

Tony, Pepper, and T’Challa stared at the teens incredulously. None of them even knew how to start unpacking what they had just been told.

“I...did you...did you name your babies after Star Wars droids and Pokemon?” Tony finally asked. Pepper and T’Challa both smacked him upside the head for that one. “What?!” he protested, rubbing his head. “That’s not your first question?!”

T’Challa just shook his head. “Why did you think you had to learn all this by yourself?” he asked.

“Because we have to!” Shuri said.

“Did Tony or Pepper tell you that you’d be changing diapers?”

“No,” all four teens replied.

“Did they ever make you feel like you’d be taking care of the baby in that capacity?”

“No.”

“Do you really think they would expect a group of teenagers to be solely responsible for the welfare of their child?”

“No...”

“Then why go through all this trouble?”

“I...we just...” Peter stuttered. “We just want to do a good job.”

“We’re taking this very seriously,” Shuri promised.

“Same,” Ned said.

“Ditto,” MJ added.

Pepper opened up her arms and pulled them in for a group hug. “It’s okay,” she said softly, squeezing them tight. She let them cling to her for a little while longer before giving Tony and T’Challa a nod that said “I’ve got this”.

“Listen,” she said, letting them go. “We really appreciate how much you care. But the diapers, the staying up all night?” She pointed to Tony and back to herself. “That’s on us.”

“And,” Tony stepped in, “we certainly don’t know how to do half that stuff.”

“Yet,” Pepper clarified. “We don’t know how yet. But we will. But you,” she said, pointing to Peter,
Shuri, Ned, and MJ. “Your job is to love the baby, play with the baby, just be there. Diapers and stuff? We’ll handle that.”

Tony grinned mischievously. “I mean, unless you want to do some of that stuff…”

“NO!” the teens exclaimed desperately. Pepper, Tony, and T’Challa laughed at their reactions.

“You good?” T’Challa asked.

Shuri nodded. “We’re so tired though!”

Peter sighed wearily. “They had us up all night.”

“See honey?” Tony said sweetly. “This is what we have to look forward to!” Pepper pinched his ear and began dragging him down the hall.

“So Tony is going to make you some food,” Pepper called over her shoulder. “Then you’re going to sleep.”

“What about the babies?” Ned asked. “We’ve gotta get them back to school.”

“Tony can drop them off!”

“Hey!” Tony protested. “Does Tony get a say in this?”

MJ cleared her throat. “They, uh, kinda need to be returned discreetly.”

Pepper stopped dead in her tracks, causing Tony to pause with her.

T’Challa glared at the teens. “Why discreetly?” he asked suspiciously. “Did you steal them?”

Peter chuckled nervously. “You know, we can skip the food.” He glanced at the others expectantly.

“Oh, yeah,” Shuri nodded. “We need sleep more than we need food.”


“See you later!” Ned exclaimed. They all ran down the hall and back towards Peter and Shuri’s rooms, leaving Pepper, Tony, and T’Challa in their dust.

The door to the movie room opened, and Clint poked his head out. They could hear all four babies crying hysterically on the other side.

“Oh, guys?” Clint asked nervously. “A little help?”

Chapter End Notes

So, we've got one more chapters before we get into a Daredevil/Punisher mini arc. If you haven't seen the shows, no worries. There will be no spoilers, and the violence in minimal (there will be some because it's Daredevil and Punisher, but I'll give a heads up somehow). As for the rest of the Defenders...I like them, but I don't think I can write them well because I'm not obsessed with them like I am D and P. I'm going to be playing with the arc to see if I can add them, but I can't make any promises.
As always, thanks for reading!!
Hey peeps! There won't be an update until next week (prob Wednesday). I am planning/organizing a HUGE field trip for 135 7th graders, and I've got a bunch of grading to do before the end of the marking period. So, I need a little time to get all that situated. But don't worry! We'll be back to our regularly scheduled programming next week!

As always, thanks for reading!! :D

“Barnes,” Sam said, with a defiant smirk, “I don’t care what type of super juice you got injected with! I can totally take you-WHAT THE HECK?!?”

Sam and Bucky both stopped dead in their tracks in the entryway to the Tower’s full-floor gym. They had planned a sparring session, but they certainly were not expecting this.

The entire floor of the gym had been turned into a checkerboard using colorful duct tape. The outline of the board and squares were blue, and the inside of the “black” squares had purple “Xs” inside of them. Peter and Ned were on one side of the board while Shuri and Hulk were on the other. MJ sat at the edge, her sketchbook out and ready. No less than forty pillows were stacked in a pile behind her.

Hulk’s ears perked up at the intrusion, and he snapped his head around to glare at Sam and Bucky. The two men backed away nervously.

“Hi Sam! Hi Bucky!” Peter, Ned and Shuri called. They waved their hands enthusiastically, while MJ merely gave them a nod.

“Uh, kid, what exactly are you doing?” Sam asked nervously.

“We’re teaching Hulk how to play Wizard’s Chess!” Shuri exclaimed.

“Duh,” MJ added, as if it were obvious.

Hulk nodded proudly. “Hulk playing chess with Peter, Shuri, and new friends! Hulk like chess!”

“Peter, it’s your turn,” MJ said.

Peter took a few steps forward on the board, carefully hopping to a spot that was diagonal from Hulk. Hulk let out a rumble and looked around the board.

“C’mon, Hulk, you know what to do,” Ned prompted.

Bucky’s eyes widened. “Wait a second,” he whispered, “isn’t Wizard’s Chess really violent in the movies?”

“What do you mean?” Sam asked.
Hulk gently stomped diagonally until he was right in front of Peter’s square. Based on chess rules, Hulk could take over Peter’s space.

“When you can overtake another player’s spot, the chess piece gets destroyed!” Bucky yelped. He frantically turned to Peter. “PETER! LOOK OUT!”

Hulk lifted Peter over his head and tossed him in the air. Sam and Bucky both felt their world move in slow motion as the teen flew out of the playing field...

...and onto the huge pile of pillows behind MJ.

“Nice, Hulk!” Shuri exclaimed, jumping up and down. “You remembered the pattern!”

“You’re getting really good at this!” MJ praised. She turned the sketchbook towards Hulk and showed him the picture she had drawn. Hulk’s penciled face was furrowed in concentration on the chess board, and MJ had drawn him in Gryffindor robes.

Hulk actually blushed and looked away from MJ before turning back to get another glance at his drawing. “Friends watch Harry Potter with Hulk?” he asked hopefully.

“Of course!” Peter replied, popping up from the pillow pile. “We can have a movie marathon someday.”

Ned caught a glimpse of a very pale Sam and Bucky. “Hey, you guys okay?” he asked.

Bucky opened and closed his mouth as he tried to form words. “He...They...I…Pillow…”

Sam let out a few guttural noises before sitting down on the floor and putting his head in his hands. “Heart attacks...all of you…”

Someone chuckled from above in the rafters. When Bucky and Sam looked up, they spotted Clint chilling on one of the beams, eating popcorn from a bag. He threw a few kernels down at them as he laughed.

“Did you seriously think they weren’t supervised?” Clint asked, tossing popcorn in his mouth. “You should have seen the look on your faces!” He cackled and tears rolled down his cheeks as he clutched his stomach. His movements caused the popcorn bag to slip out of his hands, and it fell directly onto Sam and Bucky. “Aww, popcorn, no!” Clint exclaimed sadly.

Bucky cleared his throat as he shook the popcorn out of his hair. “Does Tony...does Tony know about this?”

“The chess board?” Shuri asked. “No, but it’s just duct tape. It comes off.”

Sam shook his head. “No! About…” He nodded carefully at the Hulk. “Hang on! Bruce told us this morning he didn’t feel well!”

“Oh!” Peter said. “Dr. Banner didn’t want to go to the meeting this morning, so he decided to give Hulk some time out. I’m pretty sure Tony knows.”

Bucky’s head snapped up. “Hang on! Bruce told us this morning he didn’t feel well!”

“That lying sonofa-” Sam started, shaking his head. “Next time I don’t want to deal with lawyers, I’m using that as my excuse!”

“Can we get back to playing now?” Ned asked. “We need to teach Hulk about trick moves.”
Clint somehow appeared on the floor and nodded. “Go ahead.”

“And you!” Sam exclaimed, pointing at the archer. “How did you get out of the meeting?”

“Well,” Clint explained, “as Nat likes to say, I tend to instigate. So I got supervising duty.” He plopped down on the ground and crossed his legs. “This is way more fun! Hulk almost missed the pillow pile the first time he threw Ned. Poor guy was so upset he made the kids get more pillows before he would play again.”

“I literally don’t even know what to say to that,” Bucky replied, shaking his head. On the chess board, Hulk tossed Shuri off the board after declaring checkmate. Peter, Ned, and MJ cheered him on as Shuri rolled around in the pillows.

“Wow,” Sam said. “Just wow.”

“Umm,” Scott said nervously, “what are you doing?”

“Painting,” MJ replied without looking up. The “duh” was implied.

Scott, Wanda, Vision, Loki, and Thor stared at the teens and Hulk, who were clustered in front of the common room’s TV. A Bob Ross video played in the background, and everyone had their own canvas, paintbrush, and palette. Hulk’s was much bigger than everyone else’s, but he was trying to copy the same brushstrokes the man on the TV was doing.

“Who is that?” Vision asked quietly, pointing to the TV.

“Bob Ross,” Scott replied. “Super famous artist. His videos are awesome, plus his hair is pretty cool.”

“You know,” Peter said, looking over his shoulder. “We bought the canvases in bulk, so there’s a bunch of extras.”

“You should do it with us!” Ned added enthusiastically. “We’re not that far into the episode.”

“Just cover your canvas with the white paint first,” MJ instructed. “Thin layer, not too thick.”

Wanda, Scott, and Vision joined without hesitating. Once Thor decided to go as well, Loki merely rolled his eyes and followed his brother. Soon, the new members were set up with their paints and canvases, and the only sound in the room were Bob Ross’ soothing directions.

“Let’s make some happy little clouds in our world,” Bob instructed, lifting his brush to the top of the canvas. Everyone dabbed their brushes in the correct blue and followed the brushstrokes.

Hulk was being super gentle with his brush, and his face was set in concentration as he looked from his canvas to the screen to make sure he was doing it the right way. He smiled to himself as the paint on his canvas matched what he saw from Bob Ross.

Vision was a master at learning and copying, and his painting looked eerily accurate. Wanda was more relaxed with her brushstrokes, but it was still easy to see the resemblance between her picture and Bob’s. Loki’s tongue poked out of the corner of his mouth as he eyes darted quickly from the painting to the TV. What he had viewed as silly before was now a task that needed to be done well.
Thor was merely enjoying the calm atmosphere compared to the tense meetings from the last few weeks. Scott’s meanwhile, looked like a train wreck, but he was really enjoying himself, so he didn’t care.

The group worked straight through the thirty minute episode without stopping. They were concentrating so much on their work that they didn’t even notice they had an audience. Tony, Nat, T’Challa, and Steve watched quietly from a distance. Steve continued to be in awe of the Internet, and he made a mental note to look up more of these videos so he could practice his painting skills. Sketching had always been his forte, but this guy made painting look so easy.

“You must admit,” T’Challa whispered, “Peter and Shuri are certainly keeping their word about Hulk.”

Tony nodded. “Did we ever really doubt them though?” he asked.

T’Challa grinned and shook his head. “No,” he replied, “I don’t think we ever did.”

Chapter End Notes

Here's the Bob Ross episode if anyone is interested!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlucWfTUo1A&list=PLAEQD0ULngi67rwmrhrkJnZKvyCReqDV4

See you all in a week!!
Negotiations were finally winding down.

They had actually been winding down for some time now, but everything was getting wrapped up. The Accords were never going to be perfect, but everyone had found ways to compromise without compromising their beliefs.

Bucky had been cleared of all charges, and he was now considered a free man. Loki was to continue existing in the shadows with Thor and the other Asgardians in Norway. New York may not have completely been his fault, but he had still made mistakes. He didn’t mind, though. He really, really hated dealing with lawyers and bureaucrats. And people.

Steve, Wanda, Nat, Vision, and Sam were moving back to New York for good. The Avenger’s Compound was now the official headquarters for Earth’s mightiest heroes, and their old rooms were still waiting for them. Bucky and Bruce were going as well, and Hulk would have plenty of space to run around when he needed his time out. Tony and Pepper would commute between the Compound and the Tower, but most of their time would now be spent upstate.

Scott and Clint were going to be heading back to their own homes, and they would come in as needed. Clint was a little bit closer than Scott, but the Avengers needed someone on their side on the West Coast too.

Everyone, including T’Challa and Shuri, would be leaving in two weeks.

While Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ were happy that everyone had figured out (most) of their problems, they couldn’t help but feel glum. School would be starting soon, and their foursome was about to become a trio. Life was going to be a little less fun without Shuri in New York. Even though she could now portal almost anywhere, she was going to have her own responsibilities to pick up again once she returned to Wakanda.

The teens tried to keep their minds off the inevitable, so they chose to focus their energy on something more exciting:

Pokemon Go.

“Are you sure you saw the right post?” MJ asked Ned as she looked around warily. It was almost 9pm, and they had never been to this part of Hell’s Kitchen before.

“I’m telling you!” Ned insisted. “The forum said there was going to be a huge raid here tonight! We’re talking multiple legendaries!”
Shuri snorted. “And yet, when we tried to find the post, it disappeared.”

“I saw what I saw,” Ned grumbled. He checked the GPS on his phone and looked across the street. “That’s the restaurant.”

The street was mostly empty, and the restaurant Ned pointed out looked completely dark. There were no lights on at all, and it almost seemed to be abandoned.

“Is it inside?” Shuri whispered. “I don’t see anyone else here for the raid.”

Peter shook his head. “Pokemon Go never puts raids inside buildings. They’d be outside.” He glanced at Ned. “Dude, I think your info was wr-” He gasped as he felt the hair rise on the back of his neck. “GET DOWN!” he shouted, pulling his friends on the sidewalk.

The dark, empty restaurant burst with activity as gunshots pummeled through walls, windows, and doors. Peter felt some of debris smash the wall above him, causing the concrete to shower over him. The gunfire was relentless, and the teens could hear screams coming from inside.

Peter immediately activated his web slingers and suit. Once the protective nanites covered his skin, he tried to stand up, but all of his friends yanked him back down.

“Those are NOT little guns!” MJ exclaimed. “You can’t go in there!”

Peter tried to escape her grasp, but Ned and Shuri were there to replace her hands with theirs.

“Peter!” Shuri pleaded. “This is too dangerous!”

“I have to help!” Peter shouted back. “People are getting hurt!”

The front door to the restaurant suddenly exploded as a man was thrown out into the street. Men dressed in fancy dress clothes with slicked back hair poured out of the restaurant and bolted as if they were being chased by the devil.

Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned flattened themselves against the alley wall to avoid being spotted, but they didn’t need to worry. The men were so concerned about themselves that they didn’t even notice the teens.

“What...the...hell...” MJ panted once the street was clear.

Peter tilted his head, and he could still hear people fighting inside. There were no gunshots, so he assumed it was hand-to-hand combat. Despite his better judgement, he jumped up and ran inside.

“PETER!” his friends screamed desperately. He disappeared into the restaurant, leaving Ned, MJ, and Shuri behind.

Shuri broke off two of her kimoyo beads and tossed them to Ned and MJ. “Smash them between your palms,” she ordered, doing the same with one of her own.

Ned and MJ followed her directions, and a thin cord wrapped around their wrists. A translucent blue shield appeared, and they held it protectively in front of their bodies. They all let out yells as they ran across the street and burst into the building.

Shuri had to stop herself from running into Peter, who was standing in the middle of the dining area, completely shocked by what he saw.

A tall, intimidating man in a black t-shirt with a white skull was trying to beat the absolute crap out of
someone in a red devil’s suit. While the unmasked man had a gun, he tossed it aside and was fighting with his fists. He knocked the devil clear across the face, causing him to stumble.

“RED!” the other man bellowed. “I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUTTA THIS!”

“Red” wiped a bit of blood off his face and stood back up. “Nothing’s going to get solved like this, Castle,” he said, his voice thick. “You’ve gotta-” His head snapped up and looked directly at the teens as Ned stepped on a piece of glass.

Castle quickly pulled out another gun from his utility belt, cocked it and aimed at the teens. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ barely had time to take a breath before he pulled the trigger. Peter’s reflexes were fast, and he shoved his body back into his friends so they all tumbled to the floor. But, the bullet wasn’t aimed for them. Just as they hit the ground, a man behind them fell as well, a clean bullet hole between his eyes. He landed on the ground, his hand outstretched holding an automatic pistol.

Without thinking, Peter quickly shot a web at Castle’s gun. He yanked it, and the gun went flying across the floor. Peter kicked a fallen table at both men, and it knocked both of them over. Red flipped himself back up, while Castle tossed a chair back towards Peter. Shuri jumped in front of her friend and blocked the chair with her shield. MJ and Ned took turns tossing various items at Castle, who was trying his hardest to get back to one of his guns.

Peter shot out at Red’s legs, but the devil was fast too. Red grabbed what looked like a knight stick from his side holster and whacked Peter in the head as the teen pushed Shuri aside. Peter grunted as he fell back from the surprising force of it. He tried to get up, but Red knocked him in the head again. He landed against the corner of the table and had the wind knocked out of him. He felt his world go fuzzy as he began to black out.

“Spiderman!” Ned shouted, protecting Peter’s identity.

“Don’t hurt him!” Shuri exclaimed.

Castle made eye contact with a terrified MJ, Ned, and Shuri before looking down at Peter. His eyes widened as he finally realized four teenagers had just infiltrated his bust. He grabbed Red’s arm before the other man could do serious damage.

“They’re just kids!” he hissed. His heart sank as he thought of his own children. “Jesus Christ, they’re just kids.”

Even though he was wearing a mask, Castle could see Red’s shock. Suddenly, the blare of sirens filled the air, and red and blue lights danced across the restaurant walls.

“We’ve got to get them out of here,” Red replied.

Shuri, MJ, and Ned rushed over to a semi-conscious Peter and tried to wake him up. Peter groaned and tried to get up, but his head felt like it was splitting in two.

“Peter,” Karen said in her soothing voice, “your vitals are alarming, and you appear to have a concussion. Do you want me to call Mr. Stark?”

“N-n-no,” Peter managed to get out. “I’m...fine.” He grunted and fell back down. It was times like these that he really wished he was immune to concussions.

“Karen,” Shuri commanded, “do NOT called Tony. We’ve got this.” She could only imagine the hell Tony would unleash if he found out Peter had willingly gone into a gun fight. She’d deal with
Peter herself...once they got of of this mess.

Red and Castle both approached the teens. Shuri, Ned, and MJ immediately went on the defensive and held their shields up in front of them.

“Get back,” MJ growled. “Or I’ll put you through a wall.”

“You’re the ones who came in here half-cocked,” Castle shot back. “Now, unless you want the cops on your ass, you need our help.”

“We’re not going to hurt you,” Red promised, giving Castle a sharp glance.

Shuri nodded at Ned, and the two of them deactivated their shields. They hoisted Peter up and half-dragged him towards the back. MJ walked backwards so she was facing Castle, who took up the rear. They both glared each other down as Red expertly led them down to the basement and then through a hidden door in the wall. The teens tried not to focus on the mess of bodies covering the floor, but Ned couldn’t help but let out a whimper at the men hunched over a poker table, blood dripping down their faces. Castle moved to block their vision from the gruesome sight.

Their world was plunged into darkness as they entered the hidden passage. Despite the only light coming from MJ’s shield, Red seemed to be able to get through the darkness easily.

“Kid needs a doctor, Red,” Castle said, interrupting the silence. “You know one of those?”

Red sighed as he felt the door handle that would take them to the outside world.

“Yeah, I know one of those.”

Chapter End Notes

All good things must come to an end eventually, and we are starting to wind down! I’m thinking this book will end around 75 parts or so. Be prepared! :P

As always, thanks for reading!!
Hey peeps! Sorry I didn't update on Friday! I was in a wedding this weekend, and it was insanely crazy!!

“TEENAGERS?!” Claire Temple roared as Red and Castle ushered the others in her apartment. “You’re recruiting TEENAGERS now?” She quickly pulled her long, black hair into a messy ponytail and helped Ned and Shuri put Peter on her couch.

“We’re not “recruiting” anyone!” Red protested. “They got in the middle of our-”


“Who the hell lets someone run around in a costume fighting people with guns?!” Red exclaimed, throwing his hands up in the air. “Especially a teenager!”


“Enough!” Claire ordered, getting her medical bag out from under her kitchen cabinet. She glanced up at Castle and glared at him. “You can’t be here.” She looked to Red. “He can’t be here.”

Castle held up his hands. “Trust me, I don’t want to be here either.” He began backing away towards the door while Claire attended to Peter. “Just answer me one thing,” he said, pausing with his hand over the knob. “Why the hell were you four there?”

Ned used a shaky hand to pull out his cell phone and open the Pokemon Go app. He held it out for Castle to see. “I found a post about a legendary raid,” he explained. “It was only up for a few minutes, so I thought it was top secret.”

“A raid?” Castle asked, wrinkling his nose. “You knew it was a drug and gambling ring?”

“No!” Ned exclaimed. “A Pokemon raid!”

Castle shook his head. “Kid, the last time I heard of Pokemon was when I played it on my Gameboy Color.”

“Hang on,” Red said, putting out his hand. “You’re saying a post on the Pokemon Go site led you to the restaurant?”

“Yeah,” MJ nodded, finally looking away from Peter.

Red hummed thoughtfully as he paced around the apartment. “It could be a code…” He took a sharp breath and looked up. “What exactly did the message say?”

Ned shook his head. “I don’t...I don’t remember the exact wording. I’m sor-“
Castle thrust his cell phone in Ned’s face, interrupting the teen. “Download that thing on my phone,” he commanded.

“Please,” MJ shot back snidely.

“Please,” Castle added, giving MJ a sideways glance.

Ned carefully took the phone and began to download the app and add the forum page to Castle’s bookmarked sites. Shuri, meanwhile, was arguing with Claire, who was trying to unmask Peter.

“You can’t!” Shuri exclaimed. “He wears a mask for a reason!”

“Your friend needs to be examined,” Claire replied soothingly. “I can’t see if he has a concussion if I can’t see his eyes.”

Shuri glanced up at the other two men in the room. “They can’t be here,” she demanded. “They need to leave.”

Castle pocketed his phone. “Hope you feel better kid,” he said to Peter, who was starting to look around the room. “Stay the hell outta my way,” he growled to Red. He pushed past the other man and walked out of the apartment, shutting the door behind him.

“Your turn,” MJ said, pointing to the door. “Bye.”

Red shook his head. “Sorry, you’re not getting rid of me that easily.”

Shuri let out an exasperated sigh. “At least turn around then!”

Small smiles pulled at Claire and Red’s lips as Red turned around and faced the wall. Shuri turned Peter’s palm over and pressed his web shooter three quick times. The nanites crawled their way off his head, revealing a bruised face. He had a nasty welt on the side of his head that was already turning a yellowish-purple thanks to his accelerated healing. In a few short seconds, the whole suit was packed back in his web shooters, and he was back to wearing the same clothes he had on when they had all left the Tower earlier in the evening.

Peter groaned as Claire shined a small flashlight in his eyes. “Definitely dilated,” she said softly. She gently pressed his wound, causing him to grimace. “It doesn’t look like there’s any serious damage,” she observed, “but he has a slight concussion. Does he have...powers?”

“Yeah,” Shuri replied.

“What kind?”

Shuri held up a finger as she ticked off each characteristic. “Enhanced senses, accelerated healing, lightning reflexes, super strength-”

“Is that all?” Claire chuckled.

“And he can talk to and control spiders,” Ned added. “Insects too, but spiders respond the best.”

Red held back a snort. “So he’s a spider boy?”

“Spiderman,” Peter corrected sleepily. “Name’s...Spider...man.” He tried to push himself off the couch, but Claire held him down.

“Uh uh,” she said, “you’re benched right now.” She looked to Peter’s friends. “He needs to rest. No
screens, no strenuous activity for at least two days. Maybe just one day depending on his abilities.”

“He can’t put the mask back on,” Ned said. “The whole inside is basically a screen.”

Claire sat back and tapped her fingers against her thighs. Her eyes widened and she held up a finger motioning for the others to wait. She disappeared down the hall into a bedroom and came back a few moments later carrying what looked like a black rag. She carefully placed it over the top half of Peter’s face and tied it in place behind his head.

“You can turn around now,” Claire told Red, a wry grin on her face.

Red sighed and faced the teens. “You shouldn’t have gone in there,” he said. “You all almost got seriously hurt.”

“Doesn’t matter if they were bad guys,” Peter mumbled quietly from the couch. “You shouldn’t have killed them.”

“Kid, you have no idea what you’re dealing with,” Red replied. “Go home, stay out of my way.”

“What about the annoying guy?” MJ asked. “Wrestler on steroids?”

Red let out a quick laugh at MJ’s nickname. “Castle has the right idea, but the wrong methods. I can handle him.”

“You sure?” Shuri asked. “Cause it looked like he was kicking your ass.”

“And on that note,” Claire said, standing up, “I think it’s about time we went home.” She glanced down at Peter. “You have a way out of here?”

Ned’s eyes widened. “Ton-” he gasped, before MJ covered his mouth with her hand.

“You’re right,” she said calmly, “Spiderman’s dad is going to flip.”

Shuri pulled out Peter’s phone from his pocket and began typing a text. “Don’t worry,” she replied, “I’ll let him know we’re staying at the….” She quickly looked up and tried to think of a code. “At the… other place tonight.”

Ned nodded as MJ removed her hand from his mouth. “Good idea,” he replied.

Peter rubbed his head gingerly against the black fabric as he stood up. The ringing had already gone down, and the ache behind his eyes was more of a dull throb than a sharp pain. Nevertheless, MJ and Ned looped their arms under his to help him walk to the door.

“Thank you,” he said to Claire. “For helping me.”

Claire gave him a soft smile. “Of course. Just don’t come back.”

Peter grinned under his makeshift mask as Shuri opened the door.

“Stay out of this,” Red warned them. “Next time you might not walk away with just a concussion.”

Shuri gave him a brief nod before shutting the door behind them. Claire tossed a pillow at Red’s head as she let out a low chuckle.

“That’s pretty rich coming from you,” she said as she packed her medical supplies away. “So, did Castle really kick your ass?”
She managed to duck out of the way just as the pillow flew through the air.

“DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW STUPID YOU WERE?” Strange screamed as he towered over the four teens.

Once they had gotten outside and into an alley, Shuri had portaled them to the Sanctum. After seeing Peter’s state and getting the story from Ned, MJ, and Shuri, it was safe to say that Strange was angry. Very angry.

Peter winced at the loud noise, his headache returning. “We couldn’t just let—”

“No!” Strange interrupted, shoving a finger in Peter’s face. “This is NOT the same as what you do in Queens! Running into a gunfight was BEYOND irresponsible.”

“I can protect myself!” Peter protested.

“Oh yeah?” Strange scoffed. “What about them?” He pointed to Ned, Shuri, and MJ. “Were you thinking about their safety? They don’t have special suits like you.”

“They didn’t have to follow me in—”

“Dude!” Ned exclaimed. “You’re our best friend! We would follow you anywhere!”

“We tried to warn you,” Shuri added, a steely look in her eye. “But you didn’t listen.”

Peter swallowed thickly as he let out a shaky breath. He knew they were right, but admitting that he had put them in danger was too difficult to bear.

“And you three,” Strange continued, “should have known better.”


“Go back to yelling at Peter!” MJ exclaimed.

“Nope, your turn,” Strange said. “You could have done anything, ANYTHING else, but you chose to follow Peter. Completely unarmed.”

“We had shields!” Shuri defended.

Strange ignored her. “This isn’t a game,” he said sternly. “You’re not just thinking about you anymore. It’s really hard to be a godparent if you’re dead.”

The teens took in a sharp breath as Strange’s words punched them in the gut.

“Low blow,” Peter whispered, feeling his cheeks heat up.

“Nope,” Strange said again. “Just the truth.” He knelt down and looked each of them in the eye. “You need to think about your new responsibility a little more before going in to a firefight that you can’t win.”

“How did you know we’re godparents?” Shuri asked softly.
Strange let out a small chuckle. “Are you kidding? Tony sent everyone the picture of you two holding the chalkboards. He’s really proud of you.”

That just made them feel even worse. Peter sighed and leaned back against the couch. “Sorry,” he said.

“Me too,” Shuri added.

“Me three,” Ned said.

“Yeah,” MJ echoed.

Strange sighed. “You know I’m saying all this because I care about you, right?” They all nodded. “Good.” He stood up and motioned towards the hall leading to the stairs. “It’s late. Why don’t you crash here, and we can talk more tomorrow? I’ll check in throughout the night to make sure your concussion doesn’t get worse.”

Peter let out an involuntary yawn, causing a chain reaction with the others. Strange suppressed a laugh as they stood up, the exhaustion finally catching up with them. They trudged down the hall and up the stairs. Strange had no doubt that they were going to pass out as soon as their heads hit the pillow.

Strange pulled out his phone and opened up his texts. His phone had been vibrating non-stop in his pocket, and he finally responded to the worried party on the other side.

**Stark:** I swear, I’m going to kill them all if they’re not dead.

**Stark:** Please tell me they’re not dead.

**Stark:** I know you said I didn’t have to come down, but you’re taking way too long to answer.

**Stark:** Hello?

**Stark:** What’s up doc?

**Strange:** Relax!

**Stark:** Oh good, you CAN text back.

**Strange:** They’re fine. Peter has a concussion, but they’re fine.

**Stark:** What were they thinking?!

**Strange:** Peter was being Peter and the others were being his friends.

**Stark:** Oh, just wait until I get my hands on them.

**Strange:** I don’t think you’ll need to. I pulled the godparent card. You would have thought I told them their kitten died.

**Stark:** That’s cold, Strange.

**Stark:** I like it.
Strange: Any update on this devil guy?

Stark: He’s been on my radar, but he’s never been an issue. Might need to upgrade his status.

Strange: Okay. The kids are going to stay here. Peter’s close combat skills need work if he let himself get knocked in the head.

Stark: Give ‘em hell.

Stark: But make sure his concussion is better first.

Stark: Please.

Strange: Will do.

Stark: Thanks again for your help.

Strange: No problem. Thanks for letting me deal with this.

Strange: And for not blowing my door down.

Strange: Again.

Chapter End Notes

FYI the kids don't know that Tony and company know what they were up to. That'll be important two chapters from now :P
“Hang on,” MJ said, scrunching up her nose, “I must be going crazy because I thought I just heard you say you wanted to go back to Hell’s Kitchen.”

Peter grinned sheepishly as they waited for an uptown train. “Just hear me out…”

“Dude!” Ned exclaimed. “We just got torn to pieces by Doctor Strange! He made us clean the entire bottom floor of the Sanctum! At dawn! If you were a normal human, you’d still have a concussion! And now you want to go back to the gun scene!”

Peter held up his hands and blocked Shuri as she tried to smack him across the head. “I’m not looking for trouble, I swear!”

“Then what?” Shuri asked.

“Look,” Peter sighed, “obviously, the bad guys were using Pokemon Go to communicate. There could be more meetings planned.”

“So we check the forum boards,” Ned replied. “We don’t go back there.”

“True,” Peter admitted. “But aren’t you just a little curious about the devil guy?”

“Him, yes,” MJ replied. “Frank Castle, not so much.”

“Frank Castle?” Shuri asked. “That was the other guy?”

MJ showed Shuri some articles she had saved on her phone. “He basically went on a murder rampage in Hell’s Kitchen. Killed dozens of people in gangs, drug cartels, you name it.”

“So he has the right idea…” Shuri said slowly. “But the wrong method?”

“Basically,” Peter replied. The uptown subway finally arrived, and despite their earlier protests, MJ, Ned, and Shuri all followed him on board. “Listen,” he said, sitting down on a bench, “we need to figure out what that forum post said. If we can do that, then maybe we can figure out the code they used when we get to the restaurant.”

“No danger,” MJ ordered.

“No danger,” Peter promised. “Strictly recon.”

Ned wiggled his eyebrows as he grinned. “Like James Bond?” He and Peter both stood up with their backs against each other and held up finger guns. MJ and Shuri busted out laughing when the subway braked suddenly and the two boys went flying.

The rest of the subway ride was fairly uneventful. Shuri and Ned worked on hacking into the Pokemon Go forum to try and find the mysterious post. MJ sketched as much as she could remember about the scene, with Peter helping her fill in the details. They had a really good picture drawn up by the time they got to their stop.

The area looked much less creepy in the middle of the afternoon, and Peter could hear the police activity from the station. A crowd of people had formed in front of the restaurant, which was now cordoned off with bright yellow crime scene tape. The teens carefully edged their way to the front of the crowd and looked out at the chaotic scene.
“Found it!” Shuri said suddenly. She held out the phone with the forum message Ned had seen the night before.

_Moltres, Articuno, and Zapdos. 9pm. Mamma Mia’s Italian Bistro._

Peter scrunched up his nose as he read the message aloud again. “This makes no sense,” he muttered.

Shuri hummed thoughtfully and then let out a small gasp. “Excuse me!” she exclaimed, waving a police officer over.

“This really isn’t the place for teenagers,” the officer said as he walked up to them.

“We’ll be quick,” Shuri promised. “So, uh, Detective…?”

“Mahoney.”

“Detective Mahoney,” Shuri continued. “What exactly happened here?”

Mahoney gave her a small smirk. “We’re not making any statements right now.”

Shuri batted her eyes innocently. “So you can’t confirm that three gang leaders were meeting here last night?”

Mahoney’s smirk was wiped right off his face at Shuri’s words. He narrowed his eyes at her before turning around to his crew. “Hey!” he barked. “Tell everyone to keep it down in there! We don’t need anything leaking to the press!”

A chorus of “yes, sirs” filtered out of the crime scene. Mahoney faced Shuri again. “Listen, kid, go home. This isn’t a game.” And with that, he spun around on his heel and disappeared into the building.

“Nice, Shuri!” Ned said approvingly. “How’d you figure it out?”

“Well,” Shuri explained, “Moltres, Articuno, and Zapdos are three legendaries, right? So it makes sense they’re three gang leaders. It was just a suspicion, which the detective confirmed.”

“But why post it on a public forum?” Peter asked. “Anyone could see it.”

“We did,” MJ said. “And look where that got us.”

“No!” Ned exclaimed suddenly. “I did!” He motioned for everyone to follow him away from the nosy ears of the people watching the crime scene. “Think about it!” he said excitedly. “I saw the post right as it came up, but it was gone a few seconds later! It was probably meant to be posted on a private forum, but it got posted to the one I was following by mistake!”

Peter’s eyes widened. “So there’s drug deals going down on a private server on Pokemon Go?”

“It makes sense,” MJ reasoned. “If anyone found out about it, they would just think it’s a raid like we did. Then when no legendaries show up, they chalk it up to a mistake!”

“So we find the forum board, and we can figure out where their next meeting is,” Peter said, pumping his fist in the air triumphantly. He let out a nervous chuckle as his friends glared at him. “I,
uh...I mean we can let the devil know so he can take care of it.”

“Or Castle,” MJ said. “I bet he’d do it in a heartbeat.”

Ned let out an involuntary shudder. “I don’t know if I want to see him again.”

Shuri glanced around to make sure no one was watching before tapping on her kimoyo beads and pulling up a holographic map of Hell’s Kitchen. “Well, he’s a heck of a lot easier to find than the devil, that’s for sure.” She pointed to a small blip on the map. “He’s in that apartment.”

“What?!” Peter asked.


MJ slapped both their shoulders. “Duh, cameras. She started putting the footage together from last night while you and Ned were scrubbing the kitchen floor this morning.”

“But he kills people!” Peter protested as they started walking down the sidewalk. “We can’t just hand him the code and-” He let out a grunt as he accidentally walked into a man coming the opposite direction.

“I’m so sorry!” the man yelped, practically tripping over Peter. He gripped Peter’s shoulders to keep them both from falling. Peter felt something jab into his arm, and he looked down to find a walking cane in the man’s hand. Peter’s jaw dropped open slightly as he took in the man’s red-tinted glasses resting gently on his nose. When the man didn't meet his eyes directly, Peter realized he was blind.

“Oh, uh...I, uh,” Peter stuttered, not sure what to say. “I’m sorry! I should have been looking-” His face paled as he realized his word snafu. “I mean, I should have been more careful!”

“Geez, Parker,” Shuri groaned, putting her head in her hands. Ned, meanwhile, tried (and failed) to hold in a laugh.

The man chuckled. “It’s okay,” he assured the teen. “I tend to think I know the city better than I do.” He held up his cane guiltily. “Sometimes I forget to actually use this.”

MJ narrowed her eyes at the man. She could make out a nice bruise on his cheek and a cut above his left eye. “Do we know you?” she asked suspiciously.

The man cocked his head to the side. “I don’t think so,” he replied with a casual shrug. “Matt Murdock.” He held out his hand in the air and waited for the four teens to shake it. He smile became more of a grimace as MJ really gripped his hand in hers. “You here to check out the crime scene?” he asked.

“Kind of,” Peter admitted.

Matt grinned. “Did you learn anything? I heard people talking about how gruesome everything was.”

“Well,” MJ said, “the devil’s really in the details with this sort of thing.”

Peter, Shuri, and Ned blinked at her odd choice of words, but apparently, they held a completely different meaning to Matt. His warm smile became tense, and his hand gripped his cane tighter.

Peter looked between Matt and MJ, and his eyes widened. “Holy-”

“Shh!” Matt hissed, putting a finger to his lips. His voice took on a lower tone, which Peter instantly recognized as Red’s voice from last night.
“Dude!” Ned gasped, making the connection. “You’re the-”

“Zip it!” Matt said. He expertly spun his cane until it was behind the teens’ backs, and he ushered them away from the crime scene.

“Are you even really blind?” Shuri asked in disbelief.

Matt sighed and rolled his eyes behind his glasses. “Yes, I am actually blind.”

“But you fought so-” Peter started to say before Matt cut him off.

“If I promise to answer your questions, will you please stop talking?” Matt asked. Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned nodded. “Good,” he replied.

Ned’s eyes widened. “You could see us nodding?” Matt poked his cane in Ned’s chest. “Right, no more questions,” Ned whispered, staring down at the red and white object.

Matt folded up his cane until it was almost a fourth of the size and pushed it down in his pant pocket. He switched out his red glasses for a sleek pair of black sunglasses and led the teens down the street. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ watched in amazement as he walked around people, potholes, and curbs. They paid zero attention to where they were going and were shocked when Matt opened up an office door.

A man with longer blonde hair glanced up from his desk in a side office. “Murdock!” he yelled. He stood up and walked to the doorway. “Get any good details from the crime-” He stopped mid-sentence when he saw the teens. “Uh...we have company?”

“They know, Foggy,” Matt said simply, heading over to his chair and plopping down.

Foggy pursed his lips together. “They know...?” He let the question hang in the air.

“About Daredevil.”

“You call yourself Daredevil?” Shuri snorted. MJ bit her lip and held back a similar chuckle while Ned and Peter looked at him with stars in their eyes.

“No,” Matt replied defensively, “the papers do.”

Foggy held up his hand. “Hang on,” he said with mild annoyance. “It took you FOREVER to tell me about Daredevil, and I found out by accident!” He started pacing manically around the room. “And you’re telling me four KIDS know?! When did you tell them?”

“First of all,” Matt said, “I didn’t tell them. They decided to show up to the shootout last night and get involved.”

Foggy’s jaw dropped. “You did what now!?” he asked the teens. “Are you idiots? You could have gotten killed!”

Peter raised his hand. “I’m Spiderman,” he said.

“Dude!” Ned scolded. “What’s the point of a secret identity if you tell people who you are?”

“Plus being Spiderman doesn’t give you immunity from stupid,” MJ shot back, causing Peter to stick his tongue out at her.

Foggy clapped his hands together and pulled his fingertips to his mouth. “You...you’re the Spider
thing from Queens?” He shook the back of Matt’s chair. “He’s the Spider thing!”

“Yes, Foggy,” Matt sighed patiently. “I know. We met last night, remember?”

Foggy walked over to Peter and leaned in close. “Do your webs...come out of you?” he whispered to Peter.

Peter shook his head and tapped the watch on his wrist. The nanites crawled out and formed the web slingers, and he held them out for Foggy to see.

Foggy was practically hopping with excitement. “Can you?” he asked. Peter aimed his wrist at the wall and shot out a small blast of webbing. Foggy ran over and poked at the sticky fluid on the wall. “Oh. My. God.” he whispered. “Can you web me up?”

“Foggy!” Matt interrupted. “Enough!”

“But I wanna see how strong they are!” he whined.

“They’re strong. Trust me.”

Foggy gasped and pointed at Matt. “He webbed you!”

“He didn’t web me,” Matt corrected.

“Oh, he kinda did,” Shuri pointed out.

“No, he didn’t.”

The door to the office opened again, and a woman holding a carrier of coffee cups walked inside. “I’ve got reinforcements!” she called cheerily. She stopped dead once she saw Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned. “Oh, hi there!”

“Hi!” the teens replied unanimously.

“Hey Karen,” Matt said, waving his hand at her.

“Are they clients?” she asked Matt and Foggy.

“No exactly...” Matt replied.

Shuri sighed and then cleared her throat. “I’m Shuri, and that’s Peter, MJ, and Ned.” She pointed to her friends as she introduced them. “We got caught in the middle of the huge gun fight last night because we stumbled on a secret forum posting for Pokemon Go. Matt and Frank Castle helped us get out of a mess we shouldn’t have gone into in the first place—” She glared at Peter at that point. “—and then we met Matt on the street today, figured out he was Daredevil, and then we came back here.” She paused and tapped her chin. “Did I miss anything?”

Ned pointed to Peter. “He’s Spiderman.”

Karen let out a weird strangled noise as the coffee carrier dipped dangerously towards the floor. MJ carefully took it out of her hands to avoid a spill.

“Did we break her?” Ned whispered to Peter.

Karen covered her mouth and then cupped her cheeks. “You...Spider...gunfight?” She glared at Matt. “Castle was there?!”
Matt sighed. “It was a long night. I was gonna tell you about it today.”

Karen shook her head and cleared her throat. “Hi,” she said, regaining her composure. “I’m Karen Page.”

“Nice to meet you,” MJ replied diplomatically.

Karen’s investigative side took over. “So, explain how you found the raid again?”

The teens took turns showing Karen, Matt, and Foggy the Pokemon Go app and forum boards. They explained the secret code and their theory that the different gangs were posting using codes on a private forum.

“So us going to the restaurant was a mistake on their part,” Peter finished.

Karen hummed thoughtfully as she pulled up the forum website on her own computer. “So if we find the forum…”

“We have access to their operations,” Matt said.

“Hang on,” MJ said. “How did you and Castle even know about it? You definitely didn’t see the post.” Ned, Shuri, and Peter gaped at her. "What?" she asked defensively. "That wasn't a blind joke! Does he look like he even knows what Pokemon is?"

“Castle was tracking some people from the group anyway, and I was patrolling the area,” Matt explained, ignoring MJ's dig at his unculturedness. “Completely coincidental.”

“That happens to us a lot,” Ned replied with a nod.

“Somehow that doesn’t surprise me,” Foggy muttered.

Karen sat down at an empty desk with an older computer console sitting on top. She cracked her knuckles and began typing furiously on her keyboard. She peeked up and gave everyone else an expectant look.

“Well?” she asked. “What are you waiting for? Let’s track down some criminals.”
Shuri felt her kimoyo beads buzz against her wrist as she watched Karen aggressively tap away at the computer keyboard. They had found the private forum fairly quickly considering Shuri and Ned had been able to find the original post from yesterday. However, it was decoding and figuring out the patterns for the previous and future meetings that was proving to be a bit more difficult.

MJ had helped Foggy dig out an old map of Hell’s Kitchen from a dusty box in the closet, and they were currently using push pins to represent where different meetings had taken place. Peter and Ned taped a bunch of white paper on the walls to try and decode the Pokemon names and tie them to organized crime members in the city. So far, they had matched up five legendary Pokemon with five gang leaders, and they had even found a slight pattern to their meeting places. The boys were trying to work on an algorithm that would predict where the next meeting would be.

Matt had been relegated to helping actual clients that were coming into the office in a steady stream. Foggy and Karen will still slightly getting back at him for so willingly giving up his identity to the four teenagers. Matt was currently meeting with a woman about a malicious landlord.

Shuri stepped away from Karen and tapped on her beads to pull up T’Challa’s phone call. His holographic torso appeared above the palm of her hand. She moved into the corner of the room near MJ, Peter, and Ned.

“How was your night?” he asked. “Did you have fun at Doctor Strange’s?”

Peter stuck his head next to Shuri’s so T’Challa could see him. “It was awesome!” he replied, giving the king a thumbs up.

“Peter!” T’Challa gasped in mock surprise. “Should you be looking at a hologram right now?” His face darkened as he crossed his holographic arm over his holographic chest. “People with concussions normally avoid technology so they can heal,” he added in a steely voice.

Busted.

The teens groaned and tried to duck out of T’Challa’s line of sight, but Shuri kicked at their shins and yanked on their shoulders. If she was going down, they were going down with her.

“Why on earth did you go back to Hell’s Kitchen instead of coming home?” T’Challa asked.

Ned’s eyes widened. “How did you know we’re in Hell’s Kitchen?” he asked.

Tony’s smiling face appeared next to T’Challa’s. “Did you really think we’d let you go off in New York without some type of tracking after all your little adventures this summer?”

Peter racked his brain, trying to think about where Tony could have possibly hidden the tracker. “My suit?” he asked meekly.

“Your suit,” Tony confirmed. “And three other spots.”

“What?!” Peter yelped. “Four trackers on me?” He spun around wildly feeling through his clothes as he tried to find the mysterious bugs. “Where are they?”
“That’s for me to know and you to never find out,” Tony replied with a smug grin. “Now get your asses home. Clearly the good doctor didn’t discipline you enough if you thought it was okay to go back to the scene where you almost died.”

“We didn’t almost die,” MJ clarified.

“Ehhhhh,” Ned said, wiggling his hand side to side. “I mean, there was that one thing with the gun—”

“NED!” his friends yelled.

Tony and T’Challa blinked at them and then looked at each other. Peter couldn’t tell who looked more tired, the king or the inventor. Before he could make a decision, Pepper pushed both of them aside. Her sugary sweet smile hid a sinister expression in her eyes, and the teens gulped in fear.

“Hi there!” she practically sang.

“H-h-hi,” the four replied nervously.

Pepper brought the tips of her fingers together and placed them against her chin. “So here’s the deal,” she said. “We’re starting to set up the nursery today. I just sent a bunch of texts to your phones about some stuff we need.” As if on cue, Peter, MJ, and Ned’s phones all went off, and Shuri’s kimoyo beads buzzed again. “You’re going to get all the supplies and WALK, not portal, back to the Tower.”

Peter’s jaw dropped open. “But it’s like 50 blocks!” he exclaimed.

“Then,” Pepper continued, completely ignoring him, “you’re going to help clean the kitchen, vacuum the movie room, tidy up around here. We had a movie night last night, so things got a bit...messy.” She blinked a few times and gave them another smile. “Sound good?”

No, it did not sound good, but they knew better than cross Pepper Potts. They nodded silently as Tony and T’Challa snickered in the background.

“Good! See you in an hour!” She nodded at T’Challa and the feed cut off.

“An hour!” MJ gasped as she looked at the texts on her phone. “We’ll never get this done in an hour!”

“I think that’s the point,” Shuri replied glumly. “Let’s split it up.”

Someone cleared their throat behind the teens. “You need to head out?” They all turned to find Matt, Foggy, and Karen staring at them expectantly.

Peter nodded. “I’m pretty sure we’ll be killed for real this time if we don’t.”

The corners of Matt’s mouth turned up in a small smile. “No problem. We’ve got a lot to work with.”

“All thanks to you,” Foggy added.

“Any chance we’ll be seeing Spiderman around again?” Karen asked.

Peter took a deep breath before answering. “Actually…” he said slowly, “I think I’ll leave this one up to you.” He glanced at Matt and gave him a smile.

MJ, Shuri, and Ned were impressed and floored with their best friend. It was very rare for him to willingly let go of a case. But Doctor Strange’s words still played over in Peter’s head like a
feedback loop, and he kept thinking about how uncool it would be to get killed before his duty as godparent even started. So, he’d still fight crime, but crime with a few less automatic weapons.

“Well okay then,” Matt finally replied. “It was nice meeting you-”

The teens’ various electronic devices all went off, leaving them all with a text from Pepper.

_Mama Stark: Is there a reason you haven’t moved from your location? Do you want me to add grocery shopping to your list too?_

“Crap!” Ned yelped. “We’ve gotta go!”

And with that, they all rushed out of the office, yelling their various goodbyes and see you laters before slamming the door shut and barreling down the stairs.

“Huh,” Foggy grunted. “It’s interesting how a couple of kids seem to grasp the idea of leaving things to the professionals.”

“Foggy…” Matt sighed.

“No, no, no, I think it’s great,” Foggy clarified. “I mean, clearly they realized it was dangerous.”

“Foggy-”

“And if a couple of kids can figure that out, then surely an adult with a more developed brain could.”

“Foggy, really?”

“But nooooo. Why would we leave a crazy thing like this to the police? It’s not like it’s their job to investigate crime or anything.”

Matt plugged his ears and walked away. “I can’t hear you!” he called as he went into the other room.

“You're blind not deaf!” Foggy yelled after him. "And I won’t pull you out of dumpsters forever!”

Karen gave him a knowing look. “Yes you will,” she said.

Foggy groaned and rubbed his face with his hands before looking back at all the work they had done that morning.

“Yeah,” he sighed. “I will.”

Shuri was not usually a begging person. In fact, people were typically begging her for help or new designs with technology. But right now, she was considering begging for mercy from Pepper. Shuri was able to handle carrying six boxes of diapers out of the store and onto the subway. Ned and MJ each had six bags of stuff between them, but they were so bulky that they banged against their legs incessantly. It wasn’t nearly as bad as Peter, who had to carry a boxed crib and a stroller twenty
blocks since he couldn’t even get it down the stairs and onto the platform. His super strength came in hand
y, but even he got tired after lugging the packages throughout Manhattan.

Then, Pepper stole the directions for assembling both items, leaving Peter, Ned, Shuri, and MJ trying to put
together the pieces without any help. Of course, she would never let her baby sleep in the crib or use the
stroller without it being properly assembled, but the teens didn’t need to know that. The worst part was,
she gave all of these orders with a bright, cheery smile on her face that scared them more than the worst
villains in New York.

To say that they understood the consequences of their actions was an understatement.

Ned and MJ were able to get out of some of the torture by going home for the evening, but not before Pepper talked their ears off all the way to the parking garage and out to the subway station. Peter and Shuri continued to clean the disaster that was the movie room, waiting for her inevitable return.

Crushed popcorn kernels littered almost every conceivable surface, and the cushions were in complete
disarray. Shuri had scrubbed at a weird red stain that smelled a bit like tomato juice until her arms felt like they were going to fall off, and Peter was trying to get paper airplanes out of the high ceiling lights. He had a sneaking suspicion that Clint had enjoyed getting the movie room messy a little too much.

The door to the movie room creaked open, and Pepper walked inside. Peter carefully unstuck himself from the ceiling and stood next to Shuri. They both braced themselves for their next punishment, but instead, they felt her arms wrap around both of them and pull them into her embrace.

“I love you so much,” she whispered into their hair. She placed a gentle kiss on the top of each of their heads. Peter felt his throat tighten, while Shuri’s nose stung as tears pricked their eyes.

“We’re sorry,” they said in unison.

Pepper pulled back and gave them a small smile. “You,” she said looking at Peter, “have the biggest heart of anyone. I know you want to help people, but you need to think about the family that needs you too. I would never tell you to stop, but you have to be smarter about your fights.” Peter swallowed thickly and nodded. She turned and looked to Shuri. “And you,” she said, “are by far the smartest, kindest person in the world. I don’t want to see that beautiful life cut short because you made a rash decision. Because you have a family that loves you as well.” Shuri cleared her throat before nodding.

“We love you too,” Peter said softly.

“A lot,” Shuri added.

“I know,” Pepper replied. “But if you EVER pull a stunt like that again, you’re on lockdown. And you’ll have to deal with all four of ourwraths.” She smirked. “Plus, there are quite a few super heroes here who would give you a piece of their minds too.”

Peter saluted, causing Pepper to smile and shake her head. “Got it!” he promised.

“So what do we have left to do?” Shuri asked warily.

Pepper pretended to think about their next task at hand while Peter and Shuri waited anxiously in front of her. “Well…” she said slowly, “I have the perfect idea.” The teens gulped with nervous anticipation. “May should be here soon, so why don’t you two change into your pajamas and we can do breakfast for dinner and then a movie?”
Peter and Shuri both raised their brows. “Really?!” they exclaimed.

Pepper nodded. “I mean, you did such a good job cleaning the movie room. Why let it go to waste?”

“Just the four of you?” Shuri asked softly. As much as she cared about everyone in the Tower, she had to admit things had gotten insanely crazy over the last month. It would be nice to spend some alone time with her brother and adoptive family.

“Technically five,” Pepper replied with a smile as she gently patted her stomach. “But yeah, just us.”

“That sounds amazing,” Peter sighed. He was relieved to finally be done cleaning and carrying things.

Pepper shooed them out of the room so they could change and grab food from the kitchen. As soon as they were gone, Tony and T’Challa came waltzing in the movie room.

“You,” T’Challa said, shaking his finger at her, “are one scary human being. Remind me never to make you angry.”

Pepper merely gave him a sweet smile in return.
Hey friends! Sorry for the sporadic posting! I started another grad class, so things have been a bit hectic. We're finally winding down though!!! We've got this arc, the wedding, and then an epilogue!

“Camping?” Tony asked in disbelief. “You want us to go camping?”

The teens were still on thin ice after the whole Hell’s Kitchen incident, but that didn’t stop them from coming up with their next great plan. Plus, since time was now short, they wanted to make the most of the remainder of summer vacation. Shuri had asked FRIDAY to call a family meeting the next morning, and the teens were currently explaining their idea to the adults.

“Think about it,” MJ said, standing up a little straighter. She took on an air of authority as she walked around the room. “You’re all going to be split up again soon. You’ve made so much progress working with each other...don’t you think one last bonding experience would be worth it?”

“Sleeping in a tent though?” Scott asked, shuddering at his preemptively sore back. “Why can’t we bond here? Where there are nice, fluffy beds with Egyptian cotton sheets?”

“Putting a tent together is a very good team building experience,” Ned explained. “Plus, we’ll have other activities to do as well.”

“And,” Peter added, “we’d be going to Cherry Springs State Park in Pennsylvania. It’s the darkest park in the Eastern US, and the stargazing views are brilliant!” His eyes shone with excitement. “We’ll have an amazing view of the Perseid Meteor Shower!”

Bruce gasped. “Really? The Perseid?” He looked to the others. “I think it’ll be fun!”

“Of course you would,” Loki replied, rolling his eyes.

“Bunch of nerds, all of you,” Clint scoffed.

“How long would we be gone?” T’Challa asked, ignoring the others. “Do you expect us to go camping for the rest of the two weeks that we are here?”

Shuri shook her head. “No! Just the day after tomorrow until Friday. The meteors will be at their peak on Thursday, so we can leave the next day. Three days isn’t so bad, is it?”

Tony’s head shot up as he listed the dates in his head. “August 10th?” he asked, looking at Peter. “You want to go over August 10th?”

Peter nodded. “That's when the meteors are at their best view. We’ll make it awesome, we promise!”

“Done,” Tony said without hesitation. “Give us a list of stuff to pack. I’ll make sure FRIDAY gets it here in time. Invite whoever else you want too.”
“Wait, seriously?” Peter asked. “Anyone?”

“Anyone,” Tony repeated.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ did a group fist bump before running out of the room, brainstorming a packing list. As soon as their voices disappeared down the hall, the others began bombarding Tony.

“Are you serious?” Nat asked. “You think we should go camping?”

Steve shook his head. “I don’t know about this, Tony.”

“I personally had enough of tents during the war,” Bucky chimed in.

But Pepper and T’Challa looked at Tony knowingly. He felt their gazes on him and glanced up. “What?” he asked innocently.

Pepper merely smiled and shook her head. “If this is how easily you cave with Peter, I can’t wait to see how you react with this little one.” She cupped her hands around her stomach for emphasis.

“Is anyone else confused?” Sam asked, looking around. “Why was agreeing to camping caving with Peter?”

Wanda’s eyes widened as she briefly read Tony. “Oh, I see,” she said softly. She cleared her throat and spoke up. “I think camping sounds like a wonderful idea.”

“Yeah, I’m with the other bird guy,” Clint said. “What’s the deal?”

T’Challa smiled and nodded approvingly. “August 10th is Peter’s birthday.”

The room went silent.

“Why didn’t he just tell us that?” Vision asked.

Surprisingly, it was Loki who spoke up. “Because he’s a good kid with a kind heart. And he knows how difficult it’s been around here lately. He probably didn’t want to burden anyone with planning a birthday.”

“Wow, Reindeer Games,” Tony chuckled. “You’ve definitely gotten a soft spot for the kids if you know them this well, huh?” Loki replied with his typical scowl.

“Well, you heard Tony,” Steve said, before anyone else could chime in.

“We’re going camping.”

“You think this will work?” Peter asked, shivering a bit in the cool night air.

Shuri motioned to the left, and MJ aimed the mini satellite up towards the sky. From the roof of the Tower, they had an amazing view of the city below. Shuri tapped away at her computer, trying to get a lock on the signal.

“I’m not sure,” she admitted. “I have no idea how far away they are right now. This signal is
designed to bounce efficiently across space, but they might not get it in time. If they even get it at all.”

Ned grinned widely. “I still can’t believe you know actual aliens!” he gushed.

“Really?” MJ asked, raising her brow. “Cause I have zero problems believing it.”

Peter’s phone vibrated in his pocket, and he pulled it out and tapped the screen open. “Doctor Strange is coming,” Peter said, scanning over the text message. “He texted me back.”

“He’s actually going camping?” Shuri asked incredulously.

“Nah,” Peter replied, shaking his head. “He’s going to take a portal back home each night. May has to work during the other days, so he’s actually bringing her with on the 10th.”

“See?” MJ asked, punching Peter lightly in the arm. “And you were worried people wouldn’t want to do it.”

“Your birthday is going to rock, dude,” Ned grinned, punching Peter lightly in the shoulder.

The computer let out a series of beeps, interrupting their conversation. Shuri glanced down at the screen and then back towards the sky.

“Signal’s been sent,” she confirmed. They all stood in silence for a few moments.

“Can you believe summer is almost over?” MJ asked softly.

Peter, Shuri, and Ned all shook their heads.

“It seems like just yesterday that Pepper and Tony got married,” Peter replied fondly.

“Or that we found Ant Man in California,” Ned added.

“Scotland was pretty epic too,” MJ said.

“Almost dying wasn’t so great,” Shuri admitted. She glanced at her friends, and they erupted into a fit of giggles.

This was going to be a great trip.

“This trip sucks,” Sam grumbled as he fidgeted with his seat. He yanked on the lever and felt his seat slide back against a strong pair of legs. He let out a smug sigh as the person behind him practically growled.

“Can you move your seat up?” Bucky asked, his eyes narrowing.

“Nope,” Sam replied, wiggling a bit to find a comfortable spot. He felt a hand smack across the back of his head, and he let out a yelp of protest.

“Be nice,” MJ threatened from the back seat. She jabbed her finger in his face, and Sam had no choice but to fix his seat. Bucky gave MJ a grateful smile as he stretched out his legs a bit.
Thor and Loki had suggested taking the Bifrost to Cherry Springs State Park, but the idea was quickly vetoed by the others. Peter and Shuri insisted that the car ride would help with bonding, while Ned and MJ reasoned that a huge blinding light would make them too conspicuous in the public park.

Three hours into the five hour car ride had everyone second guessing this logic.

The team needed to be split into five different mini-vans to carry all of the people and equipment. Tony had followed the teens' packing list exactly, and it definitely took a lot to prepare for a camping trip with almost fifteen people.

MJ and Ned had pooled some money together to buy walkie talkies for each of the cars. They had enforced a strict “no technology” rule, something Tony had modified right away. He and T’Challa both had their cell phone/kimoyo beads, but they swore on all that was good and holy that the tech would stay in the cars once they got to the campsite. Thankfully, each car had a touchscreen GPS, so there was no chance of them getting lost.

Driving each other crazy, though? That was a distinct possibility.

“Underoos to Guy in the Chair. Status check.” Peter’s voice came crackling through the walkie talkie sitting on MJ’s lap. She grinned as she turned around to look out the back window. Although Peter's van was farther behind the group, she could see Thor’s van behind her, with Scott smiling widely as he drove the car with both Asgardians. Ned waved excitedly at her as he held the walkie talkie up to his own mouth.

“Sit back,” Steve warned from the driver’s seat. MJ obliged just as Ned responded.

“Go for Guy in the Chair.”

“I think we need to initiate Geriatric Protocol 2,” Peter replied. They could all hear Yoshi chirping happily in the background.

“What’s that?” Clint asked from his own van. It pulled alongside MJ’s in the right lane, and she could see Shuri yank the device from the archer’s hand. Bruce, Wanda, and Vision all laughed as she bopped Clint over the head.

“Just a reminder that only the van leaders are allowed to use the walkie talkies,” she chastised.

“Underoos, who needs Geriatric Protocol 2?”

“What’s her code name again?” Bucky whispered to MJ.

“Tech Genius,” MJ whispered back, holding the walkie to her ear.

“And yours?” Steve asked with a grin.

“She Who Must Not Be Messed With.”

“Tony needs to use the bathroom,” Peter said. “Therefore Geriatric Protocol 2. Cause, you know, older people need to use the bathroom more.”

Even though they couldn’t hear the response in the other vans, MJ knew without a doubt, that everyone else was laughing as much as she was.

“I swear, Parker, you’re-” Tony grumbled over the static. They could all hear T’Challa cackling in the background.
“Hey!” MJ exclaimed, pressing down the talk button on her walkie. “Van leaders only!”

“Don’t worry, honey.” Pepper cooed from her van. She and Nat had the entire vehicle to themselves, although no one was really sure how that happened. “There’s a rest stop not far from here. We can initiate Geriatric Protocol 2 in about 10 minutes.” She giggled hysterically as she finished her sentence. “Stark Queen over and out.”

When they all pulled into the rest stop ten minutes later, everyone relished at the chance to get out and stretch their legs. Loki shape-shifted into a female with raven-black hair and piercing green eyes as to not draw attention to himself. She waltzed into the rest stop, causing a few people to glance her way, but other than that, no one paid her any mind.

Tony immediately chased Peter around the parking lot and yelled about respecting elders. Yoshi followed her owner, and thankfully, no one in the lot seemed to notice her alien origin. The argument was cut short, however, when Tony's urge to pee overcame his urge to get back at the cheeky teen. Others followed Tony into the bathroom while the rest of the group stretched in the mid-morning sun.

Once everyone had emptied their bladders and gotten the cricks out of their necks, they headed out for the last leg of their trip. The Avengers Compound was upstate, so everyone was used to forests, but heading towards Cherry Springs was like entering a whole different world.

The trees were thick and bushy, and no matter how hard Shuri squinted through them, she couldn’t see out the other side. The road seemed to curve endlessly, and the mountains sloped gently in the distance. The radio signal weakened the closer they got to the park, so all of the vans wound up turning it off in favor for rolling down their windows and listening to nature. The smell of pine hung in the hair, and the slight breeze from the drive made Shuri’s skin pimple.

“Underoos to anyone,” Peter said softly, his voice pulling the others out of their trance.

MJ waited a beat before answering. “Go for She Who Must Not Be Messed With.”

“Go for Guy in the Chair.”

“Go for Tech Genius.”

“Go for Stark Queen.”

Peter smiled as he watched the stoic forest pass him.

“I think this is going to be a really awesome trip.”
Chapter End Notes

1. Cherry Springs is supposed to be AMAZING and it is totally on my bucket list. Also, the Perseid didn't happen in August this year, but we can be flexible, right? :P

2. This chapter takes place on Tuesday, August 8th (not correct calendar-wise, but oh well)

2. All of the Avengers...camping...in a tent...what could possibly go wrong?! ;}

Part 70

Chapter Notes

So that beautiful update schedule I had? Yup, it's basically thrown out the window :P :P

Thanks for being patient and waiting for me! This arc is absolutely INSANE to write because of the sheer number of characters. That's part of the reason why it's taking me so long so get the chapters out. I'm trying to give everyone equal time, but I don't think I did the best job. I'm trying though!

Also, I took a teeny break and wrote an IronDad fic in case anyone wants to check it out! It's called Machine Oil and Coffee.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Pole A’s connected to...Pole B!” Peter sang cheerily as he worked with Scott to set up one section of the pod tent Tony had purchased for the camping tent. Yoshi handed Peter the pole he needed before scampering back towards the pile of materials for the next piece.

Scott, who was all too familiar with children’s songs thanks to Cassie, took the opportunity to cash in on his knowledge of the bone song. “Pole B’s connected to...Rivet E!” he sang back. He gave Yoshi’s head a quick pat before continuing his work.

A branch went sailing through the air and narrowly missed both Scott and Peter. Sam scowled at them from his section of the tent as he and Vision worked together to get their own poles and rivets connected.

“Thank you!” Clint called from the opposite side of the tent.

“Anytime,” Sam replied.

Peter and Scott took this as a challenge as they grinned mischievously at each other. Peter counted up to three on his fingers then…

“POLE C’S CONNECTED TO POLE D!”

Their plan was short lived as a red mist surrounded them and levitated them in the air. Scott let out a high pitch scream while Peter tried to web an anchor point on a nearby tree. The mist, however, was dissolving his webs before they could attach to anything.

“Wanda!” Peter exclaimed. “Let us down!”

“Only if you stop singing,” she replied, stepping out from behind the tree trunk.

“Scout’s honor,” Peter said, crossing his heart. She flicked her wrist and let them fall to the ground. Peter flipped gracefully and landed on his feet while Scott face-planted into the warm grass.

“Don’t trust him!” Tony yelled from inside the trunk of one of the vans. “He was never a Scout!”

Peter grumbled and stuck his tongue out at his mentor before helping Scott up. They went back to
setting up the tent...although this time much more quietly.

Shuri and MJ had reserved a fairly secluded campsite not far from the restrooms. Technically, there were only supposed to be five people per campsite, but what the Pennsylvania State Park didn’t know didn’t hurt. At least, that was their logic. Besides, the site had plenty of space for the pod tent that Tony had bought per Peter’s request.

The pod tent was exactly that: a bunch of pods attached to each other. The largest dome sat in the center, and the group was working diligently to add four additional pods around it. The big pod slept eight people comfortably, and the others slept four. Since the Avengers contained a nice chunk of super humans who were also super-sized, the extra space, although technically unnecessary, was going to be much appreciated when everyone went to sleep at night. Who wanted to be smushed up against Captain America, the living furnace, on an August night?

Pepper, Wanda, and T’Challa were unpacking foam mattress pads that would go on the floor of the tents. Even though Shuri deemed them pointless because they would all have sleeping bags, the adults insisted on having some additional cushioning. Even Vision, who did not need sleep at all, voted in favor of the pads.

Steve, Bucky, and Nat were all in charge of setting up the fire and cooking area of the campsite. The war veterans used some of their military back pay to purchase high-quality camping stoves and other cooking equipment. They thought it would be a nice way to pay Tony back for hosting everyone at the Tower for half the summer.

Bruce and Shuri were hard at work setting up different telescopes and trying to find the best view of the Perseids. Despite being surrounded by trees, the campsite was right near a small clearing that was sure to provide the best views of the meteor shower. Even though it wouldn’t be visible until the next night, the scientists wanted to make sure they had everything set up well in advance.

Meanwhile, Ned helped Tony and Thor stretch out a tarp on the ground and stake it into place. Loki used his magic to assemble a large, flea market-style tent that would serve as the social area. MJ was busy organizing bags of clothes, toiletries, and more to be divided into the different pods. She had already covered the different flashlights and lamps with red saran wrap in preparation for the dark evenings. The harsh, white lights were prohibited in the park, but the red filters were okay.

Everyone had a job, and despite earlier complaints about not having real mattresses, the teens had been right. Setting up the campsite together was actually a lot more fun than anyone had anticipated. Tony couldn’t remember the last time he had felt so stress free, and it was nice to get out of the city. Packing for almost twenty people hadn’t been easy, but they managed to pull it off.

“Okay, listen up!” MJ ordered just as Clint finished putting the last stake in the ground for the tent. Everyone gathered around her, and she smiled slyly at their obedience. “I have tent assignments.” She cleared her throat and unfolded a paper from her pocket.

“In the big pod, we’ve got Steve, Bucky, Loki, and Thor. Small pod one will be Clint, Nat, Wanda, and Vision. Small pod two is Tony, Pepper, T’Challa, and May when she comes. Small pod three is Scott, Bruce, and Sam. And then Shuri, Ned, Peter, and I are in the last pod. Any questions?”

Loki and Sam’s hands shot up, and MJ shot them a pointed look. “No,” she said definitively, “you can’t switch pods.” The two put their hands down immediately, causing the others to grin. She glanced around, but no one else raised their hands. “Alright, get your crap off the grass!”

Everything was a flurry of craziness as people began collecting their bags from the big pile MJ had put together. Peter and Ned practically dove into their pod and began pulling out decorations from
their bags. They had each bought a string of battery-powered Millenium Falcon lights, and they carefully hung them around the top of their pod. MJ and Shuri unrolled their sleeping bags and placed them on top of the foam pads. Peter accidentally tossed a pillow at Ned’s head but hit Shuri instead. They wound up getting into a full-blown pillow fight, which was quite a feat considering their limited amount of space. But when one of Ned’s stray pillows left their pod and hit Loki in the face, all shenanigans were quickly stopped.

Once everyone was done getting their pods set up, they headed back outside. The Avengers all gathered around the teens expectantly.

“Alright, kids,” Tony said, crossing his arms, “what’s your big plan for today?” It was mid-afternoon, and they still had a few hours before they would need to think about getting dinner started.

“Well,” Shuri said with an excited smile, “there’s a pond not too far from here…” She barely had to finish her sentence when everyone’s faces broke out into wide grins. The afternoon heat made them more than willing to take a dip in cool water.

After quickly changing (which was quite an adventure in the tent), they all followed Ned as he led them to the secluded pond. It was surrounded by thick trees, and they could hear crickets and other bugs chirping in the distance. A group of birds loudly flapped their wings as they left from the sudden intrusion of newcomers. Clint and Scott wasted zero time jumping right into the dark blue water. They both whooped loudly and began dunking each other.

Peter glanced up at the tall trees around him and activated his web slinger. After choosing his more rope-like webbing, he shot three thick coils around the top of a sturdy tree branch and made a loop at the bottom. He pulled the web swing back as far as he could go and hopped on one foot as he stuck his other through the loop. Yoshi quickly shimmied her way up the rope and clung on for dear life.

“ROPE SWING!” Peter shouted before pushing himself off. He swung effortlessly over the water before unhooking himself and falling down. He caught some major air before cannonballing right behind Vision and Bruce, completely soaking them. Bruce took a deep breath and dunked himself under water, and the Hulk crashed through the surface. His giggled caused waves in the water as he lifted Peter out and threw him across the pond. Hulk was surprisingly gentle as he dipped below the surface and floated back up.

Thor’s eyes sparkled at the new toy, and he quickly ran to get in line. He had to wait behind Nat and Wanda, who were both prepared to fly. They hopped on together and Thor helped pull them back. He gave them an extra push and away they went!

Steve and Bucky were engaged in an epic game of chicken with Tony and Pepper. Pepper and Steve were both on top, and the super soldier was being extra cautious with Pepper since she was pregnant. But, that still didn’t stop him from (gently) knocking her right off Tony’s shoulders. A huge wave of water engulfed all of them as Thor finally landed in the pond. Without even coming up for air, he swam directly under Tony and lifted the inventor on his shoulders.

“Have no fear, Stark!” Thor bellowed. “We can beat them!” To prevent himself from losing his balance, Tony gripped Thor’s short hair before finding a steady position.

“It’s on, Rogers,” he threatened Steve. He clapped his hands together and rubbed his palms mischievously. He pointed ahead as if leading an army into battle. “Thor, attack!”

Thor and Bucky both moved effortlessly through the water as Steve and Tony became engaged in an epic fight. Their hands locked as they worked to topple the other over. While Steve may have been the stronger of the two men, Thor helped anchor Tony to one spot. Tony glanced at Steve’s bare side
and remembered something Peggy had told him when he was a child. With a grin, Tony quickly released Steve’s hands and attacked his sides.

“Ah!” Steve half-laughed, half-yelled. He tried to pull his arms in against his ribs, but Tony was quick. His tickle attack was merciless, and Steve quickly lost control as he fell off Bucky’s shoulders.

“Dammit, Rogers!” Bucky exclaimed as Steve spluttered to the surface. “I can’t believe we just lost because you’re ticklish!”

Steve blushed fiercely before ducking back under the water again to avoid his friend’s judgement. Sam, meanwhile, was clutching his side from laughing so hard. MJ and Shuri snuck up behind him and shoved him off the shore and into the lake.

After a game of Marco Polo (that Clint and Hulk took way too seriously) and some lazy floating, it was deemed time to head back to start making dinner. Hulk let Bruce come back out for the walk back to camp, and the others quickly came out of the pond.

Since Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ had a very testy track record with cooking, they were relegated to the social area while Scott, Wanda, and Steve made food. Clint was banned to the opposite side of the campsite after Nat reminded him about the “oven explosion” incident that happened a few years ago.

Feeding a group this size had been the most challenging part about the packing list. As Steve dumped several packages of ramen into the three pots they had bought, Tony felt a wave of nostalgia crash over him. It felt like just yesterday that he was nuking leftover ramen in his dorm at MIT.

But Steve Rogers did not make the same ramen from his college days. In fact, Tony’s nose felt like it was about to explode from whatever deliciousness Steve tossed in the pot. It was no secret that Steve could cook, but everyone was practically salivating over the campfire ramen.

Just as everyone began to gather around the campfire for dinner, a golden circle appeared in the air. The teens let out excited whoops as Doctor Strange walked through the portal. The Cloak of Levitation was attached around his neck, and its fabric moved excitedly around his shoulders as it looked around the campsite.

“Nice of you to show up just as food’s being served!” Tony called dryly. He gave Strange a wry grin and a wave as Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ ambushed the wizard. T’Challa chuckled and nodded at Strange as the two made eye contact.

“You actually came!” Peter exclaimed.

Strange blushed a bit. “I said I would,” he replied.

Shuri held out her hand, and the Cloak let some fabric wrap through her fingers. “C’mon!” she ordered. “There’s plenty of food.”

The sun was beginning to sink in the sky, filling the campsite with lovely hues of orange, yellow, and dark blue. Everyone chatted as they ate Steve’s magical ramen, and Peter couldn’t help but grin at how nice it was to have everyone together. He shared a smile with Shuri as she glanced his way, no doubt thinking the same thing. Yoshi hopped around, sneaking noodles out of everyone’s bowl. She kept coming back to Clint’s though, and the archer soon pulled his bowl to his chest to protect his territory.

“So!” Thor’s voice boomed, catching everyone’s attention. “How does this dark park work?”
Peter quickly swallowed his food to provide an answer, but Vision beat him to it.

“Well,” the former AI replied, “due to the lack of artificial lights that one might find in a city, Cherry Springs is completely free of light pollution. Once the sun sets, we should be able to see over 30,000 stars in the sky. The North Star, Aurora Borealis, and Milky Way are the other most common celestial bodies people see.”

Ned stared at Vision in awe. “Did you memorize all that before we left?” he asked.

Vision merely blinked at Ned. “No. I am, as Mr. Stark so eloquently puts it, ‘a supercomputer with legs’.”

“So cool!” Ned whispered excitedly.

“It’s going to get super dark soon,” Peter added. “Make sure you have a flashlight with red film over the light. It’s not harsh on your eyes, and you’ll still be able to see the sky.”

Shuri quickly scarfed down the rest of her food. “Hurry up!” she demanded. “I want to be in the clearing and watch the sky change!” She looked up at her brother. “I mean…” she said slowly as he pretended to glare at her. “We can help with dishes, obviously. If you really need us, that is.” She, Peter, Ned, and MJ gave T’Challa their best puppy dog eyes.

The king of Wakanda pretended to think about his decision. He hummed thoughtfully and rubbed his fingers against his chin. Just as the teens thought they were about to burst, he grinned. “Go ahead,” he said warmly. “We’ve got this.”

Shuri let out the loudest cheer, and they all headed out, each grabbing a modified flashlight and blanket before leaving. They practically ran to the clearing and set up a spot right beyond the telescopes that Bruce and Shuri had set up earlier. They could faintly hear the chatter from the large group cleaning up dinner, but other than that, only the sound of chirping crickets filled the air.

Peter uncurled his blanket and set it up right next to Ned’s. He knelt down to pick up Yoshi, and she eagerly clung to his shirt. MJ and Shuri set their blankets up directly in front of the two boys, and they soon settled in and stared straight up. Watching the sky turn pitch black almost felt like slow motion and fast forward at the same time. The sky was light, and then all of a sudden...it wasn’t.

“Woah,” Peter breathed, blinking rapidly to adjust to the drastic change. Yoshi seemed just as enamored as he was, and she was practically silent on top of his chest. He absent-mindedly petted her head in the darkness.

MJ squinted. “Do you see anything yet?”

Ned shook his head even though the others couldn’t see him. “No, but it can take up to fifteen minutes for your eyes to adjust.”

They laid in silence as they waited for the stars to appear. Thankfully, it didn’t take the full fifteen minutes. After about seven, they all began to gasp. Norway had been incredible, but this...this was something completely different.

The entire sky seemed to explode in light. Even though Vision had said there would be 30,000 stars, it seemed more like a million. White dots peppered every inky black surface of the night, and Shuri could make out a huge purple gash down the middle of a cluster. Some of the stars were microscopic while others seemed to burst above them.

“I just...this is...I mean…” Peter stuttered as he tried to find the right words.
“I know,” Shuri replied softly.

MJ sighed, trying to commit all of this to memory so she could sketch it later. “It’s amazing is what it is.”


Meanwhile, back at camp, the others were finishing up with getting all the cooking supplies back in order. Even though they had the light from the fire and various lamps, they had all started to stop and stare up at the sky in awe.

“You definitely don’t get this back in the city,” Sam noted.

Loki nodded. “Asgard was beautiful, but there’s something to be said for this.” He nodded up at the sky.

“Agreed, brother,” Thor added, clasping Loki’s shoulder.

Pepper leaned back into Tony, and he wrapped his arms around her, gently placing his palms on her stomach. Clint rested his elbow on Nat’s head, which she quickly shook off before sitting down to get a better view.

Scott scrunched his nose as he spotted something unusual. “The meteor shower is tomorrow night, right?” he asked.

Bruce nodded. “Yeah.”

“Are they supposed to get close to Earth?”

“They’ll look close, but they’re actually quite far away,” Vision assured him.

Sam didn’t like the way Scott’s face looked after Vision’s answer. “What’s up Tic Tac?” he asked.

The campfire illuminated Scott’s arm as he pointed in the air. “Does that look like it’s getting closer to you?”

Everyone’s eyes snapped in the direction Scott’s finger was aimed. Sure enough, a white mass was growing larger and larger.

“What the-?” Bucky gasped. “What is that?!”

Tony and Bruce did some quick mental math as they watched the trajectory of the mass arc through the sky. A low roar filled the air, and the ground seemed to rumble as it got closer. If their math was right, it was heading right for…

“THE KIDS!” both men yelled. They jumped into action, bolting towards the clearing. Steve, Doctor Strange, and T’Challa didn’t hesitate before following after them. The object sped up as much as they did, and by the time they reached the teens, it landed right in the middle of the clearing.

A bright, blinding light filled the area before immediately cutting off. Tony groaned, trying to rub the sparks out of his eyes from the drastic change in light. He couldn’t see a damn thing, and he stumbled on the uneven grass.

“Peter!” he yelled.

“Shuri!” T’Challa called at the same time.
“I can’t see anything!” Strange exclaimed.

Steve blinked a few times, then shut his eyes and counted to ten. When he opened them, he could make out some outlines, but nothing definitive. “Me neither!” He cocked his head to the side and heard feet pounding as the rest of the group headed their way.

“Over here!” the teens all yelled. Tony, T’Challa, Steve, and Strange carefully ran over to them. Tony reached out and grabbed a fistful of hair by accident, causing Ned to yelp.

“Sorry, kid,” Tony said, breathing a sigh of relief.

“Are you all okay?” T’Challa asked.

“What was that?” Shuri asked, completely ignoring her brother’s question. She turned and tried to focus on the direction where the mass had landed.

Peter, meanwhile, had activated his suit, and the mask now covered his eyes. “Night vision,” he whispered. Bright green light began to filter the area around him, and he spotted what had so rudely interrupted their stargazing. “It’s a ship!” he shouted. “A spaceship!”

The adults’ defenses rose sharply. That couldn’t be good.

“We can take them,” Nat whispered next to Steve. He nodded and tensed up, ready to fight.

Peter focused more, and his eyes widened under his mask. “Hang on!” he exclaimed. “That looks like-”

He was cut off as the ship hissed and a ramp dropped down to the ground. Red light illuminated grey smoke as it poured out of the new opening. Five figures stepped out and made their way over to the massive group.

“Holy shit!” Peter yelped. He jumped up and down with his friends as they laughed excitedly.

Tony put two and two together and came up with four. He relaxed his posture and motioned for the others to do the same. “Stand down,” he sighed. Tony knelt down and felt around for one of the flashlights. Once he gripped the handle of MJ’s, he held it up and turned it on.

Peter Quill squared his shoulders and grinned back at Tony.

“Did you miss us?”

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy! :D
“Thank god we have two stoves,” MJ muttered, placing two more bananas on top on one. They were wrapped tightly with aluminum foil and stuffed on the inside with chocolate chips and marshmallows.

“Tell me about it!” Peter exclaimed, adding some more.

After Quill, Rocket, Gamora, Drax, Groot, and Mantis had disembarked their ship, there had been quite a bit of staring. And gaping. And tense nerves from the people who hadn’t met the aliens (except Quill) before. But, as soon as Peter and Shuri rushed the group and gave them all hugs, the atmosphere visibly relaxed.

Once Gamora had activated the camouflage on the ship (because “Yes, Quill, of course the ship has camouflage!”), they had all gone back to the campsite for dessert.

Drax was currently holding up a banana as if it were a ticking time bomb. He carefully sniffed the yellow skin, and his forehead crinkled in curiosity.

“Terra has such strange food,” he said to no one in particular. He glanced over at Wanda and Mantis, who were peeling the top layer off and cutting a slit down the middle so they could add their toppings. Before he could ask for help, someone cleared his throat next to him.

“Hi, yes, excuse me?” Scott asked, moving into Drax’s line of vision. “Can I ask you a weird question?”

“You already have,” Drax replied.

“Can I ask another one?”

“You just did. Is this a Terra game?”

Scott blushed furiously, while Loki rolled his eyes at Drax. “Just ask him your question!” the Asgardian snipped.

“Can I touch your skin?” Scott asked quickly. “It looks so cool!”

Drax glanced down at his teal skin and gave a small flex to make the red veins pop. “My skin is actually quite warm,” he said, holding out his arm. “But don’t worry, it will not burn you.”

Scott let out an excited gasp that could be reserved for a child seeing Santa Claus for the first time as he gently rubbed his hand over Drax’s thick skin. He was so enamored that he missed other conversations floating around the fire.

Rocket had sidled right up next to Bucky and was looking at his arm longingly. Bucky had
practically yanked Sam down next to him as the other man walked by with his baked banana boat. Rocket did not let the third wheel deter him.

“Are you sure I can’t-”

“No!” Bucky replied, peering around Sam. “How many times am I going to have to tell you that?”

Rocket crossed his arms and let out a huff. “I’m gonna get that arm,” he muttered to himself. It had become his mantra ever since meeting the super soldier.

“What is that thing?” Sam whispered, leaning over to Bucky. “A raccoon?” He felt a sharp slap across his bicep and yelped.

“Watch it,” Rocket practically growled. “Between you and Quill, I swear…” He aggressively bit into his raw banana, skin and all, before promptly spitting it out. “What is this crap?!”

Bucky held up his tinfoil wrapped banana. “You need to wrap it first then put it in the fire.”

“Actually,” Shuri corrected, taking Rocket’s banana out of his hand and putting a new one in his palms, “you need to peel the top off first. Then cut a slit down the middle and fill it with toppings. Then you can wrap it and put it in the fire.”

Rocket stood up and followed Shuri over to the table with all the toppings. He sniffed eagerly and began piling a bunch of stuff into the slit that Shuri had made for him. “Aw this is gonna be good,” he laughed to himself.

He walked right past Gamora and Tony to get back to the fire. Tony heard a lot of yelling about “don’t throw it in that fire, you idiot!”, but he decided to ignore it.

“So,” he said to Gamora, “how’d you manage to get Quill back on Earth? Or Terra or whatever it is the kids are calling it these days.”

Gamora chuckled. “It wasn’t easy. He had no desire to come back here. But Peter and Shuri asked so…”

“Yes,” T’Challa said, sliding up next to them. “It is very difficult to say no to those two.”

“Those two” were currently engaged in a heated debate with Clint and Doctor Strange about the perfect banana boat topping ratio. Clint and Peter were in the “stuff it so it almost bursts” category while Strange and Shuri were slightly more reasonable.

Steve looked around in amazement at the new members of the campsite. Not a lot surprised him anymore, but seeing a literal tree trying to roast a banana boat over the open fire with its branch arm was a bit much. The tree glanced up and saw Steve staring at him.

“I am Groot,” it said, giving Steve a nod.

Steve looked around to make sure the tree was actually talking to him. He put his hand on his chest. “I am Steve Rogers,” he replied. Groot blinked at Steve and let out a yelp as the fire nipped at his branches.

“You idiot!” Quill yelled at Groot. “Fire plus wood equals burning! You’re wood and that’s fire!”

“I am Groot,” Groot said, rolling his eyes.

“LANGUAGE!” Rocket, Quill, Gamora, Drax, Peter, Shuri, and Mantis shouted at the same time.
“Groot, c’mon!” Peter yelped. “You’re gonna get us in trouble!”

“I am Groot,” he mumbled, going back to his banana.

Steve caught Tony’s eye and motioned for him to grab the teens and bring them over to a less crowded area of the campsite. He got Peter and Shuri while T’Challa rounded up Ned and MJ. They all let out an involuntary shiver as they left the warmth of the fire.

“So,” Steve began, “I think it’s great that your...uh...friends are here.” He cleared his throat as a light blush crept up his cheeks in embarrassment. “But, well…”

“They stick out like sore thumbs,” Tony deadpanned. “You’ve got big blue over there and a chick with green skin.”

“And a raccoon,” T’Challa added. "With a talking tree."

“Plus the antennae,” Steve added. “Mantis has an antennae.”

“Well, duh, they look weird,” MJ said. “They’re aliens!”

“Right,” Steve sighed. “But this is a public park. If people see them—”

“Or the ship,” Tony and T’Challa said unanimously.

“then we might have a problem.”

“Okay, fair point,” Shuri conceded. “But most of the stuff we’d be doing is around our campsite anyway. So it’s not like people will see them.”

“Plus, we can make something up!” Peter exclaimed. “We can say they’re dressed up for an alien-themed costume party!”

Steve hummed thoughtfully. “I mean, we might be able to pass Rocket off as one of those furry people, but I’m not so sure the rest of them will…” He trailed off as Tony, Peter, Shuri, MJ, and Ned gaped at him.

“W-w-what did you just say?” Ned asked incredulously.

“I don’t think we can convince other people about costumes—”

Peter held up his hand. “No...nononono. The other thing. The “f” word.”

Steve scrunched his nose. “Furry?” Suddenly, his eyes widened. “Did I not use it right?”

Tony let out a strangled sound. “How do you...even know...what that IS?!” he yelped.

“Oh, Tumblr?” Steve answered.

Shuri squealed as she jumped up and down. “Oh my gosh!” She danced around her friends, who looked just as overjoyed as she was. “He might be ready for memes now!”

“Yes!” Peter, MJ, and Ned shouted, pumping their fists in the air.

“No!” Tony and T’Challa yelled back. “There will be no more memes!”

“Memes?” Steve asked. “Are they—”
“Nope!” Tony exclaimed, holding up a hand. “No memes at this campsite.” He pinched the bridge of 
his nose and sighed. “What were we talking about before Cap here took us off on a Star Spangled 
tangent?”

“Furries?” Ned supplied helpfully.

“Costume parties?” Shuri tried.

“Memes?” Peter grinned.

“I stopped paying attention after furries,” MJ admitted.

T’Challa and Tony both groaned, and Steve finally felt like he had a pretty good understanding of 
what they had been dealing with while he was away.

“Let’s just keep your friends close by and out of sight of other people, okay?” Steve asked, ready for 
the conversation to be over.

“We’ll make sure they’re careful,” Peter promised. He nodded at his friends, and they all ran back to 
get their food.

“Do you have to breathe so loudly?!” the teens heard Nat exclaim from across the tent. They let out 
small giggles as Clint let out a breath that they could hear from their pod in protest.

“If you imbeciles don’t shut up-” Loki’s voice threatened ominously.

“Loki!” Thor admonished, his booming voice waking up a sleeping Scott.

“Wasappening?” he mumbled, accidentally kicking Sam.

“I want a new pod,” Sam moaned.

“If I may make a suggestion…” Vision started.

“Viz, don’t,” Wanda threatened sleepily. She let out a yawn as she burrowed herself in her sleeping 
bag and cuddled up next to Vision’s.

“Hey Nat,” Clint taunted, “is this too loud for you?” He sucked in a big breath of air and exhaled like 
a lion roaring. It was cut short as Nat jabbed him in the stomach with her elbow, and remaining 
breath came out as a wheeze. The kick pushed Clint back against the wall of the tent, jostling the rest 
of the pods.

“I think I understand why Strange went home after dinner,” Bruce mumbled.

“Oh my god,” Tony groaned shoving his head under his sleeping bag. “This was the worst idea 
ever!”

“At least Quill and his friends are sleeping in the ship and not in here,” Pepper replied 
sympathetically. She hadn’t been sleeping much in general at this point in her pregnancy, so the 
restlessness from the others wasn’t bothering her.
“Team building!” Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ called out.

“SHUT UP!” came the unanimous response.

“Please,” Steve added as an afterthought.

Meanwhile, Bucky snored, completely asleep.

Ned zipped up their pod entrance, blocking them off from the others as they continued to argue. They whispered to each other until the others fell asleep.

Once all was quiet, Peter gave them the signal. Shuri had left the entrance to the pod halfway unzipped, so they could escape into the night without waking anyone up. One by one, they crept outside, being careful not to rustle the tent. Peter passed the flashlights through the opening before tucking Yoshi into his sweatshirt.

They all bolted across the campsite and back towards the clearing where Quill’s ship was sitting. Everything looked extra creepy in the pitch dark, with nothing but red light to guide them. The ship blended in with the background of the forest, but Peter used the thermal setting in his mask to find the entrance. He knocked on the landing strut and stood back. A light hissing noise filled the otherwise quiet night and a ladder slid down. Without hesitating, Peter, Ned, MJ, and Shuri climbed up and headed inside the ship.

“Well if it isn’t the stowaways,” Rocket joked, hopping out of the captain’s chair.

Ned and MJ looked around the ship in awe. It looked pretty much the same as when Peter and Shuri had been on it before, but there seemed to be a lot more junk lying around in random places. Yoshi, recognizing the ship, began burrowing in anything and everything she could, chirping happily in the process.

“So how’s life?” Quill asked, peeking his head through the doorway leading to the bottom of the ship. He climbed up the rest of the ladder and sat on the floor. Mantis, Gamora, and Drax meandered up with him, while Groot joined Rocket near the front of the ship. It was crowded, but not uncomfortable.

“It seems your parents are expecting,” Gamora said with a smile. Peter blushed, but he didn’t try to deny it.

“Dude, even the aliens know they’re your parents,” MJ smirked. “When you just gonna admit it?”

“Heck,” Shuri said, “at least he’s not actively denying it anymore.” She tried to ruffle his hair, but he ducked behind Drax.

“I’m in an alien ship,” Ned whispered. “This is so freaking cool.”

Quill wiggled his eyebrows. “We could take it for a spin if you-”

“No,” Gamora replied quickly, shutting him down. “We are not kidnapping the children.”

Ned clasped his hands together. “We would not mind being kidnapped at all! Right?” he asked the others.

Peter, Shuri, and MJ nodded. “Right!”

Gamora shook her head while Quill and Rocket pouted. “Not tonight.”
“That wasn’t a complete no,” MJ pointed out. Gamora merely grinned as she held up her hands.

“How long are you staying?” Shuri asked.

“When is your birthday?” Mantis asked Peter.

“Tomorrow,” he replied.

“Then until tomorrow night,” Rocket said. “The meteor shower that will give us good cover to leave.”

Quill drummed his fingers restlessly against the metal floor, his shoulders tense. It didn’t take four geniuses to figure out that something was bothering him.

“Being back is hard, huh?” Peter asked softly.

Quill gave him a small smile and rubbed his hands over his knees. “Yeah, kid, being back is hard.”

Yoshi scampered over and climbed up his lap until she was perched on Quill’s shoulder. She nuzzled his cheek before hopping on his head and climbing up Groot’s branches. Everyone laughed as she made a small nest in Groot’s head and curled up to go to sleep.

“I am Groot?” Groot asked, waving his branches at the teens.

Mantis clapped her hands together excitedly. “A game? I love games! What should we play?”

“No video games!” Rocket ordered. “You get enough screen time as it is.”

“We should let them teach us a Terra game,” Gamora said.

Drax smiled smugly. “I will conquer any game you give me.”

MJ looked at the others who grinned mischievously. They were quite thrilled that she had decided to grab a pack of cards before sneaking out of the tent. She pursed her lips and nodded her head as she reached into her sweatshirt pocket and pulled out a cardboard rectangle. Peter bit his lip to avoid laughing, while Shuri’s eyes sparkled with anticipation of future entertainment. Ned rubbed his hands together excitedly as MJ made her dramatic reveal.

“Okay,” she said dramatically, holding up the package.

“Get ready to play Uno.”

Chapter End Notes

It's been a while since I've written the Guardians, so their characters might be a bit rusty while I find my groove again :P

Meteor shower next chapter!
The morning was grey and lazy, with everyone sleeping in and enjoying uninterrupted rest. When Bruce gently snuck out of the tent to walk to the nearby bathroom, the cool misty air tickled his skin. Every time he took a breath, he could practically taste the moisture.

On his way back to the tent, he knelt down by the teens’ pod and tapped on the fabric door. Shuri unzipped the flap and blinked back at him, still exhausted from their late night Uno battles.

“I think it’s going to rain,” Bruce whispered, barely making a sound. “Help me cover the telescopes?” Shuri didn’t need to be told twice. She quickly shoved on some shoes and scrambled out of the tent to help Bruce.

Peter, Ned, and MJ stirred at her leaving and checked their watches. It was almost 10am, and Peter listened carefully to the rest of the pods, but all he could hear was everyone’s steady breathing. They were all somehow still asleep.

They all carefully sat up, and MJ pointed to her watch. Peter nodded, and cupped his hands around his mouth to call everyone up. But Ned stuck his arm out and shook his head. He put his hands down on the ground and mimed them crawling through the tent and up the wall. Peter tilted his head in confusion, but when Ned pointed to Peter’s chest, he suddenly understood. He grinned and rubbed his hands together, as if preparing them for an epic task.

He closed his eyes and placed his hands on the floor of the pod. He focused all his energy like he had back in Hank Pym’s lab back in California.

“Hey spiders!” he thought in his head. “I need some help getting my friends up. Stay out of their way, though. I don’t want you to get crushed.”

Peter sent the message over and over in his head, and when he heard MJ gasp and tiny little legs skitter across the fabric, he knew it was working. It took everything in Ned not to freak out about how awesome it was to see hundreds of spiders start filing in the tent. They avoided touching any of the sleeping Avengers and made their way up the walls. The light that had been filtering in slowly blacked out. The spiders split up and worked together as they began to spin an intricate web above everyone.

Clint was the first to stir. He groaned slightly and ran his fingers through his already messy hair. He froze when he saw something skitter away in the corner of his eye. He quickly glanced over and watched as a spider climbed up the pod wall. He shrugged, figuring it was just part of the camping experience. But, when he followed the spider’s path, a silent scream built up in his throat.

Above him, hundreds of spiders scurried, tumbled, and hopped over each other, creating an intricate web design in the roof of the pod. There were big spiders, little spiders, hairy spiders, spiders with huge, visible eyes, and spiders with insanely long legs. They were making something, but he
couldn’t quite see what.

Clint’s breath picked up rapidly, and he could swear his heart was about to explode out of his chest. He whimpered softly as he reached out and grabbed his flashlight to get a better look. He took a deep breath and clicked on the light.

IT’S TIME TO WAKE UP, the webs spelled out in thick, block letters.

Bruce and Shuri could hear Clint’s screams all the way from the clearing.

The rain came crashing down just as everyone was finishing breakfast (or lunch since they had all gotten such a late start). Ned was on dish duty and Peter was still busy cleaning the spider webs out of the tent. Since they had been the masterminds behind the spiders, Tony had decided their punishment. With the Guardians joining everyone for food, Ned had quite a few more dishes than usual.

After Clint nearly broke everyone’s eardrums, they had all gotten up and dressed for the day (but after waiting for all the spiders to disappear back outside). No one had found their wake up call nearly as funny as the teens, but Peter and Ned had zero regrets.

Thor felt the first few drops on his head, and Scott looked up at the sky. T’Challa heard the rain before he felt it, the drops crashing against the trees and then falling like an avalanche. Everyone shouted and scrambled, trying to get everything under the cover of the large pop up tent.

“Wait it out in here!” Peter shouted, waving his arms towards the pods.

As soon as everything was secure, the others ran for the tent. Scott shook his head, getting water on Sam, who had just managed to dry off with a towel. He whirled it a few times and cracked it like a whip against Scott’s legs. A small wrestling match ensued until Bucky pulled them apart.

“How long is the rain supposed to last?” Wanda asked once everyone got quiet. All of the pods’ inner flaps were open, so everyone could see inside to the large dome. Quill, Drax, Rocket, Groot, Mantis, and Gamora had all split up.

“Let’s just calm down!” Steve shouted.

“How long is the rain supposed to last?” Wanda asked once everyone got quiet. All of the pods’ inner flaps were open, so everyone could see inside to the large dome. Quill, Drax, Rocket, Groot, Mantis, and Gamora had all split up.

Bruce ran a hand through his messy hair. “It shouldn’t last too long,” he replied. “The forecast was clear for tonight.”

“Yeah,” Rocket echoed. “We wouldn’t have planned to leave in the rain.”

“So what should we do?” Pepper asked, leaning back against Tony.

“We could play a game,” Shuri suggested.

T’Challa eyed his sister warily. “What kind of game?”

She hummed thoughtfully before snapping her fingers. “Oooo! What about that truth and lie game?” she asked, looking at her friends.

“Two Truths and a Lie,” MJ corrected.
“Yes!” Clint exclaimed, pointing at the teens. “I vote that game.”

Quill clapped his hands excitedly. “I know this game! Man, this brings me back.” He nodded at Nat, who merely blinked at him. “Doesn’t this bring you back?”

“Sure,” she said dryly.

“I am Groot?” Groot asked, scooting up between Ned and Peter.

“Okay,” Ned explained. “You think of three facts about yourself. Two of them should be true, one of them should be a lie. We have to try and guess which one is the lie.”

“Make sure you think your facts through,” Ned said. “It makes it harder for people to guess if you don’t look like you’re lying.”

Drax groaned and flopped down on the floor next to Pepper. “This sounds boring! Bring back Uno!”

“NO!” Quill, Gamora, Mantis, Rocket, Ned, Peter, Shuri, and MJ shouted.

“Not after last night!” Gamora yelped.

“What happened last night?” Tony and T’Challa asked.

Peter chuckled nervously. “Well, Rocket may have tried to shoot Drax with a blaster.”

“That sonofabitch hit me with a plus 4 when I was about to win!” Rocket roared, his face turning murderous.

“Okay!” Thor shouted before Rocket could act on his rage. “I will go first!” He cleared his throat and grinned. “I am 1,600 years old, I introduced Midgardian football to Asgard, and none of you have seen me naked.”

“Last one!” Tony exclaimed. “Last one is a lie. My eyes are still scarred.”

“You saw Thor naked?” Scott asked, his eyes wide.

“Asgardians play football?” Ned asked at the same time.

“Vegas was a bitch,” Tony muttered.


“It’s staying in Vegas,” Pepper chuckled. “Trust me, it’s a long story.”

Groot raised his hand, and Bucky pointed to the sentient tree. “Go for it.”


“Ummm,” Vision said. “I’m not quite sure I got that.”

“He loves junk food, he used Quill’s toothbrush to clean his armpits, and he’s never beaten his video game,” Rocket translated.

“Ewww!” Shuri exclaimed, scrunching her nose. “You used Quill’s toothbrush?!”

“Groot!” Gamora admonished while Groot laughed hysterically.
“Hang on!” Quill shouted. “Why is that the lie?!?”

Maybe this game was going to be more volatile than Shuri thought. “Peter’s turn!” she yelled, jabbing Peter in the ribs.

“Oh geez,” Peter muttered, completely unprepared with his facts. He wracked his brain and tried to think of something quickly. “Um...okay, okay, I got it!” He paused for dramatic effect before talking again. “My favorite movie series is Star Wars, my eyes are green, and I once had an entire building dropped on me.”

Tony let out a huge laugh. “Kid, I thought you said to make this hard! Obviously the building is the-”

“His eyes are brown,” Nat said without hesitation.

Tony sucked in a deep breath, swerving his head to face Peter so quickly that his neck cracked. “A building WHAT?!” he yelled, his heart rate skyrocketing.

Peter slowly backed away towards the entrance of his pod as Tony stumbled forward.

“Peter Benjamin Parker, don’t you DARE crawl away from me!” Tony ordered, stepping on Loki’s ankle as he himself crawled across the tent.

Thankfully, Bruce had been right about the shortness of the rain because there wasn’t any precipitation in the sky as Peter darted out of the tent, Tony hot on his heels. He pushed past Ned, MJ, Shuri and Groot before breaking out into the campsite. Peter weaved around the pods and over towards the tent where all the cooking supplies had been stored to keep out of the rain.

Tony was so busy yelling at Peter, and Peter was so busy running away from Tony that neither of them noticed the large golden circle cut through the air. Shuri squealed and ran to hug May as she stepped through Doctor Strange’s portal in a daze.

“That was probably the weirdest thing I’ve ever done,” she said to no one in particular. She wrapped her arms around Shuri instinctively, returning the hug. “Where’s Peter?” she asked.

“Over there,” Ned said, pointing to Tony and Peter. They were currently running around a large tree.

May quirked her brow. “I want answers to that, but first…” She turned around and stuck her head through the portal. “He’s not looking, hurry up!”

Strange quickly hopped through balancing a box and three bags which May handed off to Ned, Shuri, and MJ.

“Hide these before Peter sees them,” she ordered, taking the supplies from Strange and passing them out. The teens gave her a salute and dashed back towards the tent. Once they were out of sight, May turned to the other superheroes, who had come out of the tent to watch the spectacle between Peter and Tony. “You’ve got five minutes to turn this campsite into a birthday party. Got it?”

“We’ll take care of it,” Sam promised, already heading off to help Ned, Shuri, and MJ.

Once they all disappeared, May turned to Peter. “Hey birthday boy!” she yelled.

Peter stopped at the sound of his aunt’s voice, giving Tony just enough time to grab him by the ear and yank. “Ah! Tony!” he yelped, trying to escape.
“Peter,” Tony said, his voice low, “what the hell do you mean you had a building fall on top of you?!”

In retrospect, Peter could see why revealing that truth in this moment may not have been his smartest idea. “Don’t tell Aunt May!” he begged. “Not yet, please!”

Tony released his ear and stared at Peter as if looking for injuries from the accident. “Does this have anything to do with why you can’t sleep sometimes?” There was no judgement in his voice, just concern.

The blush crawling up Peter’s neck was answer enough for Tony. “I...it just…” He sighed. “Maybe,” he finally admitted. “Please don’t tell Aunt May.”

Before the teen knew what was happening, Tony wrapped him up in a bone-crushing hug. “We’re not going to talk about this now,” Tony whispered into his hair. “But we are going to talk about it.”

Peter nodded, and Tony tucked his chin above Peter’s head.

“What’s going on?” a voice asked from behind them. Tony and Peter pulled apart from their embrace, but Tony still kept an arm wrapped around the teen’s shoulder.

“Well,” Tony said, his voice back to its usual confident demeanor, “it wouldn’t be a birthday without a chase around the campsite, would it?”

“Uh huh,” May replied, eyeing them suspiciously. Tony moved Peter in front of him and gripped his shoulders. He winked at May and mouthed “we can talk later” over Peter’s head. May sighed, figuring it was better to ask questions later. She held out her arms to Peter. “Happy birthday, baby,” she said with a warm smile.

Peter grinned and practically tackled her over as he hugged her back. “I’m so glad you came,” he giggled.

“I wouldn’t miss this for the world,” she replied. She pulled back and gently shook his shoulders, excitement building up.

“Well? What are we waiting for? Let’s get this party started!”

Chapter End Notes

The Two Truths and a Lie is based off this Tumblr post: https://spiderboyneedsahug.tumblr.com/post/179961916134/the-avengers-sitting-around-the-living

Not going to lie...I can’t remember if I wrote about Peter telling Tony about the building (although I’m about 97% certain I did not). If I did, my bad for the plot inconsistency!
Omg y'all. We've got one part left and then the epilogue!! I'll get sappy later, so I'll just post this part and be on my way. Expect lots of fluff for the rest of it :)

Also, I have my next fic planned out!! It's going to be an IronDad fic where Tony basically adopts Peter for a month while Aunt May is away. Different universe than this story, so there won't be any connection. Are there tons of IronDad fics similar to this? Probably. Is that going to stop me? Heck no!

Love you all and thanks for reading!

Maybe it was because of Peter’s birthday. Or maybe it was because it was almost the end of summer, and everyone finally realized they’d be splitting up soon. But whatever the reason was, one thing was certain:

Superheroes know how to throw a party.

In mere minutes, the campsite was transformed. Streamers weaved around the poles on the social tent while balloons floated above everyone’s camping chairs. An actual piñata shaped like Iron Man’s head hung from a large tree branch next to the campfire. Food that Peter didn’t even know they had packed covered the folding table, and he was almost afraid the flimsy material would buckle under the weight.

Shuri had snuck a portable speaker with her, and MJ loaded up the party playlist she and Ned had created. The rain from earlier in the day was forgotten as everyone let loose and enjoyed their last night at the campsite together.

And boy, did they make it memorable.

May had bought a couple of sports balls, and soon, everyone was divided up and playing games.

They used a football to play a massive game of keep away. Alliances were formed, and soon, it became the teens and Groot against the adults. The teens probably would have won too, had May not tickled Peter into defeat.

Loki was not amused with Nat and T’Challa’s game of Monkey in the Middle, and Quill had to explain multiple times to Drax that he couldn’t just grab a soccer ball and chuck it at someone’s face. Bucky, Steve, Tony, and Sam teamed up against Rocket, Vision, Mantis, and Wanda for an actual game of football. Despite the super soldiers’ obvious advantages, Rocket and Mantis quickly proved they were not to be taken lightly. The game was evenly scored until the very end when Rocket swung from Bucky’s arm to help him catapult to the end zone.

Shuri kicked Peter’s butt at soccer, her footwork flawless and fast. Ned may have been a genius and Peter may fight crime, but they were no match for Shuri and MJ’s athletic prowess.

Bruce let Hulk out for a little while, and his alter ego loved learning how to play ultimate frisbee. Groot, Clint and Hulk made a good team against Gamora, Nat and T’Challa. Hulk didn’t even crush
the frisbee that much until the very end, when Gamora managed to steal it from him.

Pepper, Scott and Strange, meanwhile, were playing a relaxing game of cornhole, none of them willing to engage in the roughness of the other sports. Yoshi played on Scott’s team by gripping the bags in her teeth and whipping her head to throw them. She scored more points than Scott, something Strange and Pepper found hysterical.

The Guardians brought some surprises of their own. They dug out various items they had “acquired” over the last year and let the kids have some fun. It was like science nerd heaven, and soon, alien technology was scattered in the grass. Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ oood and ahhed over the mysterious parts, trying to figure out exactly what made them tick. The others worked to get dinner ready, but Tony and Bruce were quickly shoed away when they kept trying to sneak peeks at the stuff the Guardians brought. They wound up sitting in the grass next to the teens, just as eagerly picking things apart.

Hot dogs, hamburgers, and classic picnic food took over the dinner menu. Strange made several trips back to the Sanctum to bring dishes Wong had made for the party. Even though Wong couldn’t come (someone had to guard the Sanctum after all), he poked his head through to wish Peter a happy birthday and deliver his contributions.

Peter hadn’t planned on making his birthday a big deal when he asked Tony to take everyone camping. But as he dug into a hamburger piled high with all the toppings, he couldn’t help but smile. His best friends were laughing on the ground around him, and his aunt was standing behind him, already passing him a plate of his favorite mac and cheese. He caught T’Challa’s eye, and the king raised his water bottle to Peter in a silent cheer. Peter returned the gesture and smiled before looking over to Tony and Pepper. They were curled up adorably in their shared camping chair, Tony’s hand resting protectively over her growing stomach.

Peter sighed happily and leaned back against May’s legs. He was with his family, and it was perfect.

“This is so stupid,” Loki grumbled as Shuri tied a bandana around his eyes.

“Everyone needs to experience trying to hit a piñata,” MJ chuckled, placing an extra tent pole in his hand.

“I am Groot,” Groot nodded.

Quill scoffed and gently kicked at Groot’s ankle. “You don’t even know what a piñata is!”

“I could tear that thing to pieces with my bare hands!” Drax bragged.

Ned crossed his arms. “Sure, but can you do it blindfolded after being spun around a hundred times?”

Loki balked. “What do you mean spun-” He was cut off as Shuri and Peter grabbed his shoulders and quickly spun him in small circles. His protests were promptly ignored, and just when he couldn’t take the spinning anymore, it stopped. He stumbled for a few steps, trying to get his bearings.

“Over here!” he heard Thor call. Loki held out his arms for balance and resumed a tight grip on the pole. He followed the sound of Thor’s voice until it stopped. Loki swung his arms back and aimed
where he thought the piñata was hanging.

“Ahhh!” Scott shouted, ducking just in time to avoid a bloody nose. “Wrong way! Wrong way!”

Loki’s brain rattled inside his head as he tried to readjust. “Where is the damn thing?!” he exclaimed angrily. He yanked the bandana off his head and found himself facing the complete opposite direction, with Thor grinning cheekily in front of him.

“Got you, brother!” he crowed. “Who’s the trickster now?”

Loki growled, throwing both the pole and fabric to the ground before charging after Thor. The two chased each other around the campsite as everyone else watched.

“Should we be concerned?” Vision asked.

“Nah,” MJ shrugged. “If they start stabbing each other, we’ll just put them in time out.”

Shuri looked at Vision curiously. “Can you get dizzy?” she asked. “Since you’re not human, you don’t have the same neural functions as we do.”

“I…” Vision trailed off and looked to Wanda for an answer but only got a shrug in return. “I actually don’t know.”

“We’ve got to test this!” Peter said excitedly. He quickly tied the bandana and Shuri spun the android around.

It turned out that Vision could get disoriented because he nearly took off the real Tony’s head despite being directly in front of the piñata after Peter and Shuri let him go.

Drax did not fare much better, despite his earlier confidence. His head smacked into a low branch before anyone could stop him and fell flat on his face. He nursed his wounds (and his ego), while Quill gave it a try. The former Earthling managed to hit the corner of the piñata, but it barely left a dent, and the pole went flying right past Bucky and T’Challa.

Pepper was losing patience. She had helped pick out the piñata, and she knew exactly what kind of sweet, chocolatey goodness waited inside. “Will someone please crack it open?” she whined, her cravings getting the best of her.

“I can do it!” Clint said, making grabby hands at the pole Bucky had picked up.

“NO!” the entire campsite roared back at him.

“Seriously?!” the archer grumbled, pouting like a child.

Gamora stepped forward and reached out for the pole. “I can take care of this.” Bucky handed it over, and Gamora didn’t give Peter a chance to blindfold her before swinging. She connected solidly with the cardboard Iron Man helmet, leaving a nice crack in the middle, but it wasn’t enough to actually break it.

Bucky finished by stepping forward and punching his metal fist directly into the whole, widening it to the point where the contents inside spilled out. Peter, Shuri, Ned, MJ and Scott made a beeline for the candy while Tony just glared at Bucky.

“Thanks Barnes,” Tony said sarcastically. Bucky just grinned and gave a shrug in response.

The teens handed over half of their stashes to Pepper before May declared that it was time for cake.
Strange walked over carrying the large sheet cake with seventeen candles flickering brightly in the red and blue icing. Everyone sang “Happy Birthday” completely off-key, but Peter couldn’t help but find it endearing. He closed his eyes to make a wish, but he found that he was surrounded by everything he needed. He thought back to Tony and Pepper curled up in the chair and grinned.

*I hope I’m a good brother for the baby,* he thought. *Well, godparent technically, but you know what I mean, universe. I just wish that I’m good enough.*

Then, he took a deep breath and blew out the candles.

“Brother, I swear, if we miss the Perseids…” Shuri threatened, her hands on her hips.

T’Challa waved his arms up to the sky. “We are literally out in the open! You couldn’t miss it if you tried!”

“We need to be away from the lights!” Shuri exclaimed, yanking her brother’s arm. “And near the telescopes! We are not amateurs!”

“Have you ever watched a meteor shower before?” Nat asked, quirking her brow.

“That’s not the point,” Shuri dismissed. She abandoned T’Challa and ran off towards the telescopes, Peter, Ned, and MJ hot on her heels.

“You should start laying down!” Bruce shouted after them. “They’re most visible when you’re looking right up at the sky.”

“What time are they supposed to start?” Ned asked, panting a bit. Peter and Shuri fiddled with the different telescopes to make sure they were calibrated.


“You’ve got some time,” Wanda assured them. “Do you need any help?”

MJ glanced around. “We might need more blankets for everyone,” she said.

“We’ve got some!” Bucky called. He and Steve both carried an armful of blankets, and Wanda helped the super soldiers arrange them on the ground.

“You know,” Quill said coming up behind them, “you’d get a killer view from space.”

“Absolutely not!” May scolded, bopping Quill on the back of the head. “Everyone stays on the ground tonight.”

“But space!” Peter whined.

May ruffled his hair. “Maybe another time.”
“Or never,” Tony suggested, wrapping his arm around Pepper’s shoulder. “We don’t really need to be in space, do we?”

“Uh, yeah we do!” Ned exclaimed. “Space is like the final frontier after all.”

Rocket examined one of the telescopes closely as if analyzing its parts. “Space really ain’t all it’s cracked up to be.”

“Mmhmm,” Loki hummed. “There are still imbeciles in space.”

“Always the optimist,” Sam shot back.

“I am Groot!”

“You can’t stay,” Gamora replied. “We’ll come back and visit though. Maybe.” She glanced at Quill when she said that.

He paused for a bit then nodded. “Yeah, we can come back.”

Mantis clapped happily. “Wonderful! We can explore more of Terra then!”

“There must be more Uno,” Drax said. “Uno makes this barren planet more interesting.”

Clint clapped the teal alien on his back. “Just wait until we introduce you to Monopoly.”

Bruce peeked through the telescope and turned to face the others. “Turn off the lights. We should be good to go in a few minutes.”

Everyone shut off their red filtered flashlights and took their seats on the ground. Peter, Ned, Shuri, and Ned wound up in a giggling heap trying to get comfortable. It barely took two minutes for their eyes to adjust, and then the sky lit up in the most brilliant way.

The stars were out in full force tonight, their twinkling lights contrasting against the inky sky. Suddenly, a quick, thin light zipped across the sky at an impossible speed.

Peter’s arm shot up, even though he knew the others wouldn’t be able to see him well. “There’s one!” he cried.

“I see another!” MJ exclaimed, watching another meteor flash above them.

As the sky grew darker, the more meteors seemed to light up the sky. No one’s eyes could keep up with them after a while. Bruce helped aim the telescopes, and soon, they were watching the Perseids in high def. It was hard to keep up since they were traveling at over 130,000 miles per hour, but since there were a bunch of telescopes, everyone was able to catch a glimpse a meteor close up at least once.

The teens began spouting off facts about the Perseids as they helped everyone else look through the telescopes. Tony, May, T’Challa, and Pepper couldn’t help but feel proud of their kids (Ned and MJ included because at this point, the four friends came as a package). They were patient, and their energy was contagious. They were all caught up in the magic of it all before long.

But unfortunately, all magical things have to come to an end at some point. Despite all of their excitement, no one could stop the yawns from coming. The Perseids were still going strong, but the desire to sleep was starting to win.

“We should head out,” Gamora said softly. A calm energy had swept over the group, and she didn’t
want to speak too loudly and ruin it.

Quill rubbed his eyes and nodded. “Sounds good to me. Guardians, form up.”

Drax, Mantis, Rocket, and Groot sleepily stood up and tried to avoid stepping on anyone’s hands or feet as they made their way back to the ship. The teens quickly grabbed their flashlights and followed the Guardians.

“Thanks for coming,” Peter said as Quill activated the ramp leading to the ship. He squinted at the new light seeping down from the inside.

“Happy birthday, kid,” Quill replied with a smile.

“I am Groot.” Groot reached his branches out and wrapped them around Peter, Ned, Shuri, and MJ.

“We’ll miss you too,” Shuri promised. She wiped at her eyes. “We’ll figure out a way we can keep in touch without sending satellite signals.”

Rocket sniffled and tried to play it off as a cough. “Alright, alright, let’s get a move on. We want to leave while the meteors are still going.”

“Goodbye friends!” Mantis said, waving wildly as she climbed inside the ship.

Drax gave them a solemn nod. “We must try this Monopoly next time we visit.”

Quill grimaced at the idea of his friends playing Monopoly, but he said nothing. He gave the teens a quick salute and disappeared inside the ship. They all backed away as the engine hummed to life before racing back to join the rest of the Avengers.

“Good birthday?” Shuri whispered as they watched the Milano head back into space.

Peter nodded, his smile so wide it nearly split his face in two.

“The best.”
“I’m sorry, you want to do what now?” Tony asked incredulously. He pulled off his safety goggles and blinked at his wife, who stood in front of him with her hands on her hips and an air of authority.

“I think we should have the wedding reception next Friday,” she repeated calmly.

Peter and Shuri both stopped their work on nanotechnology and watched the conversation unfold like a tennis match. Neither of them dared to interrupt.

“You want to plan an entire wedding in six days?!” Tony practically screeched.

Pepper rolled her eyes. “Not the whole wedding, just the reception. The wedding was ours, we don’t need to repeat that.”

“But still, one week?!” Tony rubbed his hands through his hair. “You’re talking a venue, food, cake, decorations, music, tables…” He stopped and gently gripped Pepper’s shoulders. “Honey, people spend months planning weddings for a rea-”

Pepper cut him off with the gentlest, sweetest kiss. “You’re overthinking it,” she whispered. Tony replied by cupping his hand around her cheek and deepening the kiss until Peter and Shuri both dropped their lab supplies on the ground. Tony and Pepper jolted apart and glanced at the teens’ scarlet faces.

“Still here ya know,” Shuri said, throwing her arms in the air.

“Anyway,” Tony said, clearing his throat, “how do you plan on getting this done?”

Pepper gave him a simple shrug. “We’ll host it here, and it won’t be big. I think our guest list basically lives in the Tower with the exception of a few people here or there. Everyone’s about to leave, and things will get insane once the due date gets closer. This is the right time.”

Tony took a deep breath and sighed. “And you’re sure you don’t want more?” He didn’t really care about having the big reception, but Pepper deserved the best.

Pepper shook her head confidently. “This is exactly what I want. I mean it.” Her eyes were so sincere that Tony knew she was telling the truth.

“Okay,” he replied, a huge grin taking over his face. “Let’s plan a wedding. How are we going to do this?”

“You have enough to deal with this week,” Pepper said. She grabbed a stack of folders she had laid down after coming in the lab and handed them to Tony. “Stark Industries has a bunch of meetings.
that need your presence, not mine.”

“Pep, you can’t do this all by yourself!” Tony exclaimed. Pepper crossed her arms at him, and he held his hands up defensively. “Not because I doubt your ability!” he quickly corrected. “But because it’s a lot for one person who is currently in their second trimester harboring another human!”

Pepper sauntered over to where Peter and Shuri were standing and wrapped an arm around each of them. “Who said I was doing this alone?” she asked cheekily.

Peter and Shuri grinned at each other, and then gave Tony a reassuring thumbs up.

“Don’t worry, Tony,” Peter said confidently.

“We’ve got this!”

Shuri wasn’t sure if she remembered what sleep felt like. She and Peter definitely hadn’t been getting much of it the last five days. Tony and Pepper weren’t even doing the entire wedding, and it was insanely overwhelming.

Picking out the linens, decorations, flowers, and centerpieces had been cool but time consuming. The three of them had way too much fun trying out samples for the food and cake. Pepper had gone with a red velvet cake (Tony’s request) with an elegant white fondant design. Peter and Shuri helped pick out the menu of steak, salmon, and a vegetarian pasta. They decided to skip the cocktail hour, but the caterers didn’t need to know that right away, so they got to sample a ton of appetizers as well.

Peter and Shuri personally went through resumes and portfolios for all of the potential photographers and videographers. The process took an entire day, and FRIDAY helped with the extensive background checks to ensure none of the wedding moments would get sold to some trashy tabloid. Shuri designed a security system that prevented any camera from transmitting digital photos outside of the Tower, something Tony had never thought to install before. Peter also modified some of his spider drones to take epic aerial photos during the big day.

Figuring out the seating arrangement was an endeavor worthy of two geniuses and a master businesswoman. Peter had taken down all of the posters on his one wall to create a blank canvas for the seating chart. The Avengers got along for the most part, but the right pairs could antagonize each other to no end. It wasn’t a big guest list, but it still needed to be done correctly.

There were only 36 hours left until the wedding, and Peter and Shuri had felt confident that they had finalized everything.

That is, until Pepper decided she wanted to go to a wedding dress shop.

Peter was trying not to fall asleep in the large, plush chair he was sharing with Shuri as Pepper tried on what felt like the twentieth dress. The options were insanely limited because the alterations would have to be minimal due to the immediate need for the dress.

Shuri bit back a yawn and Peter sat up a bit straighter as Pepper came out in a frilly mess that had looked much better on the hanger.

“Well?” she asked, giving them a spin. But her smile didn’t reach her eyes, and they all knew this
would be one more dress for the discard pile.

“It’s...got character,” Peter lied.

Pepper groaned and put a hand over her forehead. “It’s awful, isn’t it?”

“Just a bit,” Shuri admitted with a small grin.

“Argh!” Pepper shook her head. “This is stupid, isn’t it?” She paced around the dressing room area, gripping the fabric in her hands to avoid tripping. “I mean, we already did the wedding part, so why need a dress?” She stopped and shook her head. “We should just forget about it, right?” She looked to the teens expectantly.

Peter leaned forward in the chair. “If it’s important to you, it’s important to us,” he answered definitively.

“Don’t get me wrong,” Pepper said, holding up her hands. “I have no regrets about Vegas. That was perfect. It’s just…”

“You want to wear the dress,” Shuri finished for her.

Pepper smiled at her appreciatively. “I want to wear the dress,” she confirmed.

Peter stood up with Shuri. “Then we’ll find you a dress!” He pointed back to the dressing room stall. “You get out of that monstrosity, and we’ll try and find something else.” They left before Pepper could answer, determined to find something she would love.

They scoured the racks for almost fifteen minutes, carefully scrutinizing everything they knew would fit her. Pepper was classy, Pepper was fun, Pepper was elegant, Pepper was…

“Perfect,” Peter and Shuri breathed as they both reached for the same dress at the same time. They quickly pulled it off the hook and brought it to a waiting Pepper. They practically held their breath as she tried it on, and it wasn’t long before she came back out. Her eyes were shining, and her smile lit up her entire face.

It was the dress.

Pepper stood in front of the mirror, swallowing thickly to hold back her tears. “You guys,” she said, her voice choked with emotion.

Peter blinked back tears of his own, while a few escaped down Shuri’s cheeks. “You look beautiful,” he whispered.

“Insanely beautiful,” Shuri agreed.

Pepper giggled and turned every which way to admire herself in the mirror. “I love it!” she exclaimed.

“So,” Peter asked, grinning widely, “are you saying yes to the dress?”

Pepper turned around and raised her hands above her head triumphantly.

“YES!”
For the second time in almost as many months, Peter found himself struggling with the stupid tie. Only this time it was under the collar of a much more expensive suit. He didn’t even resist when Tony chuckled and gently turned him around.

“One day you’ll get the hang of this,” Tony promised, expertly knotting the silky material.

“Please,” Shuri laughed from behind them. “Peter’s going to need you to tie it on his own wedding day.”

Peter turned around to face his best friend, and he gasped. Shuri had gone all out for the evening. Her hair was braided and circled her head like a halo. She wore a royal blue dress that was embroidered along the edges with silver thread.

“You look great,” Peter said with a smile.

Shuri playfully ruffled his hair, causing Peter to yelp and pull back. “You’re not so bad either.” She looked to Tony as Peter grumbled at her and fixed his hair. “You ready for your big entrance?”

Tony nodded. “I don’t get why Pepper and I can’t walk out together though.”

“It’s a surprise,” Peter and Shuri said unanimously. They started walking away without another word, and Tony followed them to the elevator.

The Avengers Tower was huge, there was no doubt about that, but once a nice chunk of furniture, artifacts, and research equipment was sent to the Compound, there were a bunch of empty floors. Tony nearly had an aneurysm when he learned the floor he wanted to use had been converted to a goat/tiger paradise, so he was forced to use a different floor instead.

When the elevator doors opened, Tony couldn’t help but be impressed with how Pepper, Shuri, and Peter had transformed the space. Silky gold curtains hung off the corners of each wall and were sharply contrasted by the deep, red fabric covering the tables. When Tony looked up, he could see lights twinkling from the ceiling above, something Peter and Shuri had no doubt coded. A small drone hummed softly above Tony’s head, and he heard the quick shutter of a camera lens before it flew off again.

He put one hand in his pocket and gave a cocky wave to his guests, who chuckled in response. All of the Avengers were dressed to the nines, and Tony was thrilled to see some other familiar faces as well.

Brunhilde was dressed in her traditional Valkyrie garb while Loki had gone for an all-black suit. He was glaring at Doctor Strange who had just finished portaling his glass of water across the table. Meanwhile, Scott was showing his card tricks to a slightly impressed Wong.

May looked radiant in a sparkling silver dress, which complimented T’Challa’s sharp brown traditional Wakandan suit. Tony was pleasantly surprised to see May chatting with Phil Coulson and Nick Fury, and he made a mental note to buy Peter and Shuri whatever they wanted for getting the two reclusive SHIELD agents to show their faces in public again.

Wanda, Vision, Sam, and Bucky were fussing over an absolutely adorable Yoshi, who was wearing a black bow tie around her neck. She preened at the attention, almost posing as Bucky took pictures that would no doubt end up on his Tumblr blog later.

The original crew were all seated together as if they had never been split up in the first place. Nat and
Clint huddled together and talked in hushed whispers while Steve and Thor were laughing over something Bruce had said.

Rhodey and Happy sat at the last table with four empty seats that were no doubt reserved for Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ. They both gave Tony cheeky grins, and he couldn’t wait to catch up with them at some point in the night.

“Alright everyone,” MJ said from the other side of the room, “let’s get this party started!”

Every began to clap, and when Tony turned, he found the teens gathered together behind a pop-up DJ booth. MJ had huge headphones around her head while Ned was typing away at a keyboard. Suddenly, the main lights dimmed, leaving just the twinkle from above.

“Okay, Tony, face the crowd,” MJ said, a smile evident in her voice.

Tony gave an exaggerated sigh and turned his entire body, ignoring the silly faces Scott and Clint made at him. One wedding photographer knelt a few feet in front of him, and another positioned themselves off to the side. The crowd suddenly gasped, and it took everything in Tony’s willpower not to turn around.

Now it was Ned who spoke. “3...2...1...turn around!” Tony, anxious to see his wife, spun around and felt his breath get taken away.

Pepper stood confidently in the most beautiful wedding dress Tony had ever seen. The scoop neck dress was sheer with lace flowers covering it from top to bottom. Her hair was straight, and it rested gently on her shoulders. Her stomach stretched beautifully over the elegant fabric, and she absolutely glowed under the lights. She glided over to Tony who didn’t wait for MJ to announce the first kiss before dipping Pepper low. She laughed as he pulled her back up and kissed her, the crowd cheering wildly behind them.

“May I have this dance?” he asked as the music for their first song began to play. John Legend serenaded them with “All of Me”, and for a few minutes, everyone else seemed to fade away. Pepper looked over at MJ as the song began to fade, and the teen nodded before grabbing the mic again.

“The bride and groom now request that the godparents and their guardians join them on the dance floor,” MJ said.

Peter and Shuri glanced at each other, surprised at the request. Ned gently shoved them on the dance floor, and Tony motioned for May and T’Challa to join them. A flustered Peter bowed to May, who giggled and wrapped her nephew up in a big hug while T’Challa and Shuri did their secret handshake before dancing. Ed Sheeran’s “Perfect” now played, and Peter blushed as May helped him lead, still a bit uneasy on his feet. He gained a bit of confidence and spun her around, and she smiled at him proudly. They passed by Shuri and T’Challa who had their own perfect rhythm.

“You two should dance with them,” T’Challa said, nodding his head at Tony and Pepper.

“There’s still plenty of time for that,” Shuri replied, squeezing her brother’s shoulders.

“Not as much as you want,” her brother reminded her gently.

Shuri swallowed thickly, knowing her brother was right. They would all be leaving the next morning, and her responsibilities in Wakanda would take up most of her time, just like Peter’s schooling would.

“Psst!” she hissed as T’Challa led them over to Peter and May. “Let’s dance with Pepper and Tony!”
May kissed Peter’s cheek. “That’s a wonderful idea!” She let go of Peter and held out her hand to T’Challa. “Your Highness?”

T’Challa bowed before taking May’s hand. “The pleasure is all mine.”

Peter and Shuri left them to dance, and they walked over to Pepper and Tony. “May we have this dance?” Shuri asked confidently.

Tony grinned at Pepper before letting her go. “For you two? Always.” He and Shuri paired off while Peter and Pepper danced as well.

“So I made copies of all of our work,” Shuri informed Tony as they danced. “I’ll upload it to our cloud server in Wakanda so we can continue our collaboration.”

“And what’s wrong with my cloud?” Tony teased.

Shuri shrugged innocently. “Nothing! It’s just...mine is better.”

“I’m going to miss you too, Shuri,” Tony said, giving Shuri a hug in the middle of the dance floor. “Love you, kiddo.”

“I love you too,” Shuri replied shyly. Her smile got wide, and her eyes began to shine. “I’ll definitely visit! Especially since I can portal now.”

“I hope so!” Tony exclaimed. “My kid’s going to need her godparents.”

“Speaking of the other godparent…” Shuri trailed off and practically pulled Tony over to Peter and Pepper. “Time to switch!” she announced, letting go of Tony. Before Peter could comprehend what was happening, Shuri stole Pepper out from under him, and he now found himself holding onto Tony’s hands.

“Um, uh, hi!” he squeaked out, giving Shuri a glare. She merely smiled at him and wooed Pepper on the dance floor with her skillful moves.

“Hey kiddo,” Tony chuckled. “You wanna lead, or should I?”

“You can,” Peter breathed gratefully. “May’s still working on helping me with my dancing.”

“You’re doing just fine,” Tony promised. He met Pepper’s eye across the dance floor, and she gave him a knowing look. “So, uh, my dad was never one for being sentimental, but...” He cleared his throat, and Peter straightened up in his grasp, realizing the tone of the conversation had shifted. “I didn’t really hear this a lot from him, but I want you to hear it from me. All of you.” He tilted his head over to Shuri and his eyes wandered down to Pepper’s stomach before taking a deep breath and looking Peter directly in the eyes. “I love you, Peter. You’re an amazing kid, and I wouldn’t change a thing about you.”

Peter’s world seemed to stop as Tony’s words echoed in his head. He quickly grabbed Tony in a tight hug. “I love you too,” he whispered. “You’re an awesome dad.” Tony choked back tears as Peter spoke with more sincerity than he had in his entire life.

They stood like that for a while until Ned’s voice brought them back to reality. “There will be more dancing, but first, dinner!”

Peter, Shuri, May, and T’Challa went back to their table while Tony and Pepper left their spot in the front of the converted floor. Waiters dressed in sharp black tuxes came out and efficiently served the
delicious meal. Peter and Shuri had already taste tested all of the food, but that didn’t stop them from enjoying it all over again.

As soon as plates were cleared, the dance floor was packed. Ned, MJ, Peter, and Shuri had curated the playlist to keep everyone up and moving. Popular music had everyone jumping and laughing with each other. Steve and Bucky actually sang along with some of the lyrics, something that amused the teens to no end.

Peter, Shuri, Ned, and MJ taught Loki and Thor how to do the Cupid Shuffle, while Tony and Rhodey schooled everyone else at the Electric Slide. The teens had even added a few songs from the 40s in their mix, and Steve and Bucky owned “Tico Tico” by the Andrews Sisters.

Tony and Pepper’s cake was amazing. They couldn’t resist shoving some of the delicious red velvet in each other’s faces, and Tony chased Peter around with icing still on his hands. MJ, Shuri, Ned, and Peter ate cake and danced like it was their last night together because, in a way, it was.

It was a beautiful, fantastic, perfect night, but ultimately, the food disappeared, and the playlist queued up its last song. The teens ended the reception huddled together in a circle with their arms linked around each other’s shoulders. Tears pricked their eyes, and they held on tight to their last moments together.

The adults weren’t faring much better. Scott kept swiping at his cheeks while Loki actually looked around like he might miss the Tower and its occupants. Tony and Pepper shared a bittersweet last dance, knowing their lives were going to change. In so many ways it would be for the better, but the end of the summer meant the end of a lot of good things.

Peter wasn’t even trying to hide the fact that he was crying. He, Ned, MJ, May, Tony, and Pepper were standing on the helipad as Shuri and T’Challa prepared to go home.

The teens had dark bags under their eyes from staying up the entire night to get the most out of their last few hours together. Saying goodbye to the other Avengers was hard enough. There had been many hugs and promises to keep in touch, but this was infinitely harder.

“I’ll miss you,” Shuri sniffled, wiping her eyes.

MJ’s eyes were red and puffy from crying, but she smiled at her friend. “You’d better call me.”

“And me,” Ned added, clearing his throat.

Instead of replying, Peter just wrapped Shuri up in a hug. MJ and Ned got in on the action and soon they were giggling and laughing as they tried to prevent their group hug from falling over.

“It’s not really goodbye,” Peter said, pulling away. “We’ll see each other when the baby comes.”

“And planning our godparent duties,” Shuri added with a nod. “And you never know...I might portal in every now and again.”

Peter gave her a watery smile and stepped back as T’Challa placed a gentle hand on his sister’s shoulder. “It’s time to go,” he said.
Shuri took a deep breath and nodded. She gave one last hug to her friends and the other adults before following her brother onto their jet. Tony and Pepper both gripped her a little bit tighter than usual, and Shuri squeezed back just as much. Peter, Ned, and MJ waved wildly as it lifted off and disappeared into the sky.

May wrapped her arms around Peter, and he let himself melt into her embrace. Tony wiped away a few of his own tears, knowing that when he went back inside, the Tower would be so much quieter now. He felt Pepper’s hand squeeze his own, and he reached out to ruffle Peter’s hair.

“Things are really going to change now, huh?” Peter asked, looking up at his mentor.

Tony gave Peter a smile and reached out his arms. Peter untangled himself from May and sighed in Tony’s embrace. “Yeah, it will. But don’t worry, kid…

Our adventure is just beginning.”

Chapter End Notes

So I thought a lot about this chapter. I know the build up may have seemed like more than the reception, but I hope it was everything you pictured/wanted for our main characters. There was just no way I could have written every single attendee and kept the flow.

Expect the epilogue around Wednesday/Thursday. :)

As always, thanks for taking this ride with me!!
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Friends...this is officially it.

If you had asked me almost a year ago if my drabbles about a friendship between Peter and Shuri would turn into two books and almost 150 chapters, I would have laughed in disbelief. I am insanely blown away by all of your kindness and support with this story and these characters. It's been an amazing run, and while I'm sad for this to end, it's time.

I cannot thank you enough, so I hope this epilogue speaks for me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shuri was having a pretty average day.

She had completed the most recent upgrade for a commercialized virtual reality system that she and Tony had patented together. She had also just begun working on the blueprints for T’Challa’s suit to include extendable weapons that would be a huge asset in battle.

The music was blaring in her lab as she fiddled with numbers and designs, and she didn’t even notice the mysterious figure in black sneak by. It was only when her tablet disappeared to the opposite end of the room and the music shut off abruptly that she put two and two together.

“Loki!” she admonished, looking around for the trickster. “How many times do I have to tell you to stop sneaking in my lab?!?”

Loki smirked as he stepped out of the shadows. He had taken to pestering both Peter and Shuri by popping in randomly from time to time. He swore it was to get back at them for all of their antics.

The teens swore they knew better.

“Don’t you check your silly beads?” Loki chided, pointing to his wrist.

Shuri waved him off. “I put them on mute today. T’Challa has been on my case, and I needed time to think.”

“Really?” Loki asked, raising his brow. “So close to such an important date?”

Shuri’s head shot up, and she gasped, covering her mouth with her hands. “Do you mean…?”

“Yes,” Loki replied with a smile. “It’s time.”

Peter Parker was having a pretty average day.

He hadn’t bombed his Spanish test, and he had managed to upstage Flash in physics (yet again). He
and Ned were currently in PE working their way through the Captain America fitness challenge. It was going as expected. Peter was putting forth just enough effort to pass the class, but not enough to arouse suspicion about his enhanced physical abilities.

It was all completely normal until Thor appeared in the gymnasium with a flash of light and a crack of thunder.

“PETER PARKER!” he roared, standing up from his kneeling position on the floor. The Asgardian symbol was etched onto the floor, and Peter could smell the burning wood from here.

“Thor?” he called out, ignoring the astonished/terrified looks from his classmates and teacher. “What are you doing here?”

Thor’s serious expression brightened when he spotted the teen. “Peter!” he exclaimed. “Where is your cell phone? We have been trying to reach you!”

Peter blushed fiercely and looked down at his feet. “Uh, well-”

“Penis Parker got his phone confiscated in math class today for texting,” Flash piped up from the back, a smug grin on his face.

Thor cocked his eyebrow at Flash and stared at him with such fierce intensity that the teen began to wither. “Penis Parker?” he asked, looking at Peter. “Did you change your name since we last spoke?”

“Omg he actually talks to Thor!” Peter heard a girl squeal.

“So the Stark internship is real?” someone else whispered.

“He’s not that cool,” Flash muttered under his breath.

Peter shrugged them off. “No, Thor,” he replied confidently. “My name hasn’t changed.”

Thor smiled at Peter knowingly and then resumed his glare at Flash. “Good. You need to come with me now.”

The gym teacher seemed to regain the use of his faculties because he stepped in front of Thor. “He can’t just leave!” the teacher protested.

“Um, Thor,” Peter said grudgingly, “he’s right. Can’t this wait until after school?”

Thor shook his head. “If you had answered your phone, you would know that Tony Stark needs you.”

“For what?!” Peter exclaimed.

“A very special delivery,” Thor replied.

Peter’s jaw dropped. “Oh my god!” he gasped, reading between the lines immediately. He turned to Ned, who wore an equally ecstatic expression. “Dude, get my English homework, would you?”

“Of course!” Ned promised. “I’ll come right after school!”

“I’m so sorry about this,” Peter said to his gym teacher, even though he was not, in fact, sorry at all.

“Peter Parker if you leave this building without permission-” his teacher threatened
“Call my aunt!” Peter shouted, running next to Thor who already had his hand aimed towards the sky. “She’ll give me permission!”

And with a crack of thunder and another huge flash of light, Peter and Thor disappeared.

Peter and Thor arrived at the medical wing of the Tower the exact moment that Shuri and Loki did. Tony was pacing like a madman outside of Pepper’s room, and as soon as he saw the teens, he embraced them in a hug.

“How far along is she?” Peter asked quickly.

“Is she in pain?” Shuri asked at the same time. “Does she need an epidural?”

Tony laughed, their presence putting him at ease. “She’s in active labor,” he explained. “So she’s fully dilated, but it’s still probably going to be a bit.” He glanced at Loki and Thor. “I told boy wonders over there that I texted you too early, but clearly they didn’t listen when I said not to bother you.” Thor and Loki looked around the room innocently.

“Are you kidding me?!” Peter exclaimed. “We want to be here!”

“What do you need us to do?” Shuri asked.

Tony sighed and rubbed his hands through his hair. “There’s still a few things that need to be put together in the nursery. I don’t want to leave her…” He trailed off and looked at the closed door. “Do you mind?”

“We’ve got it,” Peter replied immediately, already on his way towards the elevator.

“Tell Pepper we love her!” Shuri called over her shoulder as she ran to catch up with Peter.

Tony let out a huge sigh of relief as some of his nerves began to dissipate. He looked over at the two Asgardians. “Thanks for ignoring me,” he said softly.

“Of course,” Thor replied, giving Tony’s shoulder a gentle squeeze. “I’m glad we were visiting and could be part of this momentous day.”

“Alright ya sap,” Tony chuckled. “Save some of it for when the baby’s born, would you?”

Peter and Shuri could hardly contain their excitement as they rushed around the nursery, setting up the last little details. First, they had done the most important thing and changed into their “I never dreamed I would be a super cool godparent, but here I am killing it” shirts.

Shuri put together the rocking chair in record time, and Peter made sure to put clean sheets on the crib mattress. He also pulled the diapers out of storage and began stocking up the changing table.

Once the chair was done, Shuri quickly ran some bottles through the dishwasher so they would be
clean when Pepper was ready to feed. She couldn’t remember if the mom-to-be had decided to breastfeed, but at least she would be prepared for all scenarios.

By the time they were done, the adrenaline was wearing off, and the enormity of the situation finally took hold.

“Holy shit,” Peter whispered, sliding down against the nursery wall. “We’re going to be godparents soon.”

“Uh huh,” Shuri nodded, tucking her knees into her chest. A silence hung between them before she spoke again. “We can do this, right?” she asked Peter nervously.

Peter opened his mouth to answer, but his buzzing phone cut him off.

IronDad: She’s getting ready to push. Get down here when you can.

Peter pocketed the phone and smiled.

“Guess we’re about to find out.”

At 3:45pm, the door to Pepper’s room opened up, and Tony walked out with a look of pure, unadulterated joy. Peter and Shuri bolted up from their seats, their hands clasped together in anticipation.

“IT’S A GIRL!” Tony shouted excitedly. He clapped his hands together and pushed the tips of his fingers against his lips as tears pricked his eyes.

“A girl!” Peter and Shuri exclaimed. They rushed Tony, and he practically lifted them off their feet as he hugged them tighter than he ever had in his life.

“She’s so beautiful,” Tony whispered. He pulled back and couldn’t help but grin when he saw their matching shirts. “Speaking of,” he said, pointing to the t-shirts, “do you want to meet your goddaughter?”

The teens looked at each other nervously. “Are you sure?” Peter asked.

“Cause if Pepper wants some time…” Shuri added.

Tony shook his head. “Pepper really wants to see you,” he promised.

Peter and Shuri nodded as they followed Tony into the delivery room. The medical bay staff had already cleared out the bed Pepper had given birth in, and mother and daughter were resting comfortably on a clean one. Pepper’s hair was pulled back in a ponytail and a blanket was resting over her legs. She held a small yellow bundle in her arms.

“Hey there,” Pepper whispered with a smile when she noticed Peter and Shuri. The teens stood awkwardly in the doorway, until Tony went behind them and gave them a push towards Pepper’s
“H-h-hey,” Peter whispered back. “How are you?”

Shuri rolled her eyes. “She just pushed a baby out, how do you think she’s doing?” She smiled at Pepper. “You look amazing by the way.”

“I’m trying to be polite!” Peter hissed, defending himself.

Pepper chuckled softly, and the bundle in her arms let out a small gurgle. “Yes!” she cooed, looking down at her baby. “These are your amazing godparents we were telling you about.” Peter and Shuri felt a surge of pride at their new, official title. Pepper tilted her head towards the empty bed on the other side of the room. “Can you roll that over here?”

Peter and Shuri complied immediately, locking the wheels as soon as it was positioned next to Pepper’s bed.

“You ready to hold her?” Tony asked.

The teens’ eyes went wide.

“Right now?” Peter squeaked.

“Really?” Shuri whispered.

Tony and Pepper both nodded. “Really,” Tony replied, grinning at how adorably flustered the teens were. “Hop on up.”

Peter and Shuri quickly climbed up on the bed and sat so they were facing each other. Their knees touched, and they each rested their left arms on top of their legs. Tony carefully took the baby from Pepper and before Peter or Shuri could react, he gently placed her in their arms. He positioned their hands so they were supporting her head, and the teens moved in tandem to make her comfortable.

Time stood absolutely still as Peter and Shuri stared down in awe at their beautiful goddaughter. Her eyes were still closed, and wisps of light blonde hair covered her head. Everything about her was impossibly small, from her ears, to her mouth, to the tiny fingers that peeked through the blanket.

“Maria,” Tony called softly to his daughter. “Say hello to Peter and Shuri. They’re your godparents.”

Maria let out a huge yawn and snuffle as she wiggled around in her blanket. Peter used his other arm to wipe away the tears that had started forming in his eyes and when he looked up he saw Shuri do the same. They both leaned in a little bit closer and gasped as Maria opened her brown eyes up at them. She stared up at them expectantly before smiling and closing her eyes again.

Peter and Shuri looked at each other, and unspoken bond coursing between the two of them. They could do this.

“Hi Maria,” Peter and Shuri whispered together.

“We love you.”

Chapter End Notes
As always, thanks for reading.

~Ace

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