(Post-Civil War, Pre-Infinity War) Tony is determined to get his team back. But there's a lot of breaks that need fixing, and with new and old threats on the horizon, can the team heal enough to face them in time? Or will they break apart again? Eventual Stony and Spideypool; Wanda/Vision
Tony looks at the phone in his hand, spinning it between finger and thumb as he debates whether or not to make the call. He isn’t sure what is bothering him more: the voice he’ll hear on the other end, or the fact he’ll have to make it on such an antique. Trust that man to send him what was in all likelihood the oldest phone he could get his hands on.

Frustrated he lets it fall onto the table in front of him and leans back on the sofa, hand automatically reaching out for a glass, before remembering that he hasn’t poured himself a drink. He’d told himself he couldn’t until he’d made the call.

*Stupid idea,* he grumbles under his breath. Sitting forwards again and running his hands over his face.

‘Are you intending to use the cell phone at all this evening, or are you just going to look at it?’ a monotone voice says from the side.

Tony sits up, startled by the intruder into his thoughts, and sees Vision standing in the doorway, the mind stone glowing on his forehead. He shakes his head as the humanoid takes a seat opposite him. ‘I will, Vision, I promise. I’m just—’

‘Stalling?’ Tony knows that Vision doesn’t mean it to be accusatory, but he hears it anyway. Feels as though that’s all he’s been hearing recently. ‘What is it that’s making you not want to call?’

Afraid to look Vision in the eye, knowing he can probably read his thoughts with that damn stone anyway, Tony sighs again. ‘I’m scared,’’ he admits.

‘Of Captain Rogers?’

Tony shrugs, wishing even more that he’d allowed himself that drink. When he dares to look up, he sees a patient face and eyes asking him to explain. Sometimes it’s easy to forget that, before he became a sentient being, Vision was JARVIS. Vision knows him better than anyone, even Pepper; which meant he was the most patient with him.

Also made him the world’s worst nag when it came to his self-destructive habits. He was still able to predict when they’d happen almost to the minute.

‘They do say that a problem shared is a problem halved,’ Vision comments, leaning back in his chair.

Tony snorts. ‘They also say curiosity killed the cat, but that doesn’t seem to be stopping you.’ Vision merely angles his head slightly. Tony looks down at the phone on the table in front of them again. ‘What if it’s not enough?’ he asks quietly.

‘You won’t know until you call him, and you’ve given Captain Rogers plenty of time to read through the documents,’ Vision counters.

Tony nods, and links his fingers, resting his elbows on his knees and pressing his mouth to his hands. It’s been four days since Steve would have received the document. The document that has taken over Tony’s life for the past six months.
The document that cost him any future chance with Pepper. But that might just bring back the rest of the team.

For six months Tony has worked non-stop on getting the Accords changed into something that he hoped Steve and the others could live with. Or at least come back and help him change more. He’d argued, he’d bargained, he’d asked - he couldn’t quite make himself beg - with the Secretary General and the rest of the appointed UN Council, slowly getting changes.

He’d done it alone. And he was tired. But he couldn’t stop. He’d promised Vision he’d get Wanda home. Get them all home.

‘Tony,’ and boy did it still feel strange hearing his old AI’s voice call him that, ‘you did not ask me to take those papers to Wanda to just stare at the phone Captain Rogers gave you. You’ve never stopped during a plan before, even when it’s been an extremely ill-advised one; why are you starting now?’

Vision’s right. He’s always known that his ‘requests for leave’ have been to go and meet Wanda; he’s never mentioned it so that they can all have deniability if it ever went tits up and they got caught. When Vision had been preparing to leave the last time, only seven days ago now, he’d given him a folder asking him to pass it on to his ‘girlfriend’ to pass on to their ‘mutual friend’. Even in the facility, at least during the day, he’d been worried about using names in case any of the day staff overheard.

‘I promise I’ll bring them all home,’ that’s what he’d said. The humanoid hadn’t said a thing, just nodded and tucked the folder into his bag and left. He’d returned four days ago. Four days for Wanda to have given the folder to Steve and for the super-soldier to have read it.

A folder containing the newly agreed Accords. They would be separate from the UN as before, but would not be able to perform missions without express consent and would still be answerable to the Council. They could, however, go somewhere if the need was deemed great enough without prior consent. Tony had purposefully left that as ambiguous as possible. He’d argued for weeks that if something like New York happened again they couldn’t sit around and wait for a panel to make a decision or too many lives would be lost.

He’d eventually convinced enough of the Council to have it changed, but they would be treading a fine line for a while. He almost wished there could be a New York style event just so he could prove his point.

Almost.

‘Tony?’

‘I promised you I’d bring them home, Vision,’ Tony says, finally looking the humanoid in the eye, ‘I’m not going to back out now.’ Before his courage fails him, or before he decides he really does need that drink in order to make this call, he grabs the phone from the table and flips it open. Bringing up the contacts he just sees one name. Steve.

Tony raises an eyebrow at Vision. ‘Mind giving a guy a little privacy?’

Vision smiles slightly and nods, standing up to leave. ‘Not that you’ll need it, but good luck Tony. I hope Captain Rogers appreciates what you’ve been doing as much as we do.’

‘So do I,’ Tony mutters as he’s left alone. Taking a deep breath he closes his eyes and presses the call button, lifting the phone to his ear.
There’s silence for the longest time, and just as Tony is about to pull the phone from his ear and give up on the ancient piece of technology being able to connect, the ringing starts. He can feel his heart pounding, and just has long enough to be grateful for the fact there’s no longer any shrapnel in his chest when the ringing stops.

‘Tony?’ he can’t help but close his eyes and breathe a small sigh of relief when he hears that voice. He hasn’t heard it in a year.

‘Yeah, it’s me Cap,’ he says, wondering if he sounds as unsure as Steve does. ‘I thought I’d check up and see how you were getting on with the homework I sent you.’ He tries to bring some of his usual humour into the conversation. Trying to find a safety net.

‘The new Accords? I’ve read them,’ Steve slips into his Captain voice and Tony feels a cold drop of dread settle in his scarred chest.

‘What do you think?’

‘I think whoever you got to look over them has done a pretty good job, Tony. But you have to get Secretary Ross to agree to them, not to mention a committee-’

‘They’re in effect from Monday,’ Tony cuts him off, voice not quite as steady as he’d hoped. ‘Secretary Ross already agreed, with a bit of persuasion from the Council.’

There’s a pause on the other end. ‘They’ve already been agreed?’ Tony hates the suspicion in the other’s voice.

‘Yes,’ Tony clears his throat, trying to get rid of the lump on his vocal chords. ‘That copy I sent you was one I was given to keep after it was signed and agreed. I’ll just have to tell Ross I misplaced it if he ever asks.’

‘Who did you get to take a look at them? Was it Pepper?’ Steve asks, curiosity entering his voice and some of the ‘Captain’ tone leaving it.

‘No,’ he replies.

‘Then who-’

‘I did.’

There’s silence on the other end of the phone. ‘You changed them?’

‘Yep.’

‘You got the Secretary and the Council to rewrite the Accords?’

‘Starting to get a little offended here, Cap. You don’t think I can hold my own against Ross?’

He hears what he hopes is a breath of laughter on the other end. But that could be wishful thinking. Still the knot in his chest eases slightly. ‘I’m just surprised you got him to agree with you.’

‘Never underestimate my powers of persuasion, Capsicle.’ Tony closes his eyes and leans back, imagining for a second the other man is here in the room with him and they were back to how they were before the Accords. ‘Steve, do you want to come home?’ Suddenly he doesn’t have the energy to dance around the question.
There’s a brief pause. ‘Of course I do.’

‘Do the others?’

‘Tony, what is-’

‘Just answer the question, Steve,’ Tony tries very hard not to snap. ‘Please?’ He adds in a softer tone.

Steve sighs. ‘Yes.’

‘Can you live with the new Accords? Even if we try and change them more in the future?’ he knows he must be sounding a little desperate.

There’s another brief pause. ‘Yes.’

Tony lets himself smile. ‘Do you trust me, Cap?’ There’s a heartbreakingly long pause, so he adds. ‘Do you trust me to get you all back home safely at least?’

Another pause, and Tony feels like crying. He’s about to hang up when he hears the quiet, but firm ‘Yes.’

‘I’ll be in touch, Cap. I’ll have to work on getting everyone back one or two at a time, and I’ll need to make sure they agree to any terms. You willing to work with me on this?’

‘Keep me updated, Tony,’ is the all the response he gets before the line goes dead.

‘Missed you too, Steve,’ he mutters as he pulls the phone from his ear. Looking over at the bar as he flips the phone closed and puts it back in his pocket, deciding he’s earned a whiskey. A large one.

‘How did it go?’ Vision is in the doorway, Rhodes next to him. Tony just shrugs.

‘Is he happy with the Accords?’ Rhodes asks, taking a seat at the bar as Tony pours the three of them a drink. He nods in response.

‘Did he say they will be coming home?’ Anxiety creeps into Vision’s voice.

‘He said they want to,’ he responds, handing each of them their glass.

‘Then I’d say that’s a victory, Tony,’ Vision says, raising his.

‘We’ve got a long way to go, but Vision’s right,’ Rhodes says, raising his glass as well.

‘I’ll fix it and I’ll get them home. You two focus on keeping what’s left of this team training, alright?’ Tony says, clinking his glass with theirs.

‘Tony we’re all that’s here apart from the kid,’ Rhodes says, fixing him with a firm look. ‘We can help.’

Tony downs his drink and shakes his head. ‘This is my mess,’ he responds, ‘Let me fix it Rhodey.’ Then he walks out before either of them can argue, patting the pocket where the old phone sits, reassuring himself it’s still there. Just like he’s done every day since it first arrived.
Tony looks down at his phone as a message comes in. Setting his project to one side, an upgrade for Rhodes’ suit, he opens it.

_Alone and ready for video as requested._

‘FRIDAY make sure no one comes in, black out the windows to the workshop and notify me the _second_ something looks like it’s trying to break in.’

‘Sure thing, boss.’

‘And make sure the soundproofing is on.’ Then he makes his call. ‘Your Majesty,’ he greets the man on the screen.

T’Challa waves his hand. ‘I think we’re a little past the titles, Tony. What is it you need?’

‘I was wondering if you’d be willing to help me find something I’ve lost,’ he answers amiably, hands waving around as his nerves increase.

‘And what would that be?’

‘My team,’ Tony answers quietly. ‘I suspected they went with you to Wakanda. I never asked because if I had it confirmed and Ross found out I’d never have been able to keep the changes made to the Accords. At least I knew they were safe.’

T’Challa considers him in silence. ‘Steve showed me the new Accords,’ he says eventually, voice even.

Tony looks away guiltily. ‘I’m sorry. I should have consulted you about them before taking them to the Council. I didn’t think it was a good time to bring them up. So soon after they were initially made I mean.’

‘You mean so soon after my father’s death and my succeeding to the throne?’

Tony winces. ‘I was trying not to be so blunt.’

T’Challa fixes him with an assessing look. ‘You would not have worried when I met you before.’

It feels like a test. Tony looks up at him. ‘I’ve changed.’

The king nods. ‘I could see that from the Accords. Steve told me you’d been the one to change them. He didn’t say you’d done it alone.’

Tony’s eyes narrow. ‘I didn’t tell him. How did _you_ know?’

He smiles sadly at him. ‘You look tired, Tony.’

He squeezes his eyes shut against the traitorous wetness that springs up at those words. Nodding, rather than confirming it aloud, he merely says, ‘I want my family home.’

T’Challa nods. ‘What is it you want me to do?’
Tony faces off against Secretary Ross again, and the first of the team arrive back in the US.

Chapter 2 – The First Arrivals

‘You want us to do what?’ Secretary Ross looks at him like he’s finally gone mad.

‘Technically I don’t want you to do anything,’ Tony retorts, signature smirk on his face, ‘I want you to not do something.’

‘Mr Stark,’ the Japanese representative, Mr Aizama, interjects, ‘you cannot honestly expect us to readily agree to allow all of the renegade Avengers to return?’

‘We already have our Avengers team, why do you think we need them?’ another man adds.

‘You have three Avengers,’ Tony responds, ‘hardly a team.’

‘I thought you were supposed to be recruiting, Stark,’ Secretary Ross spits at him. ‘Or is that something else you’ve failed to do?’

‘How many people with superpowers do you think there are?’ he retorts.

‘There seemed to be enough of you not that long ago,’ Ross smirks at him. ‘What about that Spiderman that you’ve been getting so friendly with? And Stephen Strange, and King T’Challa? I’ve found three more without breaking a sweat.’

‘Spiderman is better off where he is, protecting the people of New York,’ Tony tries to keep his voice even, he really does. ‘And as for Strange, he prefers sitting in his own private Hogwarts having nothing to do with us. Something to do with his own ‘duty’ to perform. And King T’Challa has a country to run.’

‘Then you obviously aren’t being convincing enough are you?’ Ross snaps. ‘And you expect me to believe there’s no one else you can recruit?’

‘Unless you want me to stick a load of people into Iron Man suits then no, there’s not that many. Considering there weren’t any known individuals with enhanced abilities until Captain America came out of a bottle, is it really that surprising?’

‘Was there not a private investigator who dispatched someone with mind control abilities? What about looking into them?’ the German representative asks.

‘No offense Frau Leibner, but I don’t want anyone with mind control abilities and unknown loyalties coming anywhere near the team; we’ve not exactly got a good track record in that department. As for Jessica Jones: if you think I’ve got an attitude problem wait until you meet her. She’s not going to be interested, I already put out feelers.’
‘Sounds to me like you just aren’t trying hard enough, Stark,’ Ross sneers.

‘Strangely enough turning half of the last team into war criminals doesn’t really help with a recruitment drive.’ Tony presses on before anyone can interrupt him again. ‘The fact is the majority of people with enhanced abilities on this planet who are willing to do something to help others are either already at our base, or they’ve been sent into exile. If we’re lucky things will continue as they have for the past six months where none of us bothers the others. If we’re not someone finds some leverage on one or more of them and I don’t particularly fancy going toe-to-toe with any of them again. If we bring them back we’re all in the same place, and the likelihood of someone finding a way to pit us against each other is smaller.’

‘You seem to think it likely someone will be able to get you to fight each other,’ Frau Leibner comments. ‘What makes you so sure this is going to happen?’

‘It already did,’ Tony replies. ‘How else do you think we’re in this mess?’

The committee falls quiet and murmurs to each other. Ross looks like he wants to murder Tony.

‘You still cannot think it’s a good idea to just bring them all back,’ Aizama says after some quiet deliberation. ‘How can we know they won’t start another fight? And how are you going to contact them?

‘I wasn’t suggesting we bring them back and pretend nothing has happened,’ Tony tries to get his voice back to normal, but there’s still an edge of frustration there. ‘The Avengers had to change. We knew that, that’s why we signed the Accords. We have to show everyone that we’ve learned from our mistakes and we can still protect them. Besides I was one of the guys they were fighting. I need to know I can trust them as much as they need to know they can trust me.

‘I suggest we bring them back one or two at a time. Give them the opportunity to prove to us they want to work together again, give the public opportunity to accept them and see we’ve all accepted we went wrong, and give them the chance to learn to trust us again.’

‘And you think they’ll be happy to play happy families with you Stark? That the public will just accept them back with open arms like nothing ever happened? Ross challenges him.

‘What is it you had planned, Mr Stark?’ the UK representative asks.

‘Each of them comes back on mutually agreeable terms, Mr Cardy. Certain restrictions could be put in place, for example, or certain training regimes in order to enable them to control their powers better.’

‘You’re referring to Miss Maximoff I assume?’ he asks.

‘She isn’t the only one who would need training, but yes.’

Cardy sits back and speaks with the people either side of him. Ross isn’t given much input and this gives Tony a rather smug feeling which he tries to keep off his face. He’s not sure he succeeds.

‘We shall have to agree each set of terms as the individuals are discussed for return,’ Cardy says, turning to Tony once again and he can’t help but let out the slight breath he’d been holding. ‘Who did you intend to return first, Mr Stark? I sincerely hope not Captain Rogers.’

Tony shook his head. ‘Actually I was thinking of Agent Clint Barton and Scott Lang.’
A few of the Council members look surprised and Ross gives a derisive snort. ‘Oh this should be good,’ the Secretary General says.

‘And why those two in particular?’ Aizama asks.

‘They have families,’ Tony explains. ‘Let them come back on the understanding they are retired and are not to return to the field in any way unless called upon by us. Their equipment could be left with a neutral party that both sides can trust.’

‘And who would you suggest this neutral party is?’ Ross sneers.

Tony smirks. ‘King T’Challa.’

‘Aside from their families is there any other reason for your choice?’ Leibner asks.

Tony considers his next words before answering. ‘Bringing two back who are not going to be going into active duty gives us the opportunity to show those that will be that we can keep our side of any terms as long as they stick to theirs. It also gives all of us the opportunity to test how easy it will be to find mutually agreeable terms.’

The committee discuss his suggestions as if he isn’t there. This would have riled him up before, but he’s learned over the last few months to just let the discussion wash over him.

If Pepper could see me now, Tony muses, she’d never believe that Tony Stark could keep his mouth shut while being ignored by a room full of people.

Eventually Ross addresses him again and Tony pulls himself from his musings. Ross’ face is a picture of frustration. ‘Well Stark it seems that, yet again, I have been overruled and the Council agrees with you. If you can find a way to communicate this agreement with all parties and get their consent, they can come home.’

Tony tries to keep the triumphant smile from his face, merely nodding his head and taking his leave. He only lets it break out when he’s sat in his car and on his way back to the facility.

He hadn’t been allowed to meet them when they landed back on American soil. He knows it was Ross’ doing but he lets the man have his small victory. It’s enough for him to know that Scott and Clint are back with their families.

Well, and Scott’s Ant Man suit is on its way back from Wakanda; one of the things that he and T’Challa had organised during their first conversation. There are still plenty of Clint’s spare bows at the facility, which Tony continues to improve occasionally. And if one or two of them just so happened to have been misdirected during a storage clear out he has absolutely no idea where they ended up.

Tony has had the occasional message from them, to say thank you for getting them home and to let them know if he needed anything. But under the rules of the agreement they can’t have too much contact.

Now, a month later, he is standing on the tarmac waiting for the plane carrying Wanda Maximoff. He’d insisted she come next for Vision’s sake, and for the sake of his plan. It had taken a
lot of persuasion for the committee to allow it; and the two of them had had several conversations to make sure that any conditions put in place were only what she was comfortable with.

Vision and Rhodes are standing next to him, and if he didn’t know better he’d say the humanoid was nervous.

It starts as a black dot in the sky, then slowly grows into a smudge and, before they know it, the plane is gliding to a stop down the runway. Vision fiddles with the cuffs of his jumper and Tony resists the urge to smack his hands down. He briefly wonders if Pepper ever acted like that, then shakes those dangerous thoughts out of his head.

The plane door opens and Wanda calmly walks down the stairs flanked by two soldiers. One of Ross’ stipulations. As soon as her feet hit the tarmac, however, she starts to run towards them, a bright smile on her face.

‘Didn’t think you’d missed me that much, kiddo,’ Tony laughs, stepping forwards quickly and bringing her into a hug before she can reach her intended target. He feels her stiffen slightly and hurriedly mutters in her ear. ‘Don’t let them know about you and Vision. Play along for now and later you can have all the time you want. I promise.’

Pulling back he realises just how much he’s been using those previously forbidden words recently.

Wanda has a small smile on her face as she pulls away, trusting him to keep his promise. No one’s ever done that before. He decides he quite likes the feeling as the four of them head towards the parked car, Tony’s arm staying protectively around Wanda’s shoulders, just in case.

He sets her in the back seat next to Vision as Rhodes rides shot gun. He climbs in behind the wheel and can’t stop the smile on his face as he starts the engine, noticing the clasped hands of the pair in the backseat.

Vision had suggested cooking a traditional Sokovian dish to celebrate Wanda’s return and he and Rhodes had already prepared everything before they left for the airport. Tony still can’t pronounce the name of the dish, and if he’s honest there are far too many ingredients.

Rhodes goes to start warming it as soon as they get back while Vision helps Wanda take her things to her room. The two of them walk into the kitchen to Rhodes bodily throwing Tony out with orders to lay the table, and explaining his reasons to a giggling Wanda as they plate up.

‘You set the kitchen on fire one time and you never live it down,’ Tony grumbles, taking his plate and sitting at the table.

‘Tony it was our entire accommodation block,’ Rhodes argues, pointing his fork accusingly.

‘What were you even making?’ Wanda gasps between laughs.

‘Omelettes,’ Tony mumbles. ‘In my defence I’m better now.’

‘No you’re not,’ Rhodes replies.
‘I haven’t set a kitchen on fire in years!’

‘You still set fire to the food occasionally,’ Vision says, ‘and it still takes you two hours to make an omelette.’

The rest of the meal passes with friendly chatter, catching up on the more mundane aspects of each other’s lives. When they finish eating, all comfortably full, Tony turns to Rhodes. ‘Come on old man, let’s leave the youngsters in peace.’ As they stand to leave he pauses and looks back at Wanda and Vision. He knows he needs to have this conversation, but he’s a little averse to having it the first night. ‘I need to ask you to stay inside for a few days.’

‘You’re sending me to my room again?’ she accuses, eyes narrowing at him.

Tony shakes his head, raising his hands in a placating gesture. ‘No, I said I was asking you. Just until the circus,’ he gestures towards the gates of the facility where the journalists they’d had to drive through earlier had been camped, ‘has left. For your sake, Wanda, not mine. You don’t want to have to deal with the vultures, trust me. Let me deal with them, I’ve had a lifetime of practise,’ he gives her a small smile which she hesitantly returns and then nods.

He turns to look at the other two. ‘I’m also going to suggest that, whilst we’re getting everyone back, no one goes out alone.’

‘Why not?’ Rhodes asks.

‘You don’t think something will happen? One of us will get attacked?’ Wanda asks, a worried frown on her face.

‘I trust Ross about as far as I could throw Hulk one handed,’ Tony states. ‘I wouldn’t put it past him to contrive a situation where one of us has to use our powers to defend ourselves and spins it as us attacking the general populace.’

‘You seem to have been fine so far going to and from all those meetings,’ Rhodes points out, crossing his arms and giving Tony his I’m not taking any of your crap look.

‘I have FRIDAY recording everything from the minute I leave the facility,’ he explains. ‘You can do the same if you want, but I thought this would save some of your privacy.’

‘I think it’s a sensible suggestion,’ Vision interjects. ‘If you do even a cursory search of the internet you’ll see the Avengers are not universally liked, nor trusted. Anyone could try and do something to pull us apart again, especially seeing as we are particularly vulnerable in that respect at the present.’

‘Like Zemo did before,’ Wanda says quietly.

‘It’s only for now,’ Tony says, grabbing his glass from the table. ‘Until everyone’s attention is grabbed by the latest celebrity couple break up. Now that’s enough serious talk for one night. You two lovebirds go… do whatever it is you do. I don’t want to know. Have fun!’

Rhodes chuckles as he follows Tony out of the dining area, leaving a blushing Wanda with Vision.
Wanda grows in frustration, brushing a stray piece of hair out of her eyes and glaring into the blast containment chamber.

‘You’re getting it, Hermione, stop beating yourself up,’ Tony says, voice calm. ‘Now let’s try something different.’

It’s nearly a month since she arrived back in America and rejoined the team; she and Tony spent most mornings downstairs in the training room working on improving her control of her powers. She isn’t sure how he manages to fit in training with her, running out most afternoons to meet with Ross and the committee, keep up with his own training and inventing, made sure he was back almost every night for dinner with the team, and still manage to look after himself.

They’d started off small, improving the control of her powers that was already strong, and are now pushing for more intricate and powerful displays. Each fortnight they go to a nearby military base where she demonstrates her powers for a group of military officers that had been chosen by Rhodes. They’re all neutral parties and send reports back to the committee. She’d been surprised the first time, Rhodes and Tony had both come with her and Rhodes had joked with the military men as he would with any of the team. They treat her like another soldier and for that she’s grateful. They also listen when she tells them she’s getting tired, and stop the demonstration.

Now, she and Tony are focusing on improving her blast containment, after the incident in Lagos. It’s something she’s still struggling with, mainly because she’s scared of the same thing happening again.

‘Look we’ve worked out how strong a blast you can contain, now we’re reaching the stage where it’s too strong,’ Tony says, tone close to when he’s facing a problem with one of his inventions. ‘So what we need to do is find a different way of containing it.’

They’re silent for a few moments and they mull over the problem. Wanda tries but if she’s honest she’s getting a little tired, and is starting to worry they’ll never find a solution.

Trust Tony, she reminds herself, forcing herself to take calming breaths, he’s found a solution to so many problems with technology, this can’t be much different. Feeling her panic ebb away, she opens her eyes again and looks over at the man next to her, brow furrowed in thought. He’s so different to how he was before.
No, she realises. He’d always tried to do this much for the team before. He’d just been more flashy and arrogant about it. Losing the team seems to have mellowed the man, and Wanda couldn’t help but wish a little of the old arrogant Tony would come back. He may have been a pain in the arse, but he was also entertaining. This new Tony seems to carry a huge weight, and she doesn’t know how to help him.

Suddenly Tony straightens up, snapping his fingers. ‘I’ve got it!’ Wanda jumps slightly at his outburst.

‘Care to enlighten those of us not considered a genius?’ she jokes.

‘Well think of it like the old fashioned kettles you’d use on the hob,’ Tony explains, this is another change she’s noticed, he automatically explains things in much simpler terms. ‘When there’s too much steam the spout opens and lets it out, right? So what if you try and make a small opening on one side of the containment field, letting out energy in a controlled way until the blast is back at a level you can contain?’

Wanda considers this, Tony waiting patiently beside her. Eventually she nods. ‘I think I should be able to. Considering what we’ve been doing with the other aspects of my powers, I should be able to manage it. Theoretically anyway.’

Tony smirks at her. ‘Iron Man was a theory once, Hermione. What about we give the theory a shot?’ Wanda laughs and nods, feeling tired but wanting to at least give it a go before calling it a day. Tony’s smirk falls from his lips and he looks at her in concern. ‘You sure you’re up to this? We can always do this tomorrow.’

Wanda shakes her head. ‘One go. Then we’ll call it a day.’

Tony looks at her carefully, then nods and sets up the next blast in the chamber. ‘When you’re ready.’

Wanda takes a few breaths and then holds out her hands, red light dancing along her fingers as she prepares the largest containment field she can easily maintain. She gives Tony a nod and he presses the button to set off the bomb.

Her powers strain as she tries to contain the blast, a few beads of sweat appearing on her forehead as she concentrates on forming an opening at the top of the sphere. Immediately some of the blast escapes, easing the pressure on the rest of it. What she isn’t prepared for is the blast pushing against the sides of the opening and disrupting her powers. The sphere disappears and the blast explodes in the containment chamber.

She lowers her hands and looks at her feet. ‘I’m sorry,’ she mumbles.

Tony places a comforting hand on her shoulder. ‘No one manages it first time,’ he tells her. ‘Remind me to show you the video footage from when I made the Mark II, there’s a reason DUM-E is no longer allowed near a fire extinguisher.’ She gives him a small smile. ‘The question I should be asking you is: do you think it will work?’

Wanda looks at him, surprised at the calm and inquisitive look on his face. No blame for the attempt having gone wrong, just curiosity. ‘Maybe,’ she says slowly, ‘the blast pushed against the edges of the opening and it took me by surprise. Perhaps if I wasn’t as tired I may have been able to control it.’

Tony claps his hands, rubbing them together, a smile on his face. ‘Then we’ll give it another
go tomorrow. Come on, let’s go grab some lunch; you’ve earned it you did well today kiddo.’

‘Thanks, Tony,’ Wanda says, following him towards the door. ‘For everything.’

He rubs the back of his head awkwardly and looks as though he’s about to say something when an alarm sounds. ‘You’ve got to be kidding me,’ he groans. He looks over at her and motions for her to follow. ‘Briefing room, Wanda. They want to call us in.’

‘What’s the situation?’ Tony asks as they enter the briefing room, Rhodes is already sat at the long table, a tablet in his hands. Vision hasn’t arrived yet.

‘All that’s been sent through is that it’s a hostage situation in New York,’ Rhodes answers.

‘That would be a matter for the local police force surely?’ Vision asks as he appears through the wall.

‘Vis, how many times do I have to tell you: just because the door is open doesn’t mean you can go through the wall?’ Tony grumbles.

‘He is right though,’ Wanda says. ‘Shouldn’t the police be dealing with it?’

‘Let’s see what my favourite person has to say about the situation. Secretary Ross,’ Tony greets the man who has just appeared on the large screen in front of them. Wanda hears an edge to his voice and is beginning to get some idea of the full extent of Tony’s dislike for the man. ‘Any particular reason you want us to help out the NYPD? Do you owe the Commissioner money?’

‘I don’t have time for your smart mouth, Stark,’ Ross glares at him. ‘It was either the army or you to be called in and I thought this might be a good little test to see how your newest member is fitting back into the team.’ He turns to look at her and Wanda manages to hold his gaze. ‘The police have already tried sending in three negotiators. All of them have been sent out dead, and the perpetrators are using advanced weaponry, possibly made from alien remnants from the Battle of New York.’

‘How many hostages, Secretary?’ Rhodes asks, slipping into what Wanda has come to recognise as his ‘military face’.

‘Six in total,’ comes the reply, Ross turning to face Rhodes. ‘It seems to have been some kind of science event that was taking place. The majority of the crowd have managed to get out. The speaker, a Dr Judith Monroe, is one of the hostages.’

‘I recognise that name,’ Rhodes says.

‘Dr Monroe has been doing some work with Dr Jane Foster,’ Vision supplies, ‘she’s become one of the leading lights in theoretical inter-world travel.’

‘And the other hostages?’ Rhodes asks.

‘All audience members. We’ve got them identified as a Sarah Whittle, August Brain, Emma Lockwood, and two high-schoolers Edward Leeds and Peter Parker.’

Wanda notices the atmosphere in the room get tense and glances at Tony out of the corner of
her eye. His shoulders are stiff but his facial expression hasn’t changed.

‘Alright Ross send over all the information you have we’ll review it on the way over,’ he says, standing up.

The Secretary nods. ‘I want a full mission report when you return. And try not to screw this up, Stark.’ With that the link disconnects and the screen goes blank.

‘Tony-’ Rhodes starts.

‘The kid’s in trouble, Rhodey, and knowing him he’s just waiting to play the hero. We need to get him home,’ Tony cuts his friend off.

‘Sorry, who?’ Wanda asks, looking between the three men.

‘Peter Parker is Spiderman,’ Tony replies, heading for the door. ‘You met him in Germany. Now suit up everyone we’ll review everything on the way.’

‘Wait, the kid that stole Steve’s shield? He’s one of the hostages?’ Wanda asks, scrambling to her feet, her mind racing. ‘The one who wouldn’t stop talking?’

Rhodes gives a strained smile. ‘Just you wait till you meet him outside of the battlefield, he’s even more of a talker. But he’s a good kid. We’ve managed to keep his identity away from Ross so far. But as soon as he becomes an Avenger that’ll all be gone. Tony’s making sure he at least gets to finish college, since he turned down the offer the last time.’

‘He turned down being an Avenger?’ she’s finding it a little difficult to take in all this information. ‘Why haven’t I seen him here?’

‘Less chatter people! Rhodey get your suit and get one of the planes ready. Wanda, Vision get what you need meet at the landing pad. Now!’ Tony yells, racing down a corridor to collect his suit.

‘Pete we’re going to get out of this right?’ Ned mutters next to him, trying not to be overheard by their captors.

‘Yeah, course we will,’ Peter whispers back, ‘just give me a bit of time to think of a plan.’ Truthfully though he wasn’t sure how well this was going to end. His mask was in his rucksack which was still over by their seats; all of the hostages had been taken up onto the stage and there was no way he was going to be able to get to it in time. That meant if he was going to do anything he had to reveal who he was. But he wasn’t even sure he’d be able to do anything without someone getting shot by the frankly terrifying guns the group were holding. Everyone who’d been shot had all been burnt to shells.

‘Why don’t you call in the Avengers?’ Ned asks, shooting a worried glance at the masked man who’s guarding them.

‘It’s not like I have a bat-signal for the Avengers Ned,’ he says, looking around to make sure none of the others can hear their conversation.
‘What about Mr Stark’s phone number? Surely you could—’

‘Hey!’ the barrel of a gun suddenly appears in Peter’s face and he jumps back, resisting the urge to set off a web shooter. ‘What did I tell you little shits about talking?’

‘We’re sorry, sir,’ Peter manages to mumble before Ned can say anything.

‘Sorry won’t cut it you little shit,’ and then the butt of the gun is smacked into the side of his head and he has to blink to clear the stars. He hears Ned calling his name and tries to wave a hand to show his friend he’s fine.

‘Hey leave the kid alone!’ one of the other hostages says, a middle aged man with a balding head.

‘Or what, tough guy? What you gonna do?’ the man walks over to him and kicks him onto his back.

‘Hey, did I hear this kid mention Tony Stark?’ another of the men says, nudging the back of Ned’s head with the end of his gun.

Peter feels icy dread settle into his stomach. ‘I’m an intern at Stark Industries,’ he blurts out, making them turn to look at him. ‘Ned was just asking if I thought Mr Stark would turn up.’

The man pushes Ned into the floor, and Peter winces in sympathy at his friend’s grunt of pain, then comes over to him. Grabbing a handful of his hair and pulling his head back to make him look in the man’s face, Peter does his best to hold back a pained cry as the man shakes him.

Another masked figure chooses that moment to enter the main area where they’re being held, a woman this time. ‘We’ve got a problem,’ she says, capturing her friends’ attention.

‘What is it?’ the man who is obviously the leader of this little bunch snaps at her, looking up from his phone that he’s been focussed on for the past twenty minutes.

‘The Avengers,’ she replies, and Peter feels the room ripple with tension. He doesn’t dare look over at Ned.

‘Boss we need to go,’ the man holding his hair says, giving him another shake.

‘No,’ the leader responds. ‘We wait for the pick up. They need her,’ he gestures towards Dr Monroe. There’s a few moments quiet while everyone, terrorist and hostage alike, are focussed on the leader. Peter wonders if now would be a good time to make a move, but before he can make a decision the leader turns to look at him with a slight smile. Suddenly he wishes he could relive Homecoming night. ‘The kid said he was a Stark intern right? Put your vest on him Carl. We’re paying a little visit to Iron Man.’

‘Tony Stark!’ the leader shouts, his voice making Peter’s ears ring. ‘I’ve got something that apparently belongs to you! Why don’t we have a little chat?’ He presses the gun into the back of Peter’s head and hisses into his ear. ‘You keep your hands on your head, do exactly as I say and don’t say a word. Got it?’ Peter hesitates and the man adds, ‘one wrong move and I’ll set that vest off taking Tony Stark with you.’
Peter nods, casting a glance down at the bomb vest that hangs loosely around him. All the terrorists are prepared to blow rather than be taken it seems.

He glances up as the familiar sound of repulsors fills the lobby of the building where the leader’s brought him, and Iron Man comes into view through the blasted out glass doors.

‘Stay two steps in front of me, kid,’ the leader mutters, pushing him forwards. Peter does as he’s told, hands on the back of his head and his eyes firmly on the glass covered carpet in front of him. He hates everything about this situation. He was just really hoping he’d never disappoint Mr Stark ever again.

_Great job you’re doing on that front, Parker_, he berates himself, hearing a metallic thud as Iron Man lands a couple of feet in front of him.

Chapter End Notes

Hi everyone. I'm updating two chapters a week for the next few weeks as this story is already posted on fanfiction.net and I'm a couple of chapters ahead on there. I'll have caught up soon though, so don't worry.

Thank you so much for all the kudos and bookmarks so far. Big thank you as well to my first anonymous reviewer! I hope this is going in a direction you enjoy.

Do let me know what you think of these two chapters. I hope you enjoyed them.

L x

P.S. I try and do a sneak peak at the next chapter, so here's Chapter 4's:

‘You expect me to know every intern that comes through our doors when I’m busy Avenging?’ Tony asks, wishing Wanda would hurry up. The leader shrugs. ‘Well if he doesn’t mean anything to you, then he’s not any use to me,’ he holds the gun a little straighter and turns to Peter. ‘Any last words, kid?’
Tony and the rest of the team try to get the hostage situation under control.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 4 – Suicide Play

Tony feels that he’s walked into a nightmare.

‘FRIDAY talk to me,’ he mutters, landing and walking slowly towards Peter, taking in the vest hanging around his torso and the gun pointing at his head. The kid is refusing to meet his gaze which is worrying him.

‘The vest has enough explosives to bring the lobby down,’ the mechanical voice replies, ‘the man standing behind Peter has a similar vest.’

‘Rhodey, Vision get round the back and see if you can spot the other hostages. Wanda I may need your help but keep out of sight,’ he says quietly, then turns to address the terrorist. ‘If this is some way of telling me I have a long lost kid, I got to admit it’s one I haven’t seen before. Bit dramatic though.’

‘We’re nearly at the back, Tony,’ Rhodes says through the comms. ‘Vision’s going to try phasing through some of the walls to get a good look. Wanda’s found a side door and is coming round, she should be with you in a few minutes as long as she doesn’t run into any trouble.’

‘This kid seemed to think he was one of your interns,’ the terrorist says, Tony can’t make out any features other than dark eyes, most of his face covered by a woollen mask. Man these guys really need to find some originality.

‘You expect me to know ever intern that comes through our doors when I’m busy Avenging?’ Tony asks, wishing Wanda would hurry.

The leader shrugs. ‘Well if he really doesn’t mean anything, then he’s not of any use to me,’ he holds the gun a little straighter and turns to Peter. ‘Any last words, kid?’

‘Wait!’ Tony says, resisting the urge to raise his hands to emphasise his point, knowing it would probably be taken as a threat. *Shit this isn’t working. What’s your name kid?* Just play along, a few more minutes and we should have some back up.

‘Peter, sir,’ the kid finally looks up from the floor, and Tony can’t quite place the look in his eyes.

‘Well Peter nice to meet you. I’m your boss. I promise this isn’t usually part of the job,’ he feels a small sense of accomplishment at the small smile that creeps onto Peter’s face.

‘Finally taking an interest in your employees, Stark?’ the leader jeers.
‘What is it you want to let the kid go?’

‘You let us all walk out of here unharmed, and take Dr Monroe to a little house party we have planned. The rest are yours.’

‘A house party and you didn’t invite me? What if I’m insulted and say no?’

‘I blow the kid apart, taking you down with him. I’m not so sure your fancy suit could withstand a point blank bomb blast like that.’

‘It’ll take you down as well,’ Tony points out.

‘I’m here,’ Wanda says through the comms and Tony sees a flash of red through the door behind the terrorist.

‘About time,’ he grumbles. ‘Stay out of sight and get the bomb vest off the kid. I’ll keep attention on me as long as possible.’

‘No change there,’ he can hear the smile in Wanda’s voice but doesn’t respond. He’ll get her back later.

‘I’m prepared to go down,’ the leader shrugs, pulling back his jacket to reveal an identical vest to the one draped around Peter. ‘We all are.’

‘So every one of you bastards has one of those things on then?’ Tony asks, relieved when he spots tendrils of red light creeping around the straps on the front of Peter’s vest. ‘And the others are supposed to set theirs off if yours goes off am I right?’

‘I wouldn’t say that was such a huge leap for someone of your apparent genius.’

‘And there’s what? Five, six of you?’ he purposefully keeps his face turned towards the terrorist as the bindings come free, Wanda holding the vest in place. He lowers his voice again, ‘FRIDAY prepare me a knockout dart.’

‘Certainly, boss.’

‘You expect me to give away our grand plan?’ the leader sneers.

‘Eventually,’ Tony responds. ‘Though I was hoping you’d do it right about NOW!’

Wanda’s power rips the vest from Peter. He drops to the floor, just as Tony fires his knockout dart. The terrorist’s hand goes to his neck, pulling out the dart with a confused look on his face, before he crumples to the floor.

Tony really wants to jump out of the suit and make sure the kid’s alright. He’s not sure he’ll ever admit just how scared he was during that whole exchange. Instead he settles for lifting the faceplate and kneeling next to the brown haired boy.

‘Peter, you alright?’

‘Mr Stark I am so so-’ Peter begins, tears forming in his eyes.

Tony raises a hand, cutting him off. ‘Save it kid. You alright to help or do I need to send you to the jet to keep an eye on our friend here?’

Peter’s face becomes determined. ‘Ned’s in there, Mr Stark. I’m not going anywhere till he’s
Tony nods as Wanda joins them. ‘Where’s your suit?’

Peter pulls up a sleeve to reveal the concealed suit underneath his clothing. ‘My mask is still in my bag though.’

‘Alright you and Wanda get to the auditorium, find your mask and wait for instructions. FRIDAY will set you up with comms as soon as the mask is on. I’ll make sure our friend here isn’t going anywhere and then join you. Vision and Rhodey should already be in place monitoring the other hostages.’

Peter nods and gets to his feet, gesturing for Wanda to follow as he begins to remove his shirt, revealing the blue and red costume underneath. Tony can’t help but feel proud of him.

* * * * * * * *

‘So are you Tony’s secret weapon or something? Wanda asks as they move quickly and quietly along the main corridor towards the auditorium. She’s impressed just how quietly the guy can move.

‘More of a nuisance,’ he replies, voice low. He glances over at her, ‘secret weapon seems to be more your thing. Didn’t I fight you in Germany?’

Wanda looks away and nods.

‘How’d you get your powers? I mean not that you can’t be born with them, but you know, people generally aren’t. I got bitten by a radioactive spider, but I doubt that was what happened to you. Unless it was a paper cut or something from a magic book or-’

‘Do you ever shut up?’ Wanda asks, not quite able to believe there’s someone alive who can talk more than Tony Stark. He snaps his mouth shut, looking down at the floor and she can’t help but feel bad. It’s probably a nerves thing. He’s got a score to settle with this guy once he’s back at the facility.

* * * * * * *

Wanda lifts her hand, wiggling her fingers with a smile as red light dances around her finger tips. ‘Leave that to me.’

He looks at her with big brown eyes, then down at her hand, and then back up again.

‘Don’t worry, unlike your spider I don’t bite,’ she says with a grin.

He smiles and takes the offered hand. ‘Peter Parker.’ She feels a twinge in her heart at the familiar first name with such an unfamiliar face, and wonders briefly what her brother would have made of this guy. When he releases her hand they continue walking and he becomes serious again. ‘There’s seven more of them, all but one are wearing those bomb vests. They were all with the hostages when I left. My mask is in my rucksack halfway down the seats; if we can get it I’ll be a lot more help. Mr Stark wants me to keep my identity hidden as long as possible. If we can get close enough I can web it, but they’re quite likely to notice so we’ll lose the element of surprise.’

Wanda looks nervously for a moment, then nods. ‘There’s a screen along the back, if we can get through the door it’ll provide cover before we hit the aisle. At least two of the terrorists will
be guarding it as it’s the main way in and out of the auditorium apart from the stage doors.’

‘Vis, you got all that?’ Wanda asks into the comms.

‘I did. I’m assuming you’d like a distraction?’ his voice comes through into her ear.

‘Give me two minutes to get to you first,’ Tony cuts across the conversation. ‘Rhodey’s calling the shots here, but we do need to cause enough of a distraction for the two of them to get in. You two focus on getting Pete’s mask, then join in getting everyone out. Especially Dr Monroe. Seems she’s guest of honour at a house party.’

‘That’s one way of saying ‘intended kidnapping victim’ I haven’t heard before,’ Rhodes mutters, then starts setting out the plan of attack.

* * * * * * * *

It doesn’t take long to get the situation under control. Tony’s especially proud considering it’s the first time they’ve had a situation since Wanda’s been back and for Peter working with them since Germany.

The rest of the team are taking the captives back to the facility on the jet. Agents are debriefing the other hostages and helping police prepare bodies for identification. It seems Ross had neglected to mention the fact there had already been casualties amongst the audience before the majority had got out.

Tony is currently sat in the back of a car with the kid, being driven back to his home by Happy and giving him a chance to cover up his trademark suit.

Peter is worryingly quiet and Tony isn’t sure what to do. They sit in silence while he pulls a shirt and jeans over his suit, slipping his mask back into the side pocket of his bag, Tony glancing towards him out of the corner of his eye every so often.

Before he can figure out what to say, and Tony will never admit to not quite being able to work anything out, the car pulls up to a stop outside the apartment block. ‘Come on, kid, I’ll walk you up,’ he says, opening his car door, ‘you look beat.’

Peter just nods and mutters a thank you. He’s telling the truth the kid does look beat, and if it isn’t for the fact Tony knows this kid is Spiderman, he’d be very worried. Just right now though he looks like a kid whose been taken hostage and is still trying to process everything. And again, if Tony didn’t know this kid is Spiderman and what he’s been through in the past, he’d assume that’s all it is.

They climb the stairs and Peter unlocks the door to the apartment he shares with his aunt, and Tony has to marvel at how the two most talkative people on the team are being silent. ‘Aunt May I’m back,’ he calls, though his voice isn’t as strong as usual.

‘Peter!’ the relief is obvious in May’s voice as she appears and draws the boy into a tight hug. ‘Oh my god I saw on the news that there was a hostage situation and I couldn’t remember if it was the speaker you’d been to see, and then I was calling the helpline trying to find out if you were there. And why didn’t you pick up your phone young man?’ She pushes him back to say the last bit firmly into his face, then her face falls as she takes in his expression. She finally notices Tony standing behind him, and he closes the door softly. ‘Don’t you dare tell me you pulled him into that situation, Mr Stark.’ Her voice is deadly.

‘No Aunt May,’ Peter says tiredly, before Tony can answer, ‘the Avengers saved us.’
‘Why don’t you go get changed, kid?’ Tony suggests, ‘I’ll explain what happened to your aunt.’

Peter just nods and goes to his room, closing the door behind him while Tony explains to May Parker just what happened.

‘So what happened to make him silent if this is nothing worse than he’s faced before?’ May demands, arms crossed over her chest.

Tony rubs a hand over his face. ‘I have no idea. Which means I don’t know what to do to help.’

May’s frown deepens. ‘Mr Stark you know I’m not happy with Peter being Spiderman. I’d be much happier if he stopped. But I know he’s not going to do that. Especially not with you helping him.’

‘I know. But Peter’s special, Ms Parker. More special than any other boy his age. He’s incredibly smart and his heart is in the right place. But he also has these powers, and if he doesn’t find a way to control them he may end up getting caught and used as some kind of experiment by the military, or by someone with less than honourable intentions. He keeps the mask people look out for the suit; they focus on Spiderman and not on Peter Parker and he can keep the two lives separate as long as possible. If we take away Spiderman then the kid has these powers and nothing to do with them and he’ll go mad. He’ll constantly be holding back his strength and his speed and he won’t have any outlets.’

May’s face falls and she nods, her crossed arms now hugging herself. ‘I just don’t know how to keep him safe when he’s Spiderman.’

‘That’s my job, Ms Parker,’ Tony says quietly. ‘If we can work together we can keep him safe.’ He’s very aware that Peter can probably hear everything they’re saying but he doesn’t let that stop him. ‘When I heard Peter was one of the hostages I’ll admit I was scared. I was scared he’d do something, well incredibly Peter trying to save people and would get himself hurt. Or worse,’ he has to swallow past the fear that stirs up at this thought. ‘I was scared we weren’t going to get there quick enough and we’d lose him.’

‘You were scared of losing Spiderman,’ May says, though he notices her stance is a little less tense, and the statement is bordering on being a question.

Tony shakes his head. ‘As heartless as this sounds, if any of the Avengers are lost we can always find someone to replace the gap, either in a suit of armour or because we’re lucky enough to stumble across someone else with incredible gifts. I was scared we’d lose Peter. I told you you’re nephew is an incredible kid, Ms Parker, and I meant it. I promise I’ll do all I can to keep him safe.’

May smiles a little and gives a huff of laughter. ‘You’ve never had to care for children before have you, Mr Stark?’ He shakes his head. ‘You can do everything possible to try and keep them safe but they’ll always find a way to get into trouble. Sometimes because they go looking for it, sometimes because it finds them. If you want to continue being a presence in Peter’s life you better be prepared to be as scared as you’ve been today a lot more often.’

‘He’s probably going to give me more grey hairs than being Iron Man ever did,’ Tony quips, trying to find some steady ground.

‘I’ll give you the name of my hair dye brand,’ she says with a smile, then unfolds her arms and goes towards Peter’s bedroom. ‘Now let’s see if I can find out what’s eating him.’

As the door closes behind her Tony mutters, ‘FRIDAY give me ears.’

‘Yes, boss.’ He knows he shouldn’t, but he needs to know what’s bothering the kid.
‘Pete?’ he hears May say. ‘You going to tell me what’s wrong?’ The bed creaks as she sits down.  

There’s a pause before Peter’s voice, sounding very small, comes through the ear piece. ‘It’s just… every time something big happens all I seem to do is screw up.’

‘What are you talking about?’ May asks.

‘I just… I can’t… I’m supposed to be a hero and save people, that’s what everyone expects of Spiderman. But I didn’t do anything. I just let them kill people and take us hostage. Then they used me against Mr Stark and,’ he trails off and Tony can hear the tears in his eyes when he adds, ‘I just keep disappointing him and I don’t want to do that anymore Aunt May.’

If anyone needed proof that Tony Stark has a heart, he could have given them both halves with those words. Knowing he’s probably going to be in big trouble with May for doing it, he knocks on the door briefly then steps into the room without waiting for an invitation. He sees the kid sitting on the bed with May’s arm around his shoulders.

Grabbing the chair at the kid’s desk he wheels it to sit in front of him. ‘Now I need you to listen to me very carefully, Peter Parker,’ he says, ignoring the slight glare May sends his way and looking straight into the tear filled brown eyes. The kid is desperately trying to keep any tears from falling, but nods and looks down at his lap. ‘And I need you to look at me while I say it,’ Tony adds, waiting until he looks back up before continuing. ‘You were something special today kid. You were in the middle of a hostage situation, in which your best friend was also involved. You were taken out, with a bomb strapped to you and a gun to your head, and placed in a bargaining situation. And you know what? You kept your head about you. You kept your cool and you followed very unclear instructions, and you trusted in a team that you’d not had the opportunity to train with properly. One of which you saved the life of. I saw you take out that terrorist that was about to fire on Wanda, without you I’d be having to explain to Vision why I allowed his girlfriend to get fried. I’m proud of you, kid, you acted like a true Avenger today.’

‘But before you turned up I did nothing,’ Peter almost shouts. ‘People died because I did nothing, because I didn’t have my stupid mask on!’

Tony sighs. ‘Kid you can’t save everyone all the time. Sometimes you have to put your own survival first.’

‘What’s the point in being a hero if you can’t save people?’ Peter asks, looking down at his hands again. This time Tony lets him.

He considers his next words carefully. ‘Yes as heroes it is our job to save people and to protect them. Sometimes we can save everyone, usually when there’s smaller numbers and it’s a relatively easy situation to control, like on the ferry last year.’ He pauses for a moment and then continues. ‘And then there are times when we can’t save everyone, and all you can do is save as many as possible, while also keeping yourself safe.’ He raises a hand when Peter starts to argue. ‘If you keep yourself safe you have the chance to save more people in the future. You do the suicide play for the person who’s just going to get shot two seconds after you? No point. Not when you can potentially save the remaining ten people if you’re still alive and uninjured.

‘Sometimes the suicide play is worth it. Means you’ll be able to save tens, hundreds, if not thousands of lives. Like when I flew the nuke up through the wormhole in New York, or when Captain America flew his plane into the ice in the War. But you only make that call kid, when it’s the only option you have; when there’s no one else to do it, and there is the certainty of everyone you’re doing it for to survive. Otherwise it’s you first, and everyone else second.’
‘But—’

‘I know it’s hard to accept,’ Tony cuts him off. ‘Especially when everyone says that heroes are the selfless. But look at it this way: you throw your life away for someone who ends up being killed anyway because you’re not able to take out the bad guy, you aren’t there the next week to get the bus of school children empty when it’s hanging off the bridge.

‘How many people do you think we lost in New York? In Segovia? How many do you think Cap lost during the war? Hell he thought he’d failed to save his best friend for years, then found out he’d been tortured by the Soviets into a brainless weapon. I thought I’d lost Pepper when I faced the Mandarin. Wanda lost her twin brother in Segovia. We lose people, Peter. What matters is that you remember the people that you lose, and you keep trying to save others.’

Watery brown eyes look back at him and Peter nods. ‘I understand,’ he whispers, wiping at his eyes with his sleeve.

‘And kid? You should know better than anyone I make it very clear when I’m not happy. So don’t you ever think I’m not proud of you,’ then Tony does something he’ll deny to anyone who asks. He pulls Peter into a hug, only relaxing when he feels the kid’s arms wrap around his back.

‘Ok, getting too long now,’ he says after a few moments, earning himself a small smile from Peter. May gives him a grateful look over Peter’s shoulder. He stands up, pulling his suit jacket into place with a swift tug. ‘I better get back and see to our new guests. I expect you’ll be paying your usual monthly visit to us next weekend?’ At the kid’s bright smiled nod, he then adds. ‘I may have to speak to your aunt at some point about possibly making them bi-weekly when we’ve everyone back,’ he says half to himself and half to the other two occupants.

Tony leaves the apartment with a secret smile on his face as he hears Peter’s excitable voice already trying to convince May to let him come up to the facility more often. All previous sadness forgotten. Tony knows the guilt will come back, but hopefully, tonight at least, he’ll sleep soundly.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: So I may have forgotten quite how long this chapter was and how much of it is taken up by Tony & Peter’s bonding father-son style time. Please do let me know what you think, I want to know if I’m on the right track, or if there’s anything you’d particularly like to see over the course of the story. Thank you so much to everyone who has left kudos and favourited this story so far, I’m so grateful! It is going to be a slow burn with the relationships I’m afraid so do bear with me. Hope you’ve enjoyed this chapter.

L x

Here’s a sneak peak at chapter 5:

‘Spidey baby!’ the excitable shout is all the warning Peter gets before a red blur tackles him and they both go tumbling over the side of the building.
Reacting on instinct Peter wraps an arm around his attacker and sends a web up to stop their fall about twenty feet from the alley floor below them. He looks down to see who was stupid enough to tackle someone off the side of a building and sees none other than—
‘Deadpool,’ he growls, unceremoniously dropping the red suited man the rest of the
way to the ground.
Fanboy

Chapter Summary

Peter deals with an excitable fan, and Bucky prepares to head back to America.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 5 – Fanboy

A few days after the hostage incident finds Peter swinging through the streets of Queens. He’s had a pretty busy patrol today, the universe is obviously wanting to prove Mr Stark right.

Now he gets the opportunity to just swing through the streets, his mind clearing with every stretch of his muscles and the wind rushing past his ears. He finds a rooftop in one of the less busy areas to take a break.

*Maybe I should give Happy a call and let him know how the patrol went,* Peter muses, knowing that Mr Stark wants him to keep up with the reports. He’s not entirely sure why, seeing as he’s technically off the ‘training wheels’ program; but he enjoys the chance to reflect on what he’s managed to achieve.

Standing and looking over the city he takes out his phone and calls Happy. He’s not worried any more when it goes straight to voicemail, he’s worked out it means it can be saved for Mr Stark to listen to. ‘Hey Happy it’s me. So had a bit of an interesting patrol today. Started off pretty slow, there was a guy grabbed a lady’s bag right under me, which you know not so smart, and I managed to string him to a lamppost and give the lady back her bag. Then some tourists got really excited and wanted a picture, so that took up a good five minutes; they also wanted directions to somewhere, I think it was Central Park, but I’m not sure. That’s where I sent them anyway.

‘Then things got a bit more interesting with a drunk driver that the police were struggling to get under control. At least I think he was drunk, he was all over the road at any rate. If he wasn’t drunk he needs driving lessons. Managed to get people out the way, then helped stop him with a bit of webbing across a clear street. Think I’m just going to do another quick sweep and then head back ho-’

‘Spidey baby!’ the excitable shout is all the warning Peter gets before a red blur tackles him and they tumble over the side of the building.

Reacting on instinct Peter wraps an arm around his attacker and sends a web up to stop their fall about twenty feet from the alley floor. He looks down to see who’s stupid enough to tackle someone off the side of a building and sees none other than-

‘Deadpool,’ he growls, unceremoniously dropping the red suited man the rest of the way. He stays hanging where he is, bringing the phone back to his ear which he’s miraculously kept hold of during the drop. ‘Sorry Happy I’ve just to deal with an idiotic fanboy. I’ll call you when I get home. If you get reports of a masked man being webbed to a wall saying he’ll die of hunger ignore them. He won’t die.’
‘Aww Spidey you caught me. You do care!’ comes the annoying voice from the alley.

‘What the hell are you playing at, Deadpool?’ he demands, letting go of the web and climbing down the wall another couple of feet so he doesn’t have to shout.

The red suited man holds his hands up, eyes of his mask wide. ‘I just wanted to see my favourite superhero. Can I have a picture? You let those tourists have a picture. Bet they’ll be going home and showing all their friends the proof they met the amazing Spiderman. And here’s little ole me with nothing to show for having met New York’s most selfless superhero.’ His tone is light and joking, but Peter can’t stop the guilt welling up.

‘Maybe you should actually go and find him,’ he spits at the other man, ‘I’m sure he’ll give you a picture.’ With that he launches himself back up the wall and onto the rooftop.

He pauses once he reaches the roof, lifting up the front of his mask to try and wipe at his watering eyes. He closes them against the images of broken bodies across the auditorium floor, of bodies crumpling to the floor of negotiators sent to save him. Killed by weapons that shouldn’t have been in the hands of humans, let alone terrorists.

‘Mask down, baby boy,’ comes a voice behind him. How did he get up here so fast? Peter thinks, hurriedly pulling the mask down before turning to face Deadpool. ‘What do you want now? I’d quite like to swing around and do a quick sweep before going home.’

‘I’d quite like you to swing my way,’ Deadpool replies, the mask pulling over his face shows his grin.

‘Get lost, Deadpool,’ he says, turning and heading for the opposite side of the building.

‘What happened?’ the man asks, tone unusually serious.

Despite his best intentions, Peter’s walk falters and he knows no matter what he says next Deadpool isn’t going to believe. Not unless he tells him the truth. ‘What are you talking about? I’ve had a long patrol-’

‘Yeah come on Spidey, I heard most of your report. I doubt directing tourists to Central Park is fucking taxing.’ There’s a slight pause. ‘Is it to do with the hostage situation the other day?’

Peter spins so fast he’s surprised he doesn’t give himself whiplash. ‘How do you know about that?’

‘It was all over the news that the amazing Spiderman helped the Avengers with a hostage situation,’ Deadpool shrugs, then he grins again. ‘I’m right aren’t I?’ Peter curses himself and turns to leave again. ‘It’s obviously bothering you, Spidey. What happened?’

‘And why would I tell you?’ he snaps, preparing to shoot a web.

‘Because I might understand what it’s like for things to not work out like you intended.’ It’s not the words that stop him shooting the web and swinging off.

He can’t quite place the emotion behind the words, but it makes him turn and sit down on the edge of the building with a sigh. Deadpool doesn’t move closer as he explains, keeping as much identifiable information out as possible. ‘People died because I didn’t have my stupid mask!’ He finishes, eyes on the ground at his feet not daring to look at the other man. Probably thinks I’m being an idiot.
‘You can’t save everyone, baby boy.’

‘Yeah I’ve already had that talk from Mr Stark,’ Peter snaps, standing up and facing away. ‘I should go,’ he says, preparing his web shooters.

‘Wait!’ Deadpool grabs hold of his arm before he can shoot one. He hurriedly lets go and stands back, hands up. ‘Just hear me out before you run off.’

Against his better judgement Peter nods, crossing his arms over his chest. ‘You’ve got two minutes. If you start spouting the same stuff as Mr Stark I’m leaving mid-sentence.’

The man just shrugs. ‘Fair enough, I still get to look at your cute butt as you swing off.’

‘Any more comments like that and I’ll web your eyes before I do,’ Peter warns.

Deadpool’s hands go to either side of his face. ‘Spidey you’re so mean.’

‘Deadpool’ Peter growls in warning.

‘Alright, alright,’ he cocks his head to the side and puts his hands on his hips. ‘What if I gave you a potential out if you’re ever caught without your mask again?’

Peter frowns behind the mask. ‘What are you talking about?’

‘I’m a merc, baby boy,’ Deadpool explains. ‘I’m used to getting called into fucked up situations. What if I said I’d give you my contact, then if you’re up shit creek like that again, I’ll come kick the bastards’ ass?’

‘Why would you do that?’ he asks, suspicious of this apparent display of generosity.

‘You think I want my Spidey baby to get squished?’

‘You want me to owe you a favour is that it?’

The red covered head shakes side to side. ‘Nothing like that, baby boy.’

‘Then why offer to help me?’ Now Peter’s just confused.

Deadpool shrugs and looks away. ‘Look I’m a merc because I’m good at it and the pay’s fucking awesome. I don’t get a lot of chances to do the good thing.’

‘You want to be a hero?’ he can’t keep the surprise from his voice.

‘I want to be your hero, baby boy.’

Right, and we’re back to the flirting. ‘Whatever,’ he turns away from Deadpool again.

‘Just take the number, Spidey. Even if you never use it, at least you know it’s an option,’ the teasing lilt is still there in the merc’s voice, but Peter can tell he’s nervous.

Maybe he does actually want to help. Peter sighs. ‘It’s not that I don’t appreciate the offer, Deadpool,’ he says, ‘but I barely know you, and what I do know about is that you’re a killer with questionable sanity.’

The red clad mercenary’s shoulders slump and he shrugs. ‘I get it.’
He’s not sure what makes him say the next part. ‘Maybe in the future, when I know you a bit better. But for now I don’t think its a good idea.’

He didn’t think it was possible to see a face light up in what could only be described as glee through a mask. Apparently Deadpool is full of surprises. ‘Wait are you saying you want to know me better?’

Peter rolls his eyes, surprising himself by needing to hold back a smile. ‘See you around, Deadpool,’

‘I love you, Spidey!’ he hears the merc shout as he drops from the side of the building, firing a web and heading back towards home.

He’s not sure why, but a part of him feels a twinge of excitement at the possibility of spending some more time with the nutjob. Though he’s not sure what Mr Stark would think of his new friendship.

Well it’s not like I’m teaming up with him all the time, Peter reasons as he eases his window open and crawls in; dropping down in the centre of the room he allows himself a rebellious thought.

Maybe it’s better if I don’t tell Mr Stark about running into Deadpool so often. It’s not like he seems to want to hurt me, he’s even offering to come and help if I need it. As he pulls off his suit and puts on normal clothes to go have dinner with Aunt May he hesitates and takes out his phone, feeling a little disappointment at the lack of a new contact.

Maybe he just doesn’t think you can handle things anymore, a traitorous voice pipes up in the back of his brain. Maybe he’s just playing on your moment of weakness earlier to try and get closer to you and find out about you. He’ll probably sell you out to the highest bidder once he’s got all the information he needs.

‘Because I might understand what it’s like for things not to out like you intended’ the merc’s words and tone come floating back to him. Now he thinks maybe he can place some of the emotions in that voice: sadness and guilt. Peter suddenly realises how much he doesn’t know about the smart-mouthed-merc.

Since when do you care about Deadpool? Let alone what he thinks of you? That little voice pipes up again as he heads out of his door, following the smell of dinner and deciding the voice doesn’t need an answer.

Steve Rogers looks out over the green expanse of Wakanda, a light breeze keeping him cool as he leans on the railing. The door opens behind him and he turns to see the king and his best friend walking out side by side, apparently having finished their latest conversation with Tony.

Steve hasn’t spoken much with the man himself since that initial phone call, and he can’t help but feel a little hurt. It’s almost as if Tony doesn’t want to talk to him. Which he knows is ridiculous, but there’s a small voice in the back of his mind telling him that Tony should be including him in more of the conversations.

It’s not like you haven’t had the option to join them, he reminds himself as he straightens up. You’ve been hiding from him.

‘How did it go?’ he asks the two men as they join him in looking out over T’Challa’s country.

‘I leave in two days,’ Bucky replies, leaning on the rail next to Steve. Steve leans his back against it and looks back at the building they’ve called home for months.
'And the catch?' he asks.

Bucky laughs. ‘You know Stark calls it the same thing,’ Steve feels his chest clench uncomfortably at those words. ‘The terms,’ he shoots him a grin, ‘is that I’m accompanied by armed guards until being handed over to the team. We then have two months to try and cure me of this brain washing. If not then Secretary Ross believes he is taking me into custody.’

‘What?!? And Tony agreed to that?’

‘Of course he agreed to it,’ T’Challa says calmly. ‘Secretary Ross needs to believe he is in charge or none of you will be able to go home. What will happen is we will extract Sergeant Barnes and return him here if it looks as though the healing process will not be completed.’

‘The only problem,’ Bucky adds quietly. ‘Is if that happens its unlikely Ross will allow any of the rest of you to return.’

‘I don’t want to go back if we can’t all go,’ Steve places a hand on his friend’s shoulder. ‘Clint and Scott got back to their families and Wanda’s back with Vision. The rest of us can afford to wait and see.’

Bucky gives his friend a grateful smile. ‘Still that kid from Brooklyn that won’t back down, eh?’

Steve smiles back. ‘Well you’re still a jerk so I’d hate to be the one to break the mould.’ He feels the smile melt from his face as he looks back out over the trees. The doubts he’s been fighting for the past month creeping back.

‘What is on your mind, Captain?’ T’Challa asks. ‘You are becoming quieter with every mention of home. Do you not want to return?’

‘Of course I want to go home,’ Steve replies, not looking at either of them and staring out over the forest below them. ‘I’m just not sure how I feel about Tony being the one to get us all there.’

‘Why? Don’t you trust him?’ Bucky asks. ‘If you don’t trust him then why did you let the others go?’

‘It’s not that I don’t trust him,’ Steve argues, ‘it’s just I’m not sure I do trust him, either.’ He runs a hand over the back of his head, pulling a face. ‘I’m not making much sense am I?’

‘When do you ever?’ Bucky mutters.

‘What is it that worries you about Tony Stark, Captain?’ T’Challa asks calmly.

‘Tony was the one to champion the Accords in the first place,’ he explains, ‘and to hell with what we thought. And now he’s the one changing them; finding compromises. Tony Stark doesn’t compromise, he goes in all guns blazing then tries and fixes things afterwards. Ultron is the perfect example.

‘Now he’s working with politicians. A group of people he’s made it very clear he has no time for in the past. I just- he just-’

‘In some ways he is a different man, Captain,’ T’Challa says quietly, then starts to walk back inside. ‘Losing your family is a very difficult thing,’ he says over his shoulder. ‘To have lost them twice is a pain I cannot begin to imagine.’
A/N: Hi everyone. I hope you are continuing to enjoy this story. So this chapter was a little tricky. I’m not sure I’ve got Deadpool’s voice right yet, but I’ll keep trying. Do let me know what you think of the chapter or if there is anything you’d like to see or are looking forwards to seeing. Any suggestions for help with Deadpool’s voice would also be greatly appreciated.

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As always here’s a sneak peak at the next chapter:

‘The only place you aren’t allowed without permission is my workshop,’ Tony says, standing up and stretching. ‘But then no one is.’
‘He even took away my entry override,’ Rhodes gripes. ‘Though you should have seen his reaction when Vision phased through the wall to say good morning. It was priceless.’
‘I simply wanted to know if he wanted coffee,’ Vision manages to sound a little sheepish.
Let The Healing Begin

Chapter Summary

Bucky returns to the US and the team start the healing process. Tony takes on the council again and finds himself defending the man who killed his parents.

Tony does his best to not fidget as the plane rolls to a standstill on the tarmac. Rhodes and Vision are standing either side of him as they wait for the passengers to disembark.

‘You sure you’re ready for this, Tony?’ Rhodes asks, keeping his gaze fixed on the aircraft.

‘Do you think I would have agreed to this if I wasn’t?’ he retorts, pulling the sunglasses from his face.

‘Yes,’ both of them respond in unison.

He huffs in annoyance. ‘I was born ready for anything. Now smile for our new guest, ladies.’

The door of the plane opens and a soldier steps out, rifle held ready in his arms as he stands to one side; another two follow him out and quickly make their way down the stairs, standing to attention at either side of the bottom. All of their attention fixed on the door of the aeroplane.

‘What is this, a ballet or something? Hurry it up already,’ Tony says, making sure it’s just loud enough for the soldiers to hear as he makes his way forwards.

Another soldier, this one obviously the one in charge, exits the plane followed by a man in handcuffs, then the final two soldiers.

‘You going for the record of longest walk down stairs?’ he asks with his usual snark when the group finally reaches the tarmac. Ross had insisted on the armed guard, he hadn’t insisted Tony be nice to them, nor polite. ‘And what’s up with the metallic armbands?’

The soldier in charge salutes and Tony just about manages not to groan. He does roll his eyes though. ‘Sergeant Watson, Mr Stark. Our orders were to deliver the prisoner to you and ensure he did not escape.’

Holding up one finger he says, ‘ok one he is not a prisoner.’ He holds up a second taking a step closer. ‘Two, that doesn’t answer my question.’

Watson looks irritated. ‘Our orders were to deliver James Barnes to you, sir, and that has been accomplished with the help of the handcuffs.’

‘I suggested it, Stark,’ Bucky says evenly. Tony looks over at him and swears he can see a glint of amusement in the other man’s eyes. Maybe they will get along after all.

‘Then I suggest you release Sergeant Barnes, decorated World War Two veteran and former Howling Commando, so we can get this ballet recital over with.’

‘Sir I suggest you keep him cuffed until you reach the facility. He’ll be easier to control.’
‘You do realise they’ll do nothing to stop that arm if he actually decides to make a break for it right?’ Tony points out. The man looks between Bucky’s slightly amused expression and his own increasingly frustrating one, seemingly not knowing what to do. Tony throws his hands into the air. ‘Rhodey!’ he pleads for his best friend’s help. ‘Your military guys are killing me over here.’

‘If only that were true,’ Rhodes says coming over to stand next to him, ‘I wouldn’t have to fork out so much money on headache pills.’

‘Hey it’s Stark Industries that pays for all your needs at the facility I’ll have you know. Which means I pay for them.’

Rhodes just ignores him and turns to the soldier. ‘Give me the key Sergeant and I’ll get them both out of your hair.’

Watson looks extremely relieved as he hands Rhodes the key and Tony spins on his heels. ‘Great now that’s all sorted let’s get going. We’ll leave Watson to find his missing Holmes.’

The three of them walk along the tarmac to join Vision and then they make their way to the car. Rhodes and Bucky sit in the back, while Vision rides shotgun with Tony. As he turns the key in the ignition he looks in the rear view mirror. ‘For the love of all things holy, Rhodey, get those damn things off of him.’

As they pull away he hears the satisfying click of the cuffs and feels some of the tension leave his shoulders as Bucky rubs the skin around his wrist. ‘Welcome back to America, Barnes. I hope you didn’t pack for a short stay.’

‘And that,’ Tony says as they return to the common area, ‘concludes the tour of your new home, Sergeant Barnes.’

‘I may need a map,’ Bucky mutters, just loud enough for Tony to hear.

‘You’ll get used to it eventually. If you feel that you’re lost just ask FRIDAY for help. Only do me a favour and don’t talk to the ceiling like Steve always used to, she doesn’t live in the ceiling. I used to walk in and wonder if he was trying to talk to FRIDAY or God.’

‘Not everyone is as comfortable with your advanced technology as you are Tony,’ Vision says from the sofa. Wanda, sitting next to him, gives a big smile when she sees Bucky.

‘Nice of you to join us this side of the Atlantic,’ she teases. ‘Don’t mind Tony, he just likes showing off his toys. He’ll sulk for a few days once you actually get used to them and stop treating it like you’ve walked into a sci-fi film.’

‘I don’t sulk,’ Tony says, trying not to pout and pretty sure he fails at Wanda’s amused smile. ‘Anyway I’m the one who makes all the gear and everyone look cool so you better keep looking at it all like it’s the best thing since sliced bread or your projects are getting moved to the back of the list.’

‘Considering I am a form of technological life myself, I am not sure what you could make that would surprise me,’ Vision says, and Tony swears that humanoid is learning sarcasm better than JARVIS ever did.
‘See this is why I like it when the kid’s here. At least someone appreciates me!’

‘You mean there’s someone here who is still stupid enough to try and inflate your ego,’ Rhodes says as he enters behind them and makes his way to the kitchenette. They have a bigger kitchen and dining area elsewhere, but Tony had made sure a small one had been included here as well. Not because he was lazy of course.

‘I’m sorry, who kept begging me for a suit?’ Tony asks, moving to take a seat in one of the armchairs; Bucky follows behind him, the man has been like a second shadow ever since they got back. He’s still trying to work out if he’s creeped out by it.

‘I wouldn’t have called it ‘begging’ exactly. And you needed the help in the end!’ Rhodes replies, offering Bucky a drink.

‘Anyway,’ Tony waves his hand in the air to move them on. ‘Barnes make yourself at home, you’ve got free run of the facility tonight and tomorrow. Hermione and I have an appointment with some soldiers tomorrow. We’ll begin working on your alter ego the day after.

‘I thought we were on a time scale?’ Bucky asks, frowning a little at this news.

‘We are but you’re not going to be able to deal with everything you have to go through if you aren’t at least a little bit familiar with your surroundings,’ Tony points out. ‘Plus I have to give reports to the Council on your progress and it’ll be a little hard to do if I’m not there.’

‘I have to demonstrate my powers every two weeks,’ Wanda explains to Bucky. ‘It’s to a group of military that Rhodes picked out, and they send unbiased reports back to Ross. They’re actually pretty decent guys.’

‘They’re sensible and don’t push her,’ Tony adds, sending his friend a grateful smile.

‘They’re all men I’ve worked with in the past,’ he explains. ‘I knew they were level headed and not prone to accepting other people’s opinions.’

‘So you’re a performing monkey for them?’ Bucky asks, frown still present on his face.

Wanda shrugs. ‘You could look at it that way I suppose,’ she muses, ‘but they don’t treat me that way and, except for the first time when I didn’t know what to expect, I’ve never felt like it either. I just look at it as another part to my training. It’s easy to stretch the limits of your control when it’s just you and someone you trust in the room, but add the pressure of showing people who are reporting on it, and suddenly you see just what you are actually capable of doing.’

Bucky just nods thoughtfully. ‘So where am I allowed to go tomorrow then?’

Tony tilts his head. ‘I said you have free run of the facility. Go wherever you like. I wouldn’t suggest leaving the facility grounds just yet; I’m not sure how the public will react to you and we are, technically, not supposed to let you wander off.’

‘Wait you’re just letting me do what I want?’ he asks, sounding surprised. ‘I thought I’d have to be under surveillance or something until we know I’ve got the brain washing under control. What if something happens?’

‘You only lose control when trigger words are used,’ Vision counters. ‘And it is very unlikely anyone here would know them. Even if they did they wouldn’t be confident enough to control you should anything go wrong. In addition FRIDAY knows everything that happens on the facility, so if you should run into any difficulties she will notify one of us.’
‘There’s no cameras in our bedrooms,’ Tony hastily adds. ‘But she is able to monitor vitals and sound, so you do have privacy. She tends to only pay attention to sound from your room if it sounds like you’re in trouble or if you’re asking her for something.’

‘So I am under surveillance then?’

‘No more than the rest of us are,’ Rhodes says. Bucky nods, seeming a little more relaxed.

‘The only place you aren’t allowed without permission is my workshop,’ Tony says, standing up and stretching. ‘But then no one is.’

‘He even took away my entry override,’ Rhodes gripes, then he grins. ‘Though you should have seen his reaction when Vision phased through the wall to say good morning. It was priceless.’

‘I simply wanted to know if he wanted coffee,’ Vision manages to sound a little sheepish.

‘No one enters the workshop without permission,’ Tony frowns. ‘It’s my safe space. Speaking of which I’m heading there now to put the finishing touches on someone’s War Machine upgrade. You can thank me later.’

‘You know I won’t,’ Rhodes lifts his bottle towards Tony with a smirk.

‘Ah whatever, I know you love me really. Welcome to your new home Barnes, good luck with this lot and don’t be afraid to tell them where to shove it.’

Two days later they are downstairs in Tony’s workshop; Bucky is sitting in a chair that Tony’s adapted his ‘memory machine’ to fit, Wanda and Vision are waiting nearby.

‘So we plug this into my brain and I can relive any memory we choose?’ Bucky asks, eyeing the machinery warily, the only memory that is springing to mind right now is of having his brain ‘reset’. He’s just waiting for Tony to stick a piece of wood between his teeth.

‘In very basic terms I suppose you could say that,’ Tony says, sliding across the floor on his stools. ‘It will allow you to relive memories but you will still be in control as to when the memory stops and which memory you choose. Reliving it in this way allows you to see and process everything while Wanda and Vision see if they can help speed up the healing process.’

‘I’m wondering why you would have this kind of technology. I doubt it’s something you would have made just for me, this kind of thing would have taken years of research to put together,’ Bucky muses aloud.

Tony doesn’t meet his eyes when he replies. ‘I made it for me.’ The tone of his voice stops Bucky from pressing. ‘It was made before… well everything kicked off with the original Accords; I just tweaked it to help you.’

‘The public tends to refer to that incident as the Avengers ‘Civil War’ in the media,’ Vision supplies.

‘Yeah well the public are stupid,’ Tony grumbles.

‘They would say the same thing about you.’
‘Anyway,’ Bucky cuts in before the two of them can start a full argument. ‘How do we know it’ll help me?’

‘We tested it with Tony before you arrived,’ Wanda supplies. ‘It’ll work.’

‘And it can tell you if your brain can be healed from trauma?’ he asks, looking between the three occupants and actually feeling something like hope in his chest for the first time in years.

‘It helps us to see where the scar tissue is and what can be repaired and what cannot,’ Vision explains. ‘When we tested it with Tony we were able to see which parts of his psyche could be healed and which were damaged beyond repair.’

‘Hey I am perfect thank you very much,’ Tony says, fiddling with some of the many screens that littered his workshop and refusing to meet anyone’s eye.

‘What kind of memory did you work through?’ Bucky asks. As Tony’s shoulders tense he quickly adds. ‘I mean so I know what kind of memory might be a good place to start from?’

‘Usually the more traumatic the better,’ Vision supplies.

‘Yeah like that’s going to help him stay calm,’ he can practically hear the eye roll in Tony’s voice. ‘We went through what happened when I woke up in Afghanistan, before I became Iron Man.’ He turns his stool around and comes to make a few last adjustments. ‘I woke up with a magnet in the middle of my chest, and the knowledge that if it was removed the shrapnel that was trying to make its way to my heart would kill me.’ He hands Bucky a set of glasses. ‘Put these on, Barnes, it’ll project what we need to see into the room. There’s sensors in the arms that will latch onto the memory once you start it, if you need to stop at any time just take them off. We’ve got you in the chair simply because it’s a better height for Wanda and Vision to work at. Any questions?’

Bucky shakes his head mutely, still trying to process the information Tony has just given him. He’s never heard the story of how the inventor became Iron Man, and now he regrets not getting Steve to tell him.

‘Alright then, Sleeping Beauty, let’s get this show on the road.’

He can’t help it. The memory that comes to mind first is one of the many times he was recalibrated. His present screams mix in with his past self, echoing around the workshop.

‘According to this report, Stark, you’re saying the initial findings of your sessions with James Barnes suggests that you should be able to cure him of the brainwashing’ one of the councilmen says.

‘That’s right,’ Tony says, leaning his elbows on the table and resting his chin on his fingers. ‘Vision and Wanda are confident that with enough time the effects of Sergeant Barnes’ torture can be reversed. At least to the point where he can no longer be controlled. There’s obviously going to still be a hell of a lot of trauma he’s going to have to work through, I’m not sure you’d be able to find a shrink you could pay enough to sort that guy’s head out.’

‘Be that as it may, you expect us to believe he could be useful to the team?’ Ross demands.
‘You know sometimes I think you just make me write those reports because you want to kill some trees.’

‘Be serious, Stark!’ Ross thunders.

Tony rolls his eyes. ‘I said in the report that if we are able to eliminate the possibility of him being controlled by outside forces then, yes, he could become a full member of the team.’

‘And you think this could be done within the time frame specified?’ one of the councilwomen asks. Tony thinks he really should learn all their names.

‘I think that if anyone can do it, Sergeant Barnes can,’ Tony replies. ‘He’s continuing working with the team as we speak.’

‘I thought you were supposed to supervise whilst these experiments are going on?’ Ross counters.

‘They are not experiments,’ Tony has to rein in his temper to not shout, ‘the technology we are using to help Barnes could be used in the future to help other victims of trauma recover, it just needs to be ratified by medical councils. What we are conducting is treatment. And Lieutenant Colonel James Rhodes is supervising in my absence.’

‘And if he decides to turn back into the Winter Soldier and attack them all?’ Ross counters.

‘Then you have two of the most powerful Avengers in the room to subdue him before he takes two steps,’ he retorts.

‘And you say the process is going to include him working through various points in his history and resolve some of that trauma before you can be certain the effects have been reversed?’ the first council member asks.

Tony nods. What he hasn’t told them is that they’ve worked out if they work through Bucky’s missions they’re hoping they can repair enough of his scarred mind that it won’t be so difficult to remove the effect of the words on him. He’s not looking forwards to reliving one memory in particular, but they’ll cross that bridge when they get to it. Preferably with a shit ton of scotch.

‘And you believe Sergeant Barnes wants this process to work?’ the same council members asks.

‘He’s spending every moment he can working on healing,’ Tony replies, ‘if that’s not enough of an indication I’m not sure what is.’

There’s a bit more debate between the council members before Tony is allowed to leave. It’s been nearly a week and a half since Bucky returned to them and the man has barely been out of the chair. Sometimes with only one of either Vision or Wanda present to help heal his mind. Tony’s not sure he’s ever seen someone so determined, but he knows it’s because Bucky wants Steve to be able to come home.

The only problem from Tony’s point of view is that Ross has been insisting he make more of his reports in person and as, for some reason, Bucky feels more comfortable going through the memories with Tony present, it’s setting them back with meeting the time scale.

Tony knows Ross is doing it on purpose. I’ll be damned if I let that smug bastard win this one, he thinks as he speeds back towards the facility, fairly certain he’s breaking every speeding law in the country.
Chapter Summary

Tony and Bucky have a heart-to-heart; Vision and Wanda go on a date and Tony acts like a dad, much to Rhodey's and Bucky's amusement, and they listen to one of Peter's reports.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

‘Boss, Sergeant Barnes is currently sitting in the kitchenette with a bottle of whiskey and a gun on the side in front of him,’ FRIDAY’s voice interrupts Tony’s train of thought just as he’s reaching a ‘eureka’ moment with an improvement to his flight navigation system.

‘This better not be some weird way of saying the interior décor sucks,’ Tony mutters, glancing at the clock and surprised to see it’s nearly three in the morning. ‘Hey FRIDAY didn’t I tell you to let me know when it got to midnight?’

‘I did, but you ignored me.’

‘Why did you let me?’

‘You muted me, I had no choice.’

‘Why does every AI I create end up learning sarcasm?’ Tony wonders aloud as he quickly leaves his workshop. ‘Make sure you save all of that, FRIDAY, I was close to a break through.’

‘Already done, boss.’

When he reaches the common area he finds Bucky where FRIDAY says he would be. ‘If you’re trying to decide between the scotch and the gun I’d go for the scotch. Tastes better,’ he says, going to a cabinet and taking out two glasses. ‘Plus it’s easier to share the scotch,’ he puts the two glasses down in front of Bucky and pours some of the amber liquid into each.

‘I’m not sure I can get drunk,’ Bucky says with a dark smile, ‘I know Steve can’t. I assume they used similar stuff on me.’

‘Won’t know if you don’t try,’ Tony says, raising his glass for the other man to meet. ‘What’s eating you, Barnes?’

‘What do you think it’s a walk in the park reliving all the people you killed under someone else’s control?’ the soldier snaps.

This could be a long morning, Tony thinks as he lets the amber liquid run down his throat, relishing the burn. He’s just going to have to make sure he doesn’t drink too much that he can’t be of some help. *Maybe I should get a job as a shrink.* ‘You weren’t to blame, Barnes.’

‘Yeah so Steve kept telling me,’ he sighs, ‘I don’t believe you any more than I do him.’
‘Yeah well as much as I love Capsicle, he isn’t exactly speaking from any kind of experience whatsoever.’ He notices the curious look Bucky tries to hide and sighs, rubbing the back of his neck. ‘How much do you know about how I became Iron Man?’

‘What the hell does that have to do with anything?’ Bucky’s voice isn’t quite as bitter as it was earlier, which Tony takes as a good sign.

‘It’s a bit of a long story, but I’ll shorten it as much as possible, bear with me and you’ll see why I’m telling it. So…if you’re sitting comfortably, I’ll begin,’ Tony adds with a smile, trying to ignore the nerves building in his stomach. ‘As I’m sure you know from working with my dear old dad back in the day, Stark Industries was first a weapons company. All of my billions came from manufacturing things that could blow up hundreds of people in a single hit. They used to give me a lot of names in the media, but you know what the worst bit was? My favourite one used to be ‘The Merchant of Death’.

‘It’s not the fact that we made the weapons that makes it hard for me to sleep at night now, it’s the fact that I enjoyed doing it. Enjoyed the parties they got me into, the wine, the girls, the attention, everything. I never even thought about what my creations were actually doing to other people. And if I did I justified it to myself by saying I was doing it to keep the people of America safe.

‘I was out in Afghanistan on a weapons demonstration,’ Tony pauses to down the rest of the liquid in his glass. ‘Rhodey was in the group but I insisted on travelling back to the base separately. I think he still blames himself for what happened,’ he continues as he refills their glasses. Bucky is silent as he tells his story, immobile save for the rise and fall of his chest as he breaths.

‘The convoy was attacked. The soldiers I thought I was protecting killed in front of me as they tried to protect me. I managed to make it out of the car and one of the shells landed right in front of me. Want to take a guess at what it said on the side?’

Bucky says nothing; doesn’t even blink at Tony’s question.

‘Stark,’ he answers into the silence. ‘The bastards were using my weapons to kill our soldiers.’

‘You were selling to both sides,’ Bucky states, not a trace of accusation in his tone.

‘I wasn’t,’ he replies, voice laced with bitterness. ‘But my partner was. I didn’t find out until after I got back and he tried to shut me out of the company.’ He allows the time to finish his drink to wallow in self-disgust.

‘What happened at the convoy?’ Bucky asks quietly.

‘Shell exploded,’ Tony shrugs, ‘when I came to I was in a cave, a magnet in my chest and a car battery powering the magnet.’ Then he tells him about the time spent as a captive in Afghanistan, about Yinsen and making the first suit, and briefly what happened with Stane when he returned. For the large part Bucky is silent and unmoving, only occasionally asking questions, though avoiding any related to the arc reactor that had once kept him alive.

‘Not that I don’t appreciate the trust you’re showing in telling me all of this, Stark,’ Bucky says as the story draws to an end. ‘But why are you telling me of all people?’

‘So you might understand when I say there’s a difference between something being your fault, and you being at fault for something,’ he explains, refilling the glasses with the last of the
scotch in the bottle. ‘For a long time I thought it was my fault that I had killed people with the weapons I created, and for not realising Stane was dealing under the table. But what I came to realise was that the blame was not solely on my shoulders. Yes I should have known there was double dealing going on and stopped it, but I wasn’t the one doing the deals. Maybe I shouldn’t have made all of those weapons, but I wasn’t the one to fire them.

‘Did Wanda ever tell you how she and her brother came to be orphaned? Their apartment building was shelled, it killed their parents outright but they were trapped under rubble. It was one of my shells that destroyed their home in the hands of people they should never have been sold to. They spent days looking at a shell with my name on it, waiting for me to kill them. Honestly? Don’t know how she can stand to be in the same building as me, let alone look at me. I think, I hope, she decided that, although I am to blame for making and selling the weapons, I’m not to blame for the people firing them.’

‘And what does that have to do with me? I killed people with my bare hands, Stark,’ Bucky’s voice rises as he continues to talk. Then, in a much softer, more broken tone: ‘I killed your parents.’

Tony closes his eyes and nods, then looks Bucky directly in the eye. ‘Let me put it another way: is it the gun or the shooter that kills a person? A gun doesn’t choose to kill anything, the person holding it does. The gun is the instrument.

‘The way I look at it Barnes, is that you are the gun. You are not the shooter. Can you honestly tell me that you would have chosen to kill my parents of your own free will?’

Bucky shakes his head.

‘There you go then,’ Tony says as if they’ve just found the meaning of life. ‘I mean I wouldn’t have blamed you for shooting my dad, God knows I wanted to a couple of times. But you didn’t choose to. Hence gun, not shooter. You may have been the instrument, but it is not your fault those people died.’

Bucky nods showing he understands what Tony is saying, though he doesn’t look particularly convinced of the truth in the statement. Though honestly, Tony is not sure he’s making the most sense.

Taking that as good enough for now he stands and stretches, taking his empty glass to the sink. ‘Well that’s enough serious talk for one night. For one year if I’m honest. I’m off to bed. I’d appreciate you not telling anyone all of this, Barnes. I haven’t told anyone the full story, tends to make them feel bad and I hate it when people bring the pity party.’

Bucky nods again, a small painful smile of complete understanding on his lips. As Tony starts to leave he hears the soldier say, ‘Tony? The person who makes the gun doesn’t kill the person either.’

Tony allows himself a small smile. ‘Goodnight, Bucky. Put the gun away, yeah? You’re making FRIDAY nervous.’

Two weeks after their late night chat finds Tony and Bucky lounging on the sofas of the common area with Rhodes; the latter two are nursing beers, but Tony’s being sensible and sticking with soft
drinks.

‘Stop acting like a dad waiting up for their daughter to get back,’ Bucky laughs as he checks his phone yet again.

‘Oh sod off,’ he grumbles as the other two laugh at him. ‘I’m just trying to be sensible looking out for our two youngest team members.’

‘Wanda and Vision have gone to a restaurant,’ Rhodes says, ‘and you’re acting like they’ve gone to take on a supervillain. They’ve gone on a date, chill out.’

‘They’re going to let me know when they want picking up,’ he tries to defend himself.

‘Yeah and FRIDAY will put it straight through no matter where you are. Relax,’ Bucky throws some of the popcorn they’ve made intending to watch trash until they got the call from the two lovebirds.

‘Honestly, Tony. From being the guy who said he’d never have kids, you’ve sure decided to adopt a few without their consent. You’ve already got Wanda and Peter, any more you want to pull out the woodwork on us? Maybe we should be getting Clint to name you godfather to their next kid,’ Rhodes teases.

‘Maybe we should start calling him Papa Stark,’ Bucky suggests, the grin on his face threatening to break it in two.

‘Why is it when I start trying to be an actual responsible adult I get just as much grief as when I’m a reckless and selfish asshole?’

‘Oh don’t worry, Tony, you’re still an asshole,’ Rhodes assures him.

‘You know what? I don’t have to sit here and listen to you two. I’m going to listen to the kid’s report,’ he says, feigning hurt.

‘Stick on it here, Tony. I’d quite like to hear how your adopted son is getting on,’ Rhodes leans back in the seat.

‘He is not my adopted son, he’s a kid I’m mentoring.’

‘Practically adopted him,’ Rhodes mutters.

‘This is the one from Germany right?’ Bucky clarifies. ‘Spider-Man?’

‘That’s the one,’ Tony says, aware of the obvious pride in his voice. ‘Stole Cap’s shield and managed to tie you up on his first day out with the team.’

‘When he brings the paperwork to say he’s adopted him I’m getting the biggest ‘I told you so’ ready.’

‘Just how old is the kid exactly?’ Bucky asks, ignoring Rhodes’ comment.

‘Nearly seventeen,’ Tony answers. ‘His birthday is in a couple of months.’

‘Wait you remember his but you can barely remember everyone else’s?’ Rhodes demands.

‘I remember Cap’s,’ Tony tries to defend himself.
‘Everyone remembers Cap’s,’ Rhodes gives him a look. ‘Something to do with it being July the fourth.’

‘I remember the month yours is in,’ he tries again. ‘And Pepper’s.’

‘Ok what month is my birthday?’

‘September?’

‘My birthday is 6th October, Tony.’

‘Hey I was only one month out, that’s an improvement!’

“So when’s the wedding?” Bucky interrupts, laughing as both of them turn glares on him. ‘Anyway I thought we were supposed to be listening to Spider-Man’s report?’

‘FRIDAY pull up the kid’s latest voicemail to Happy would you?’ Tony says, leaning back on the sofa.

‘Certainly, boss,’ FRIDAY’s voice is soon replaced by Peter’s.

‘Hey Happy, it’s me. Just giving you my daily report.’

‘Wow he sounds thrilled to be doing this,’ Bucky laughs.

‘So pretty slow day overall. Alright, I’ll be honest it was boring as hell. A kid had her cat stuck in the tree, and I swear she nearly wet herself when I got it down for her. Damn thing nearly scratched the suit up though so next time it can just stay up there.’ The three of them all share a laugh at how annoyed Peter sounds. ‘Then there was just an old lady who was struggling with her shopping so I helped her home after she dropped some of the bags. She did give me an amazing piece of homemade pie though, way better than Aunt May’s. Oh god please don’t tell her that, she won’t feed me and I’ll starve. She doesn’t get to hear these right?’

‘So, yeah, that’s pretty much been it for today. Except for dodging a weird fan. Hey Happy do you think Mr Stark could give me some pointers on how to deal with weird fans? Like surely he must have had some psychos after him before right? I mean not that he should – I don’t mean that only psychos would be interested – I mean he’s probably had lots of attention in the past before right? Like not cos I think he’s someone who’d sleep around a lot, but – oh god I need to shut up.’

‘Oh if only he knew the truth,’ Rhodes says between laughter. Tony gets FRIDAY to pause the recording until the three of them can calm down.

‘Damn the kid can talk,’ Bucky says, wiping at his eyes. ‘And like talk himself into so much trouble.’

‘I’m pretty sure we should be taking this more seriously if he’s actually got a psycho fan stalking him,’ Rhodes points out, finally calming down enough.

‘So yeah anyway what I’m trying to say is, I’ve got this person who is apparently a huge fan of Spider-Man and they’re, like, everywhere I go. And they’re not necessarily a bad person as such, I mean they haven’t tried to kill me yet so that’s all good. Ok I’ve just realised how weird this sounds.’

‘Why the hell would a fan want to hurt him?’ Bucky frowns.
‘So my Spidey-sense has never gone off around them and, like, that thing goes off when Aunt May’s like super mad, so I’m not too worried. It’s just I’m not really sure how to handle the whole situation.

‘I don’t want to be mean and tell them to just go away cause they seem kind of lonely; but at the same time they can be super annoying and inappropriate and I just want to get on with patrol and school work you know? So, yeah, I guess I’m asking for advice on how to tell them to take a step back sometimes?’ Peter sighs. ‘And make sure Mr Stark knows I’ll let him know the minute something bad does happen, so he doesn’t have to worry about me having an insane stalker or anything. Like I know he has a lot to worry about with helping Sergeant Barnes at the moment but, after what happened with the Vulture, I don’t want to keep this kind of stuff to myself all the time. Because that didn’t exactly go too well last time. See? I’m learning.

‘Oh and before I forget Ned and I think I may have stumbled across some people using those same kind of weapons as the terrorists that were holding us at the science event with Dr Monroe. We’re not certain – and I sweat I’m not going to go after them alone or without telling you Happy – but I just want to make sure we’re right before we bother Mr Stark and the Avengers. So, yeah, anyway glad to have got all that off my chest. Hey Happy maybe you should become a shrink or something, you’re pretty good at it even when you’re not actually talking! Speak to you tomorrow, Happy – or, you know, leave you a message tomorrow – I’m going to go see if Aunt May’s made Italian for dinner. Nothing beats her pasta!’

Bucky shakes his head. ‘That right there sums up why I am so happy I left my teenage years behind like, a hundred years ago.’

‘What we going to do about the fan, Tony?’ Rhodes asks.

Tony still hasn’t moved from when he stood up, and he rubs the back of his head thinking. ‘The kid seems to be sensible about the situation, and looks like he’s got a good read on it. For now let’s trust his judgement and I’ll get Happy to give him some pointers.’

‘And the weapons?’ Bucky asks.

‘Again, I’m going to try and trust the kid and see what he comes back with when they’ve done some more digging. If there’s one thing I can be certain of it’s that if Ned’s involved he’s going to be super cautious so his friend doesn’t get hurt.’

‘That’s a lot of trust to place on a sixteen year old,’ Bucky observes.

Tony sighs. ‘I underestimated him before and treated him like a little child, and it nearly got him killed. But he got through it on his own merits and, so far, has been making pretty mature decisions when it comes to doing things as Spider-Man. I’ll let him continue to prove himself,’ he sits back down. ‘Besides, FRIDAY will let me know if anything really bad happens. It’ll set off a warning from his suit and we can go get him out of whatever situation he’s got himself in.’

Just as they’re about to talk some more Tony’s phone pings with a message from Wanda asking to be picked up. ‘Time to go get the kids,’ he says, pocketing his phone and heading for the door. ‘Behave yourself while Daddy’s out, and don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.’

He casts one look back over at the two when he reaches the door. Bucky’s been doing well in the healing process, but they’ve still got a long way to go and only two weeks left to do it. He’s still not able to stop himself from falling under someone’s control when the trigger words are said, but he can go further through the list before they start taking effect. Tony’s glad he’s more at ease with the rest of the team though, and watching him and Rhodes start to swap war stories he feels
hopeful that they can manage this.

Chapter End Notes

So I found these last two chapters quite tricky, mainly because I was a tad worried about having Tony and Bucky bond a little too quickly. I get the impression, though, that the two of them are actually very similar in some ways, and in the ways that would make them good friends. Tony's whole spiel on blame I think is also something the two of them will struggle to come to terms with, and the two of them are really the only ones who can understand what the other is going through.

I would love to hear your ideas on it all though, on Tony and Bucky's relationship and also on how you think Tony would have behaved had the team all come back. I get the feeling from his interactions with Peter in the films that he would really try with the relationships this time around: he's lost so many relationships in his life it seems only Rhodey, Pepper and Happy have stuck around. What I also find interesting is Vision is the only other who sticks around, and he has all of JARVIS' conscience as well as his own.

Anyway I'm going to stop giving you all my dissection of Tony's character and just ask that you let me know how you think this is going. If there's anything you think I need to change or that is working well.

L x

As always here's a sneak peek at the next chapter:

‘Oh my gosh, you’re Tony Stark, right?’ an overly excitable voice pierces his thoughts. ‘Can I, like, get your autograph? Please?’
He opens one eye and cracks a smirk. ‘Nice get up. You here to save me from the evil government men, Agent Romanoff?’
Natasha scowls as she takes off her sunglasses. ‘You really need to work on your undercover skills,’ she grumbles, taking the offered seat on the bench next to him.
Deadline

Chapter Summary

The deadline for Bucky is getting closer, and the team aren’t sure if they’re going to make it. Tony has a visit from an old friend.

Tony rubs a hand over tired eyes as he walks down the steps to the street, hoping the headache he can feel coming on could at least wait until he got home. Yet another time Ross had called him in to ‘discuss’ his latest report on Bucky; it was becoming increasingly obvious, almost embarrassingly so, that it was just an excuse to pull him away from helping the soldier.

Casting a look around him as he reaches the street he heaves a heavier sigh than he would have normally done in public. God he was going to be glad when everyone was back. As he turns to go to his car he notices something at the bus stop across the road. Or rather someone.

A beanie is pulled down over their hair and a pair of sunglasses covering their eyes, but Tony knows they’ve seen him. A small head gesture towards the park behind them and they start walking. Without a second thought Tony follows.

Dammit, he thinks as he enters the park and realises he’s lost them already. Sneaky bastard.

Sighing in resignation he takes a seat on a bench and leans back, letting the spring sunshine warm his face and taking a bit of pleasure in the outdoors for the first time in a while. Closing his eyes he contemplates letting himself doze off for a couple of minutes.

‘Oh my gosh, you’re Tony Stark, right?’ an overly excitable voice pierces his thoughts. ‘Can I, like, get your autograph? Please?’

He opens one eye and cracks a smirk. ‘Nice get up. You here to save me from the evil government men, Agent Romanoff?’

Natasha scowls as she takes off her sunglasses. ‘You really need to work on your undercover skills,’ she grumbles, taking the offered seat on the bench next to him.

‘Missed you too, sunshine. Now let me guess: Cap sent you to make sure I didn’t get his best friend arrested?’ he hopes he keeps the bitterness out of his last statement. It’s not that he feels any kind of anger or jealousy towards Bucky any more, the guy’s become a good friend in the time he’s been here. If he’s honest with himself, which he is more often than people realise, he’s upset that Steve hasn’t been in touch.

She nods. ‘He and T’Challa thought it was better to have one of us here in case everything goes south fast. Bucky told Steve in their last phone call that he was worried he wasn’t going to make the deadline, but he said you weren’t telling him exactly how long you have left.’

The last bit isn’t a question, but he answers it anyway. ‘Two weeks. And Ross is doing all he can to keep me away.’

‘Yeah he mentioned that too,’ Natasha says, ‘and about how much you’re doing to help him get through it all. Steve’s confused as hell, T’Challa and I are finding it hilarious.’
‘Bucky getting healed is hilarious?’

She laughs and shakes her head. ‘No Steve being really confused about you is hilarious. Do you think you can keep to the deadline?’

‘If anyone can do it, Bucky will.’

She fixes him with one of those looks. ‘You two seem to be getting along really well.’

‘I’m not doing my own form of brainwashing to make him like me if that’s what you think.’

She laughs again. ‘I think Steve would find it easier to understand if that were the case. But no I don’t. I’m just curious as to what happened, all things considered I wasn’t expecting you two to get along as well as you are.’

Tony shrugs and looks away. ‘We’re more similar than people realise. I’m better looking, obviously, and not prone to murdering people or mind-control.’ When he turns back he sees a confused frown on her face. ‘We both have things we can be blamed for.’

Natasha’s face softens with understanding and he realises just how much he misses her. She just gets things without you needing to go into long winded explanations.

‘Well I better get back to Elsa before he and Rhodes plot my downfall. Introducing those two was the biggest mistake of my life, and it’ll only get worse when Pepper comes round,’ he says, standing quickly before he makes an idiot of himself.

‘Take care of yourself, Tony,’ she says, slipping the glasses back on, ‘you’re looking tired.’

‘You know so many people are saying that recently I’m going to get a complex. If I start stressing over my good looks disappearing I’m sending you the shrink bill.’

‘See you later, Tony,’ she says with a smile and shake of the head.

‘Nat? Tell our cat I may need him to catch a mouse,’ he says as he leaves; Natasha, face serious once more, nods and walks in the opposite direction. It takes everything inside Tony not to look back as he leaves the park.

‘There’s only one memory left to see before we’ve seen all my kills,’ Bucky mutters as he takes his seat in the chair. ‘Do you think it’s going to be enough to get rid of the mind control?’ he asks Vision as the humanoid comes to stand on his left.

‘We are making good progress,’ he responds. ‘After this all we are going to have left to do is to repeat the trigger words until we are able to remove all traces of the controlling elements from your mind.’

‘And how long will that take?’ he asks, Tony can tell Bucky is getting more worried as the days go by. It’s been two days since his meeting with Natasha and they’ve all been working non-stop; Bucky and Tony have only had about five hours sleep each as they’ve stayed up talking while Wanda and Vision slept, going over the words one by one and trying to work out the reasons Hydra
had chosen them. Vision had commented that his tired brain was easier to manipulate so they’d tried to keep on the edge of being productive. It was a good thing Tony had plenty of practise with little sleep, he didn’t want the soldier to be left awake by himself.

‘That will depend on how much we have managed to heal up by the time we get there. It could take anything from a few days to a few weeks. Possibly longer, but I wouldn’t think that would be the case considering how well you’ve been responding to treatment already.’

Bucky fixes Tony with his eyes and the inventor can’t quite place the emotion behind them. ‘How long do we have left, Tony?’

Tony looks away and back at the screen in front of him. ‘Let me worry-’

‘No Tony,’ Bucky’s voice is close to shouting levels, and Wanda and Vision take a step back, looking between the two of them. It’s the first time they’ve come close to an argument the whole time the soldier’s been back. ‘Tell me how long we have left.’

Tony sighs and rubs his temples with one hand. ‘We have until next Friday,’ he answers quietly. ‘If we’ve made enough progress I may be able to convince them to give us another week, possibly two.’

‘A week and a half?’ he asks quietly. He looks back to Vision. ‘Is it enough time?’

Vision looks between Bucky and Tony, then sighs. ‘I don’t know. It may be, but it possibly may not be.’

‘Possibly or probably?’ he asks. Vision pauses and Bucky gives a small laugh. ‘Don’t bother, Vision, that’s answer enough.’

‘We won’t let them take you, Bucky,’ Wanda says, placing a hand on his arm.

‘T’Challa is prepared to extract you should the need arise,’ Tony says, still not looking away from his screen. ‘Nat’s already in the US in case we have to move quicker than planned, and the training bots are poised ready to malfunction, needing the team to round them up.’

‘You already had an escape plan?’ Wanda asks. ‘Why didn’t you tell us?’

‘The less you knew the less you could be accused of,’ Tony explains, finally looking away from his screen. ‘This way the only person who could be held accountable for planning Bucky’s escape was me.’ After a brief pause he adds. ‘Now how about we stop wasting time talking and actually get on with doing something?’

‘Tony,’ Bucky pauses, then continues, ‘are you sure you want to be here for this?’

‘Gun and shooter remember, Elsa,’ Tony replies, trying to think too much about what he’s about to watch. ‘Now let’s get on with it.’

‘Tony-’

‘Bucky, come on. You’ve just heard how much time we have, we can’t afford to waste any more. I want to be here and help you, alright? Now don’t give me time to overthink things. Let’s get started.’ He turns the machine on before anyone can argue with him.

Bucky sighs and, after a moment’s hesitation, gets himself set up in the machine. He casts one last look in Tony’s direction then, taking a deep breath, starts the memory.
The room fades to night around them and Tony can see Bucky sitting on a motorcycle, in front of them lies a very familiar stretch of road. After a few minutes they can hear the rumble of a car engine, and a pair of headlights coming along the road. Wanda and Vision are already fast at work, red tendrils snaking from her fingers and the mind stone glowing brightly on his head. The car races past them and memory-Bucky pulls out, giving chase.

Tony watches as if in a trance as the tyres are blown and the car swerves off the road; only dimly does he hear his father’s surprised question of recognition. When he sees memory-Bucky move towards his mother, however, he has to close his eyes. Yet through everything, even the sound of the gunshot that takes his mother’s life, he stands just behind the soldier, a hand on his shoulder. As the memory fades around them Wanda and Vision continue to work.

‘There, that’s all we can do for now,’ Wanda sounds drained and moves towards one of the chairs.

‘There was a lot of recent and well as old scarring surrounding that particular memory,’ Vision explains. ‘Perhaps that will have sped up the process for when we try and neutralise the connections for the words themselves.’

‘That’s true,’ Wanda muses. ‘We’ve already weakened the connections through targeting the actions linked to the words, and with healing recent scarring as well as old it may have weakened the connections even more.’

‘Tell you what,’ Tony is surprised how steady his voice sounds. ‘You two continue to have your little debate session, me and Elsa here are going to have a quick drink and then we’ll be back. Alright? Everyone take five. Come on Elsa.’

He doesn’t allow the soldier to argue, just leads him up the stairs, and hoping that no one notices as he wipes at the traitorous wetness on his cheeks.

‘Tony I-’

‘I swear you start apologising and I’m banning you from touching any and every bottle of alcohol in this facility. Including the hand gel.’

‘Doesn’t work on getting me drunk anyway,’ Bucky mumbles as he takes a seat at the breakfast bar.

‘No but you still enjoy drinking it,’ Tony replies with a smirk. He pours them a glass each and then takes a seat the other side. ‘Listen I’m not going to lie and say that wasn’t fucking hard to watch, nor am I going to say I can ever forget that,’ he sees Bucky wince and sighs, ‘but I’d already forgiven you before you even got on that plane to come back, Bucky.’

He pauses and takes a drink then continues, staring down at the liquid in the glass as he swirls it with one hand. ‘In a way it’s kind of a relief to finally know. Car crash just never sat right with me. I mean, Dad was the lead in technological advances, his cars were always fine-tuned and they never broke down. And, okay he wasn’t the best at handling a car at high speeds, but he was always more careful with Mom in the car. So for it to be a car accident?’ He sees Bucky wince and sighs, ‘but I’d already forgiven you before you even got on that plane to come back, Bucky.’

Plus, at least this way I know there really was nothing I would have been able to do to stop it.’
‘You couldn’t have anyway,’ Bucky points out, voice quiet.

‘No, see with a car accident I could have. Dad and I are technological geniuses remember? All these years of ‘If only I’d checked the car before they went’ I now know is irrelevant. I mean, yeah Dad was a prick, but Mom didn’t deserve it.’

‘Neither of them did.’ Bucky takes a long drink, nearly finishing it in one.

‘You obviously haven’t seen the media footage from the time of the accident. At first it was all sympathy and what a great man he was. Then it was ‘Well if he wasn’t dealing in weapons maybe he wouldn’t have ended up like that’. The kind of crap I imagine they pulled when I was taken in Afghanistan.’

‘You’ve really forgiven me haven’t you?’ there’s a tinge of awe in the soldier’s voice.

‘I thought it was taking you a while to catch on. Now come on, Elsa, we’ve got more work to do.’

‘I really hate that film,’ Bucky mutters has he follows the inventor out. When Tony had first used the nickname he hadn’t understood the reference so Tony and Wanda had forced him to watch Frozen. It still made Tony smile at just how painful Bucky found the whole experience. The nickname was most definitely staying.

Tony watches as the soldier continues to vent his frustration on the gym’s punching bag, occasionally turning to get some better form of satisfaction by taking it out on a poor unsuspecting chair. Luckily none of them came flying his way.

It was Friday. They had one week before their deadline was up but since they watched Bucky’s memory of killing his parents they hadn’t made any progress. Vision said it was as if Bucky’s brain was fighting back against them. They couldn’t get further than the third trigger word before his body would start reacting and he’d lash out. Tony had a black eye and split lip to prove it. He’d just got back from one of Ross’ summons and had had a lot of fun trying to convince the council his injuries were due to an accident during training with one of the bots going a bit haywire.

Laying the groundwork for his distraction to get Bucky out should the need arise. Which was looking more likely.

*Knew things were going too well,* Tony thinks as Bucky finally exhausts himself and slides down a wall to the ground, his head in his hands.

‘I swear Tony you say make one joke and I’ll give you another black eye,’ he growls as the inventor takes a seat next to him. He sighs as Tony makes a zipping motion over his lips and grins.

‘We’re not going to be able to manage it.’

‘Sure we-’

‘Tony, please. Just- let’s talk realistic for a change.’

Tony sighs. ‘I don’t do realistic very well, you should know that after I made an arc reactor in a cave.’
‘Yeah well I’m not a genius. I can’t fix…this’ he gestures to his head, ‘and at the moment it doesn’t look like you can either. At least not in the time we have left.’

That’s what it all came down to: time. If Tony is honest he has contemplated trying to get Doctor Strange to help, but he’d rather not owe that man a favour. He’s annoying enough as it is.

‘Tony I know I don’t have any right to ask but-’ Bucky pauses and, for the first time ever, Tony sees him fidget. ‘Can we go and visit your parents? Their graves I mean, I… I’d like to say I’m sorry in person before I have to go back.’

His voice finishes so small and insecure that Tony doesn’t even think before responding. ‘Of course, we’ll go tomorrow.’
Final Test

Chapter Summary

Tony and Bucky visit his parents' graves and Bucky has his final test

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It’s peaceful as they walk along the path, rows of stones stretching away into the field. Neither of them says much, just happy to be away from the compound. Eventually, though, Tony stops and turns off the path; three rows back, set slightly apart from the other stones around them, sit the graves of his parents.

‘I would introduce you,’ he says, ‘but that feels too much like I’m bringing home a partner or something. Plus you already know Dad; and Mom as well I suppose.’

Bucky shoots him a look. ‘Well at least I know who you get your inappropriate humour from,’ he mutters, then steps closer to the graves.

Tony takes a few steps back, wanting to give him as much privacy as possible, but knowing he’ll have to stay close in case anyone is watching who might report back to Ross and the Council if he leaves the soldier alone. Wonder if this is how Fury felt all the time, he muses, no wonder the guy was paranoid.

‘Hey Howard,’ Bucky’s soft voice travels through the quiet as the soldier kneels in front of the two graves. ‘I know I shouldn’t really be here, all things considered, but I needed to see you before I leave again. Looks like I’ve not done a good a job as normal this time, and I’m sorry that means that Steve can’t come back. From what he told me you two had become good friends, and I wanted to thank you for being there for him when he thought I was dead. Not that I repaid you very well for that. Howard, I am so sorry for what I did; I hope you know if I was in control of my mind I never would have done it. I hope you knew that back then.

‘You really did get a beauty of a wife, Howard. Not that I’m surprised; I’m not sure which Steve found more confusing: your technology or how easy you found it to talk to women. He told me the fondue story with you and Peggy in the plane by the way, had me laughing so hard I couldn’t see for tears.

‘You did well for yourself, though. Beautiful wife, successful company, and a great kid. Mind you, I always thought you were as much a man out of time as me and Steve are now; just you should have been here in the future and us in the past. I dread to think what you could have accomplished with the advances today. Maybe finally got that flying car to work,’ Bucky gives a small chuckle.

There’s a pause before he starts again, quieter this time. ‘I do think your best creation has to be the guy behind me though, Howard. You’d be so proud of him, even if you wouldn’t say it knowing you. He’s done so much, still does, and he does it despite being as broken as I am, just in a different way. He’s stronger than me, though, despite all the cracks. I know I’m to blame for a lot of that, taking you and Maria away from him when he was young, and I’m sorry for that too. I-’ Bucky
trails off, seemingly running out of words.

Tony turns to look at the figure hunched on the ground, metal hand on his knee and the other tangled in his dark hair. To anyone else he looks like the epitome of despair, but Tony’s spent the best part of two months with the guy and he notices that the tension in his shoulders is just a little less than usual. Almost as if a weight has gone, a small one, but a weight all the same.

He’s never been known for his sensible ideas so it’s no surprise they don’t decide to turn up now. Before he can consider any other course of action Tony begins walking forwards and saying a sequence of ten Russian words that he knows are forever etched in his memory.

Bucky tenses. ‘Tony, what the fuck are you doing?’ he shouts, scrambling to his feet.

Tony gets a gauntlet on, sedative dart ready, but doesn’t raise it yet and just continues with the sequence.

‘Tony please,’ Bucky pleads, falling to his knees and gripping his head. ‘Stop, I don’t want to hurt you. Please.’ But Tony ignores him and, eventually, he reaches the end of the ten word sequence.

He waits, the silence stretching out then, taking a deep breath he says: ‘Soldier?’

‘Part of me really wants to knock you out right now you bastard,’ Bucky says, and Tony can’t help the grin that breaks out. ‘But everything considered, I might hug you instead.’

Tony laughs, falling to his knees next to the soldier and brings him into a hug. ‘Just don’t kiss me alright?’ Then after a pause. ‘You did it.’

Bucky nods, and Tony feels the shuddering gasps wracking the man’s body as he cries. ‘Thank you, Tony.’

‘Two more weeks, that’s all I’m asking,’ Tony says facing the Council, representatives from different countries all looking at him with raised eyebrows. ‘We are so close to being able to give him a clean bill of health. Two more weeks and I guarantee you can add the Winter Soldier to the Avengers roster.’

‘Who says we’d want to?’ Ross counters.

‘The guy can go toe to toe with every Avenger, save perhaps Vision. You honestly want him to not be on the team?’

‘I’d rather he be in a secure facility where he can’t harm anyone,’ Ross retaliates.

‘So, what? The agreement that if he could be healed from the brainwashing he’d be allowed back as a full US Citizen was just a load of bullshit?’ Tony demands.

‘Mr Stark, calm down,’ the Chinese representative cuts in, then turns to Ross. ‘Secretary Ross does not speak for the rest of us, he is merely expressing his own opinions. As for the agreement, it still stands as it was signed by every member here and agreed by the President. You must also understand that, when you come to us with a black eye, we have reason to question
whether James Barnes really is going to be healed in the time you say.’

Tony resists the urge to reach up and touch the lump on his cheekbone. Bucky had caught him with his metal arm when he was lashing out during one of their tests; the man was still apologising and it had happened three days ago. Tony had threatened to blindfold him every time he looked guilty when he caught sight of Tony’s face. ‘If he hadn’t been near the end of recovery I’d probably have a broken jaw,’ he says, settling back into his chair. ‘This is the injury I received from his metal arm. An arm that has, in the past, ripped into the Iron Man armour. I think you’ll agree he is exhibiting better control.’

‘Yet he still hit you,’ Ross points out, a half smirk on his face.

‘It was a glancing blow that I didn’t manage to duck in time. And I’m not sure what relevance my face has to the question of the extension.’

The German representative cuts in before Ross can start a new tirade against him. ‘Because, Mr Stark, the injury puts into question the truth of your prediction.’ Tony just nods in acquiescence. ‘Now I would suggest a compromise: one more week. If James Barnes is not recovered by then he is handed into custody. Considering he was wrongfully accused before, I’d hate to be seen to be too harsh on him now, especially if he is nearly at the completion of his road of redemption. We, after all, want the world to be able to trust the Avengers will still look after them; I think showing that we allow redeemed characters to enter into their ranks will help with earning trust from the general public.’ She turns to the rest of the Council. ‘All in agreement raise their hands.’ Tony feels a smug smirk pulling at his face when only Ross doesn’t raise his hand. ‘The majority have it. One week, Mr Stark. And if James Barnes cannot demonstrate his ability to retain control of his mind then he will be taken into protective custody.’

‘I passed,’ Bucky’s grin is wider than Steve’s seen it since before the war, his friend’s face filling the screen in front of him.

‘I knew you could do it, Buck,’ he says, feeling an answering smile tug at his own lips.

‘Couldn’t have done it without the team here, Steve. I… I never thought they’d accept me like this. Not without you here.’

‘Well obviously you haven’t been as much of a jerk to them as you are to me,’ Steve says, trying to keep his friend’s spirits high. ‘Kind of a feat considering you took all the stupid with you.’

‘Yeah ha ha, very funny,’ Bucky rolls his eyes. ‘So you guys ready to come home? Complete the team?’

Steve nods. ‘T’Challa said he’d be ready to get us home within three days of you getting the all clear. He’s going to speak with Tony and Secretary Ross to arrange it all in the morning. I’ll be back with you soon.’

‘You better, I’ve missed you Steve.’

‘I’ve missed you too. Try not to do anything too stupid till I get back, alright?’

‘Yes, Mom. You and Tony are as bad as each other you know that? I’m not going to be
surprised when you two get married.’ He closes the connection before Steve can form a response.

‘Asshole,’ he mutters with a small smile. He makes his way out of his room to find Natasha and Sam, hoping one of them would have some news of how T’Challa’s call had gone. They’re sat on some sofas, looking out over Wakanda and talking about home.

‘Any news?’ he asks as he takes a seat on the sofa next to Sam.

Natasha shakes her head. ‘Not yet. He should be out soon though.’

‘Ready to go home, Cap?’ Sam asks.

‘I think you’re more ready than I am,’ he responds with a smile.

Sam shrugs. ‘As awesome as this place is, they don’t have great drive-thru.’ Steve laughs,

‘I’m looking forwards to seeing the whole team again,’ Natasha admits, voice quiet. The other two turn to look at her. ‘SHIELD, the Avengers, they were my chance to go straight, wipe away some of the red in my ledger. Make a life away from everything before. It’s the closest I’ve come to having a family. It’ll be nice to have everyone together again.’

‘Then I suggest,’ comes a deep voice from behind her. ‘That this time you do not let something come between you all.’

‘How did the call go?’ Steve asks the Wakandan king as he joins them.

‘Well, Captain,’ T’Challa responds. ‘You will leave for America in two days; Tony will be waiting at the airport to greet you and take you back to the facility.’

‘And that’s it? No fight from Ross?’ Sam asks suspiciously.

T’Challa chuckles. ‘Oh no he fought like a cub that doesn’t want it’s mother to leave for the hunt: making lots of protests but no claws to back it up. However the Council has signed the documents, and the President has agreed so there is little he can do.’

‘Thank you for all your help,’ Steve says. ‘We really appreciate everything you’ve done for us.’

‘It was my pleasure, Captain,’ he replies. ‘But when you return remember what I said: don’t let something tear you apart again. For all our sakes.’

‘We’ll do our best,’ Natasha says, glancing at Steve as he starts to frown. He just nods in agreement but something inside of him clenches painfully. What if something does tear them apart again? Would they be able to come back from it?

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. I hope you continue to enjoy this story. There’s a couple more weeks of double chapter uploads left and then I’m afraid it’ll be down to a single chapter a week. Sorry!

Thank you so much to everyone who has left kudos, you have no idea how much it
makes me smile when I get an email to say I've had some left. Also huge thank you to seireidragon for leaving a review! I really appreciate all the support.

Please do let me know what you think, if you disagree with any of what I've put across in the story and if there's anything you'd like to see in the future. Next chapter: everyone is finally back!

Thanks again for all the support,
L x

As always here's a sneak peek at the next chapter:

Tony’s already turned away and is running towards the plane. ‘Steve! Stop!’
Steve pauses halfway down, Natasha is a few steps behind him and Sam is still at the top by the door. As he catches sight of the soldiers Steve frowns at him. ‘What’s going on, Tony?’ his voice is cold and dangerous.
‘I don’t know,’ he admits, standing in front of the stairs and doing his best to block out Bucky’s moaning at Steve’s perfect timing of being an idiot. ‘But I have a feeling I can guess,’ he growls as Ross moves in front of the soldiers.
‘Stark, move out of the way,’ the Secretary orders. ‘We are here to arrest Steven Rogers on charges of treason. The rest of your little team is free to go.’
Attempted Arrest

Chapter Summary

The last of the team arrive back on American soil, only for Tony to have to take on Ross to make sure they all stay free.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tony stands, for what he hopes is the last time, on an increasingly familiar stretch of tarmac; Wanda and Vision are standing next to him, and Happy is back at the car. He’s decided to treat them with the limo; it rarely gets taken out and it’s got space for the largest number of people. He doesn’t even attempt to stop his fidgeting as the plane comes into sight, and does his best to ignore Wanda’s smirk.

‘You sure you don’t want some time alone to welcome Steve home?’ she teases. He scowls at her.

‘Are he and Captain Rogers in a relationship?’ Vision asks, sending Wanda into fits of laughter.

Tony groans. ‘Just ignore her Vision, she’s trying to wind me up. No I’m not in a relationship with Steve, and I never will be.’

‘But if she’s using that to try and get a response, that implies there is a grain of truth to the statement. You feel affection for Captain-’

‘And stop right there,’ Tony cuts across him, as Wanda’s laughter increases in volume.

‘Hey if you two get married can I be best man?’ Bucky’s voice comes across the ear pieces.

‘No way, I’m Tony’s best man. You be Steve’s,’ Rhodes’ voice joins in. They’d left the two of them back at the facility, partly to appease Ross and partly so they can keep an eye on the hacked security cameras from the airport. Something for which he is extremely grateful for right now.

‘Ok everyone stop. We are never talking about this ever again. Understood?’

Vision looks confused and mutters, ‘I still don’t understand humans.’

‘Oh thank god,’ Tony says as the plane hits the tarmac of the runway and begins to slow. ‘Hopefully at least one person on this plane will be on my side in this.’

‘I wouldn’t count on it,’ Wanda’s sing-song voice laughs at him.

Before he can reply Rhodes’ voice cuts across them both. ‘Tony you got two transports and five cars just pulled up. Ross is getting out of one car and a shit ton of soldiers are coming out the transports.’

Tony curses under his breath. The plane has now come to a standstill and the stairs are being locked into place. ‘What do we do?’ Wanda asks, immediately sobering up.
‘Stay back for now,’ he replies as the door to the plane opens, Steve’s very familiar form stepping out just as the soldiers come into view around the side of one of the buildings. ‘Follow my lead. We can’t afford a fight.’

‘But, Tony—’

Tony’s already turned away and is running towards the plane. ‘Steve! Stop!’

Steve pauses halfway down, Natasha is a few steps behind him and Sam is still at the top by the door. As he catches sight of the soldiers Steve frowns at him. ‘What’s going on, Tony?’ his voice is cold and dangerous.

‘I don’t know,’ he admits, standing in front of the stairs and doing his best to block out Bucky’s moaning at Steve’s perfect timing of being an idiot. ‘But I have a feeling I can guess,’ he growls as Ross moves in front of the soldiers.

‘Stark, move out of the way,’ the Secretary orders. ‘We are here to arrest Steven Rogers on charges of treason. The rest of your little team is free to go.’

Tony crosses his arms. ‘Yeah, wouldn’t suggest it Ross. See as long as he hasn’t touched American soil, he’s still under Wakandan jurisdiction. You really want to start a fight with King T’Challa? Actually, please be my guest, I’ll reserve front row seats. Screw it I’ll get them for the whole team.’

‘I’ve no time for your games, Stark. Now move and I’ll overlook this little show of yours.’

‘Not going to happen,’ his voice goes from his usual teasing tone to low and dangerous, he can feel the anger boiling up inside him.

‘Tony be careful,’ Rhodes’ voice warns him, prompting him to take a deep breath.

_Stay focussed, Stark._

‘If you don’t move, Stark, I’ll have you arrested alongside Rogers.’

‘What do you have to arrest him for anyway?’

‘I already told you: treason.’

‘Captain America has committed treason? Really? The guy who almost single-handedly took down Hitler’s science division? Who went solo behind enemy lines and brought back an entire captured division? Not exaggerating, trust me, that was my Dad’s favourite bed time story; well mainly his part in flying the plane, but eventually he told me the rest of it.’

‘Past actions do not negate present ones,’ Ross cuts him off. ‘When Captain Rogers left he still had not answered for his crimes.’

‘Crimes which you agreed, as part of the Council, to clear him of before his return.’

‘Stark I swear, you don’t move and I’ll—’

‘You’ll what? Arrest Iron Man as well as Captain America for charges which were dropped? Is that how America runs her justice system now?’ Tony notices a few of the soldiers’ guns dropping as they look to each other for a hint as to what to do. ‘Hey, Vis? If I uploaded a video to the internet, how long before you think it’d go viral?’
‘That would depend on the content,’ Vision’s calm voice responds. ‘However I assume you are referring to a recording of this particular exchange, so I would say no more than twenty minutes.’

‘Twenty minutes,’ Tony muses aloud. ‘I suspect less if it got onto all the news channels first.’

‘Are you trying to threaten me Stark? You’d have to have recorded it from the beginning to do any damage.’

Tony smirks. ‘I’ve never trusted you, Ross. I made sure the others were always covered any time they left the facility so you couldn’t try and pull anything on them. Trust issues a mile wide, that’s one of my failings I’m afraid. So every time I step outside the facility I’ve had FRIDAY record every second of it. Including today.’

‘You think that scares me?’ Ross growls.

If possible, Tony’s smirk gets wider as he reaches into his jacket and pulls out his trump card. ‘I don’t care if it does or not, because I don’t need to release anything right now. See Rhodey and I paid a visit to the President; a wonderful guy, by the way, and still likes to keep in touch after we helped him during the whole Mandarin incident. You know the White House does these amazing cookies? I need to get the recipe sent over at some point. Anyway, we got talking about our blond friend back here,’ he jabs a thumb over his shoulder at Steve, who has been staying mercifully quiet throughout this whole exchange. Part of him wonders if Natasha is having something to do with that, but doesn’t want to risk looking back. ‘I may have expressed some nerves about just such a thing as this happening on his arrival back on US soil. Now it seems the President’s dear old dad was one of the men that Cap saved from Hydra on that solo mission I mentioned. Turns out he’s still really grateful about that, so he decided to write and sign an official pardon, just to make absolutely sure that the hero who saved his dad would stay free.’ Taking great delight with every word, Tony reads the pardon aloud, watching as Ross’ face goes from red to purple. ‘Nat? Do me a favour and show this to the Secretary? I wouldn’t want him to think I was making all of this up.’

‘Tony you son of a bitch,’ Bucky laughs down the ear piece as he hears Natasha make her way down the stairs behind him. When she’s drawn level with him he thinks the smirk on her face is probably a match for his own; she takes the paper and saunters the distance between him and Ross, holding out the paper for him to take.

‘Oh and in case you were thinking of tearing it up? That’s actually a copy, the original is back at the facility with Rhodey. I think the President kept an original copy as well,’ Tony shrugs. ‘Can’t be too careful these days. Paperwork does have a tendency to go missing.’

Ross lets out a sound that’s somewhere between a snarl and a scream. ‘One day, Stark. One day I’ll wipe that smug look off of your face.’

Tony shrugs again. ‘Many have tried all have failed. But you want to take an Avenger, Ross? You better be prepared to go through the whole goddamn team. And you’ll start with me.’

There’s a pause as Ross attempts to stare him down. Then the Secretary spins on his heel, flinging the pardon back in Natasha’s face, and storms off, gesturing for the soldiers to follow him.

No one moves until they’re all out of sight.

‘Well,’ she says, coming back up to Tony, ‘you got badass while we were away.’

Tony lets out a breath of laughter as the other two come down the stairs. ‘Yeah well I knew someone who once told the government to go screw themselves and it seemed to work out alright for
them. Thought I’d give it a go.’ After a pause he adds. ‘And I’ve always been badass, you just never admitted it.’

‘No your suits are badass,’ Wanda says as she and Vision join them. ‘You’re just an ass.’

‘I just saved our asses and all I get is grief,’ Tony throws his hands into the air.

‘Thank you, Tony,’ Steve says, placing a hand on his shoulder.

‘Ah don’t mention it. Preferably ever. Now let’s save the talk till we get to the car.’

They all exchange brief greetings as they hurry towards Happy and the waiting limo. Tony feels a small slice of tension melt away as Steve falls into step beside him, the rest of the group falling in behind them. It all felt very natural.

It felt like his family was home.

Natasha watches as Vision climbs in last, closing the door behind him and settling down next to Wanda; she can’t help a small smile at the sight of the two of them, they look much happier now they’re together.

‘Very nice,’ she comments, casting an eye around the limo. ‘You’re spoiling us, Tony.’

He waves her off. ‘Yeah well it hardly ever gets taken out. Plus it’s got the best soundproofing. FRIDAY? Bring up the secure link to the facility and let’s see the two ugly mugs.’

‘Sure thing boss,’ the AI responds.

‘Who you calling ugly?’ Bucky demands as he and Rhodes’ face fill the screen separating them from Happy.

‘Well, well, well look who finally found their way home,’ Rhodes says at the same time.

‘You look happier Barnes,’ she comments, noticing the lessening of the tension in his shoulders and face, and a little more of a spark behind his eyes.

‘Yeah well having a fully functioning brain can do that to a guy,’ he replies, then grins. ‘Plus getting all the embarrassing growing up stories about Tony from Rhodey helps.’

Tony mock-glares at them as Wanda sniggers. ‘Introducing you two? Biggest mistake of my life.’

‘I thought that would have been Ultron?’ Vision queries.

‘Way to ruin the mood, Vis,’ Wanda rolls her eyes next to the humanoid.

‘Nope. Those two, hands down. We’re having nothing but embarrassing stories about Steve out of you from a week,’ he says, pointing at Bucky.
The ex-assassin laughs. ‘If you insist.’

‘You really are a jerk, Buck,’ Steve complains from his seat next to Tony. ‘I’ve not even got back to the facility and you’re making my life difficult.’

‘Yeah well you’re still a punk. And a dork.’

‘It’s alright Steve, Tony didn’t say anything about me not being able to share stories,’ Rhodes adds. ‘I’m sure we’ll find a way to balance it out.’

‘You know, I might just add a feature to your suit to make you do the Macarena whenever I want, Rhodey,’ Tony muses aloud.

His friend’s eyes narrow at him. ‘You wouldn’t Tony. You know you wouldn’t.’

Tony grins. ‘Oh but I would. Hey FRIDAY? Prepare to install the ‘dance-off protocol’ to the War Machine suits.’

‘Right away, boss,’ comes the female response. ‘Should I set it to voice or music prompting?’

‘Do both,’ Tony says as Bucky, Sam and Wanda start laughing.

‘Tony take it off!’ Rhodes shouts. ‘Don’t you dare, you hear me? FRIDAY, ignore everything he just said!’

Natasha can hear Steve chuckling as the AI responds. ‘I’m sorry Colonel, but you do not have authority to override any of Mr Stark’s orders. I might suggest you contact Miss Potts, who still does have authority.’

‘Vision help a guy out here,’ Rhodes pleads.

‘I’m sorry, Colonel, but I’m afraid I do not have an override protocol,’ he replies.

‘But you must be able to work around it?’

Natasha feels herself breaking into a true smile as she catches Sam’s eye and nods. Looks like they’ll be alright after all.

‘Steve?’ Tony walks into the common room the next morning, phone in hand as if he’s just got off a call.

‘What is it Tony?’ the blond asks, looking up from his conversation with Vision. A few of them are sat having breakfast, he’s just finished a workout with Sam and Bucky and they’d come up to find Vision at the table. They still weren’t sure if he actually needed to eat, but he seemed to anyway.

‘The Council just called, they want you and me to go and see them this morning,’ the inventor replies, rubbing one eye with the heel of his hand and yawning as he reaches for the coffee pot.

‘Why us?’ he asks, feeling everyone at the table tense.
‘Turns out they heard about Ross’ little power play yesterday,’ Tony responds, taking a seat at the end of the table. ‘I think they want to apologise.’

‘They what?’ Sam asks.

‘When do they want to see us?’ Steve asks, ignoring his friend’s surprise.

‘In about an hour,’ he replies, standing up with his coffee. ‘We need to leave in ten minutes. Better move quick, soldier.’

He does and they manage to make it to see the Council with five minutes to spare. ‘Tony? What should we expect when we go in?’ he asks the shorter man beside him.

‘Representatives from fourteen UN countries,’ he replies, furiously typing away on his phone. ‘Majority of them are pretty reasonable; they’ve been willing to find middle ground with me. Ross is the primary antagonist in the group, but I imagine he’s been put on the naughty step after his stunt yesterday. They’ll be wanting to show you that they’re willing to work with us.’

‘Should I say anything?’ he questions, he’s used to avoiding these kinds of situations. He’s always stuck to his path in the future, and it sounds like that’s not what is needed in this room.

Tony shrugs. ‘I’m not going to stop you,’ he replies. ‘Just remember we have to work with them so try not to go all ‘Captain America’ on me. Right now I need, Steve Rogers.’

‘Most people would say they’re the same person, Tony,’ Steve sighs.

Tony stops typing and puts his phone away, but looks straight ahead rather than at Steve. ‘I’ve found there tends to be a difference.’

Before he can ask what the inventor means, the door in front of them opens and a young man gestures them forwards. ‘Mr Stark, Captain Rogers? They’re ready for you.’

‘Thanks, Jones,’ Tony says, gesturing for Steve to follow him.

Before they get within earshot of the man Steve leans to Tony. ‘I thought you didn’t learn people’s names?’

Tony shrugs. ‘He’s a fan, I felt bad.’

He doesn’t have chance to say anything else before they’re in a large executive board room, around the table are sat thirteen men and women from a variety of countries. He follows Tony’s example and takes a seat at the bottom of the table.

‘What no cookies?’ Tony asks, once they’re sat down. ‘You do realise I was asleep when you called? You could at least have given us cookies.’

‘I hope your usual light tone means you do not hold us responsible for Secretary Ross’ actions yesterday?’ the Chinese representative asks.

Tony shakes his head. ‘You assured me during our last meeting that Captain Rogers had been cleared of all his crimes, along with the others on the team. There was nothing yesterday to suggest anything other than Ross acting alone. I assume I can continue to trust you to keep your word?’

‘Of course, Mr Stark,’ a man responds, from his accent Steve thinks he’s German. ‘We shall be discussing this incident with Secretary Ross ourselves.’
‘Where is Ross now?’ Steve asks.

The German representative turns to him. ‘He is currently meeting with your President,’ he replies. ‘Once he is finished there he will come here for our discussion.’

‘Allow us,’ the Chinese representative adds, ‘to most sincerely apologise for the events of your return yesterday, Captain Rogers. We were most displeased to learn of the Secretary’s actions and can promise you that nothing like this will happen again.’

Steve simply nods. Tony speaks up from next to him. ‘I hope you are right, ma’am. I’d hate for one of our team to be put in such a situation again, and I hope you can understand when I say there would be serious consequences.’

‘Are you threatening us, Mr Stark?’ the British representative demands.

‘Only if you plan on stabbing me in the back, which is no more than what you do to me on a fairly regular basis,’ he replies, leaning back in his chair.

A few of them seem to nod in acceptance. ‘Very well, if you do not have any questions or any more concerns, then we can conclude this meeting,’ the British representative says.

‘Oh I have plenty of concerns after today,’ Tony says as he stands up. ‘But I believe they are all with Ross, and I’ll take them up with him and the President.’ He gestures for Steve to stand up. ‘As for this Council I hope we can continue to work in a mutually beneficial arrangement as we have these past months.’

‘Of course, Mr Stark,’ the Japanese representative nods his head.

‘Then in which case we shall say goodbye, ladies and gentlemen. Enjoy your meeting with Ross,’ and with that Tony turns on his heel and marches out. When they are outside the door and a safe distance away, he looks at Steve out the corner of his eye and grins. ‘I never get to go in there with the upper hand. That was fun!’

Steve just smiles and shakes his head, he’s about to respond when Tony’s phone goes off and the man answers it. ‘Pepper! Wonderful timing. I need you up at the facility today. No, the terrible twins are behaving themselves today. Well now Steve’s back Bucky can terrorise him instead of me, and Rhodey just follows his lead. Plus I may have scared him with the Macarena protocol. I am being nice! Did you see my message on Ross? No I didn’t do anything stupid, Steve and I have just been to meet the Council. No they were apologising to us for once. I know right? So will you please come up to the facility tonight? I need help with PR. Yes the great Tony Stark is asking for help. Pepper just come up to the facility.’

Steve laughs quietly as he listens to Tony’s side of the conversation. He’s still not sure how he feels about all this, but for now he’ll just go with the flow. He’ll never admit it, but he’s really missed Tony.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: First of all a huge thank you to my two reviewers on the last chapter JustAnotherLonelyFangirl and BB4ever!! I love getting reviews, they really make my day. And due to a request from BB4ever there will be a WinterIron scene a little later in
the story. But don't worry I'm staying primarily Stony!

There's another chapter to come today so I'll leave more of a note on the next chapter!
L x
Tony speaks to May Parker and tells the team Spider-Man will be visiting more often; and Bucky tries to look after Tony since he won't look after himself.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tony fiddles with the repulsor as he listens to the ringing fill his workshop. *Pick up the phone already.*

‘Hello?’ the voice of Peter’s aunt fills his workshop.

‘Ah, hi Ms Parker, it’s Tony,’ he says, wondering how he can take on a room full of journalists and not blink an eye, but when he speaks to this woman he breaks out in a sweat.

‘Oh, hi Tony. Is everything alright? Has something happened to Pete?’

‘No, nothing’s happened. Everything is fine I promise,’ he tries to cut off her panicking before it gets out of hand.

‘Oh, ok then. What did you want to talk about?’ May asks.

‘Well, I was wondering if you’d be happy for us to start having Peter up to the facility every two weeks from now on? Now that the rest of the team is back.’

There’s a pause, then she sighs. ‘I thought he’d said he doesn’t want to be an Avenger? What’s the point in having him up there so often, Tony? You trying to wear him down?’

‘I’d rather he stay off the team for now,’ Tony admits, ‘he becomes an Avenger and suddenly all the big players take more of an interest in him. He stays the ‘friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man’ and he only has to deal with the small time people. But he enjoys being here and being with the team. And when the next big thing goes down, and it’s going to at some point, there’s nothing you or I can do to stop him getting involved.’

‘I know,’ May admits, voice quiet.

‘If he gets to know the team he can work with us much easier when he has to. Then he can go back to being the neighbourhood superhero.’

‘And if we try and keep him away he’s just going to find a way to get there anyway, and he’ll probably get himself into a lot of trouble doing it,’ May sighs. ‘Alright, we can move it up to every two weeks,’ she gives a small laugh. ‘Do you know how disappointed he’s been that he’s not been able to come up while you’ve been helping the Winter Soldier?’

‘Has he been driving you insane by any chance?’

‘He’s been climbing up the walls.’
‘Literally or figuratively? Cause with him it could be either.’

‘Both! Do you know how hard it is to deal with a sulky teenager, let alone one that sulks cross-legged on the ceiling?’ May groans.

‘So I take it that means you’ll agree to him coming over this weekend?’

‘Fine. Do you want me to drop him off?’

‘No it’s fine, I’ll let him know I’ll pick him up from school.’

‘Please be discreet, Tony,’ May begs as she hangs up.

‘Why would she think I wouldn’t be discreet?’ Tony asks out loud.

‘Is that a rhetorical question boss?’ FRIDAY asks.

‘Why do all my AI systems learn sarcasm?’ he pushes away from the table and makes his way towards the stairs. ‘Well, now it’s time to warn the rest of the team.’

Tony reaches the common area to find Natasha sitting with Wanda and Rhodes in front of the TV.

‘Who watches the twenty four hour news channel out of choice?’ he asks, flopping onto the sofa next to Natasha.

‘Anyone who wants to keep track of what’s happening in the world,’ Rhodes points out. ‘Plus it’s a good thing to leave on in the background when people are coming in and out.’

‘You do know that’s wasting energy right? Isn’t the world supposed to be cutting its carbon footprint?’

‘You make the whole facility run on clean energy,’ Wanda points out.

‘Are you saying you’re purposefully wasting my energy?’

‘What are you doing here Tony?’ Natasha asks.

‘Err… I live here. And own the building.’

‘What did you want us up here for Tony?’ Steve asks as he, Sam and Bucky walk in; they’ve obviously been working out.

‘And there goes the cover story,’ he says, ‘thanks Steve.’

‘What did I do?’ the soldier asks.

Vision takes that moment to phase through the floor. ‘I imagine nothing terrible, Captain Rogers. Mr Stark is probably being dramatic. Hence the reason for asking us all to come up here.’

‘Why is everyone raining on my parade today? First these guys are purposefully wasting my energy, then Steve blew my cover, and now Vision’s calling me dramatic.’
‘And how is you acting like this not being dramatic?’ Wanda points out.

‘Ugh, fine. So I thought it’d be easier to get everyone together to let you all know that Spiderman will be coming up every other weekend from now on.’

‘That’s your big announcement?’ Rhodes asks. ‘Jesus Tony I thought you were going to tell us you’d finally signed the paperwork to be his legal guardian or something.’

‘Very funny, Rhodey. What might have slipped your mind is that not everyone here knows the kid. Or rather only knows him from Berlin,’ Tony reminds his best friend.

‘And some of us switched sides after the last time we met him,’ Natasha points out.

‘You mean the kid who wouldn’t shut up? He comes here regularly?’ Sam asks.

‘How come I haven’t seen him before?’ Bucky frowns, looking between Tony, Rhodes and Vision.

‘We discussed it before your arrival,’ Vision answers for Tony, ‘and we thought it was best if only official team members were present during the difficult time of recovery. Having a new member who no one you trusted had previously known would not have made for a conducive healing environment.’

‘Err…ok?’ Bucky responds, blinking a few times as he processes the information.

‘You keep calling him a kid, just how old is he?’ Sam asks, crossing his arms over his chest.

‘He’s seventeen in two months,’ Tony replies.

‘He’s the only person Tony can tell you the exact birthday of,’ Rhodes says. ‘Well apart from Steve, but everyone can tell you Steve’s birthday.’

‘Rhodey you’re making this weird,’ Tony groans.

‘The kid is sixteen?’ Sam asks. ‘Tony are you insane? You can’t take a kid that young into a firefight.’

‘He was already in the firefight, Sam. How do you think I found out about him?’ he brings the videos up from when he’d first found Peter, and shows them to the others on the screen, replacing the latest celebrity couple break up story.

‘Nice catch,’ Bucky comments as Peter catches a car before it hits a bus. ‘Can see why you think he’d be useful.’

‘And why he’d need protection,’ Natasha adds. At a few questioning glances she elaborates. ‘Who else do you think could have picked him up if not us?’

‘HYDRA,’ Wanda states quietly.

‘No offense, Tony, but how do we know the kid can keep his cool during a firefight? He didn’t exactly fill me with confidence with that runaway mouth of his,’ Sam’s voice is calmer now.

‘He’s good,’ Wanda answers before Tony can do more than open his mouth. ‘He was caught up in that hostage situation not that long after I arrived,’ she explains, ‘when we were getting the hostages out of them one snuck up behind me and he took them out. Without him I’d be dead.’
‘Good enough for me,’ Steve says, cutting off any more protests. ‘What’s the kid’s name?’

‘That’s his information to give,’ Tony cuts across everyone else. ‘I’ll pick him up from school on Friday and bring him up here. And play nice please people.’ He looks at Bucky as he says the last part.

‘Why you looking at me?’ the dark haired man asks.

‘Because you’re a jerk,’ Steve says, grinning. Tony just sighs and shakes his head as the two start bickering. Who knew bringing everyone back would just give him more headaches?

Natasha just rolls her eyes and throws the remote to Wanda who decides to put on some comedy show to drown out the two super soldiers. Sam comes and joins them on the sofa, apparently not wanting to try and break the two friends up. Not that Tony can blame him. Unconsciously he rubs at his chest where the arc reactor used to be, the shadow of a shield sitting heavy.

‘Steve do you think we should go check on Tony?’ Bucky asks, looking over at the clock on the wall.

‘Why? He usually stays locked in his workshop until the early hours, Buck. Trust me, from past experience I know he doesn’t like to be disturbed mid-inventing session.’

‘Yeah but he hasn’t been up for food and we all had dinner an hour ago,’ his friend points out. ‘And Pepper left an hour or so before that.’

Steve nods. Pepper had popped her head around the door to say goodbye to everyone just as Wanda and Natasha had decided they were cooking dinner that evening. She’d arrived that afternoon instead of last night because she’d been caught up in a board meeting. The moment she’d arrived the billionaire had taken her down into the workshop where they’d been all afternoon. And apparently Tony still is.

‘Come on, let’s just go make sure he isn’t working himself to death,’ Bucky says, standing up and stretching.

‘Why the sudden concern?’ Steve questions as he follows his friend out of the common area.

Bucky shrugs, but at Steve’s raised eyebrow he sighs. ‘I don’t know if you noticed, Steve, but Tony’s been doing all of this alone.’

‘What do you mean?’ he frowns.

‘Getting us all back, dealing with the Council, making sure there’s everything we need at the facility, protecting us from Ross, upgrading weapons and armour, and now this new found PR war he’s decided to declare. I could go on but I think you get my drift,’ Bucky presses the button to call the elevator and Steve leans up against the side.

‘I thought Pepper was helping him, like she is with the PR stuff.’

Bucky gives a small laugh. ‘It seems Tony got it into his head that the whole fight between
the team was his fault,’ he explains as the doors open and they step into the glass box. Bucky presses the button for the basement where the workshop is. ‘So he’s also decided that he has to be the one to fix everything.’

‘But it was my fault too,’ Steve’s frown deepens.

‘It was all of our faults, Steve,’ Bucky says. ‘And it was kind of all over me so yeah I feel I own a big chunk of the responsibility.’

‘Buck it wasn’t just-’

‘No, Steve, I’ve already had all this from Tony I don’t need it from you too. You two want to wallow in self-pity over the fight, let me wallow in mine.’

Steve doesn’t really have anything to say to that, but luckily for him the elevator doors open and the step out into the short hallway that leads to the entrance to Tony’s ‘Cave of Wonders’.

‘I just…’ Bucky pauses, then starts again. ‘He did so much for me when I first got here, Steve. He gave me time to settle in, gave me everything I needed to get better, hell he watched my memories of me murdering his parents and then proceeded to tell me he didn’t blame me for their deaths. And it’s not just me he’s been doing stuff for, Steve, it’s all the team. Rhodey can walk again because of him.’

‘You know Buck I’m starting to wonder when you’re going to ask me to be best man,’ Steve teases, not sure why that joke leaves a bit of a sour taste in his mouth.

Bucky shoots him a glare. ‘I’m being serious, Steve. He’s working himself too hard and none of us are able to give anything back at the moment. If we don’t find a way to get Tony to realise we can help him out, he’s going to crash and burn. I’m not sure how we’ll be able to pick up the pieces if he does. I’m also not sure how well the team will hold together if he does.’

Steve doesn’t have a reply to that. They reach the glass doors to the workshop and look through, seeing the hunched figure of Tony passed out on his workbench, facing away from the door.

‘Stupid bastard,’ Bucky mutters.

‘Think we can get FRIDAY to let us in?’ Steve asks.

His friend gives him a grin. ‘No need. I’ve got an override code.’

‘What?’ Steve doesn’t get an answer to his question as Bucky quickly punches in some numbers and the door silently opens, letting the two men into the workshop. ‘Why do you have an override?’ Steve whispers.

‘Tony gave it me after we had a heart to heart and made me promise to come down and talk to him rather than considering other options,’ he whispers back as they approach the motionless form of the inventor.

‘What other options, Buck?’ Steve’s whisper is hard, fear making its way into his heart.

They look down at the dark haired man, his head resting on one arm, the hand still clutching a screwdriver; the other one is reaching across the desk as if he’s fallen asleep in the middle of typing out an idea on one of his many screens.
‘FRIDAY? Save all the work and close down the screens would you?’ Bucky quietly asks the AI.

‘Of course, Sergeant Barnes,’ the female voice responds and the workshop goes dim.

‘There’s a sofa over there we can put him on,’ he tells Steve, pointing to a space behind him and walking over to grab a pillow and blankets. ‘He has it here for power naps.’

‘Buck, what other options?’ Steve asks again.

Bucky sighs, facing away from Steve. ‘Tony found me one night a couple of weeks in trying to decide between a whiskey tumbler and a gun.’ Then he gives him a brief recount of the conversation they’d had about blame.

Steve looks down at the inventor as his friend talks. He notices the dark circles under Tony’s eyes, and the sheer exhaustion beginning to show through. The billionaire is usually so animated when he’s awake that it’s easy to miss. For Steve apparently, but not for other people. And this is the man who apparently saved his best friend’s life a couple of times over in the past few months.

Bucky starts to come over to help him carry Tony but Steve shakes his head. Gently prising the screwdriver from his hand, Steve picks up the inventor, who is worryingly light in his arms, and navigates his way around Tony’s projects to lay him down on the sofa. The former assassin drapes the blanket over him and Steve can’t help but smile as Tony snuggles into it.

He gestures for Bucky to follow him out of the workshop and the two say nothing until they reach the elevator.

‘We’ll look out for him, Bucky,’ Steve promises himself as well as his friend, ‘the two of us.’

Bucky smiles and nods as the elevator doors close and they go up to rejoin the rest of the team.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! So the whole team is back now and is going to be introduced to Peter in the next chapter. Hope you're enjoying the story; we're now moving properly into the second stage of the story. I've planned about three stages, and just under 40 chapters for this fic. I've already written 20 chapters, so in case I have a busy week there'll always be an update ready.

Unfortunately I am now going down to one chapter uploaded a week seeing as I'm now caught up with where I am on fanfiction.net. If I get five or more reviews one week though I might do a surprise mid-week upload - just to inspire you to review if you want the chapters quicker!

Do let me know what you think, getting reviews really does make my day, plus it lets me know if I'm doing the characters justice. Also if there's any requests or suggestions I may be able to find a way to incorporate them into the story.

Hope you're enjoying it.

L x
As always here's a sneak peek at the next chapter:

‘You’re unnaturally quiet, kid,’ Tony comments as they weave through the New York rush hour traffic, heading towards the outskirts. ‘What’s up?’

‘Praying I’ll make it there alive,’ comes the muttered response.
‘Oh come on I’m not that bad a driver,’ he says, narrowly missing a motorcyclist as he changes lane. He notices the wide eyes and bursts out laughing. ‘Ok so I’m not the most careful driver, but I have yet to have an accident in a car I made myself.’
Meet The Avengers

Chapter Summary

Peter meets the whole team since Germany, and Bucky takes a shine to the young webslinger

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘Can I see it again?’

Peter resists the urge to groan, shaking his head. ‘Ned shut up and listen.’

‘Dude, Tony Stark texted you to say he’s picking you up today and you want me to focus on Shakespeare?’ Ned whispers, casting a look at the teacher who so far hasn’t paid any attention to their conversation.

‘Yeah and if my big reveal comes from you getting my phone confiscated during class you are so dead,’ he mutters, but passes his phone to his friend anyway. It’s only small things like this that has Ned feeling really involved with his alter-ego so he can’t really begrudge him reading a text for what must be the fiftieth time.

Not when Peter himself basically had it committed to memory. Well it was the first time Mr Stark had texted him rather than passing a message through Happy:

‘Hey kid, I’ll be picking you up after school on Friday. May says you can join us every other weekend from now on. Don’t worry about bringing the suit I’ve got some prototypes for you to try out. Don’t keep me waiting.’

‘Dude can I come meet him?’ Ned asks, passing his phone back.

Peter smiles. ‘Sure Ned, I’ll introduce you.’

‘Parker, Leeds, is there something you’d like to share with the rest of us?’ their teacher’s voice cuts right to the back of the classroom.

‘Sorry, miss,’ Peter casts a quick glance at the board, making sure they hadn’t covered anything new. ‘We were just having a short debate as to whether seeing his father’s ghost is the first sign of Hamlet going mad or not. I said yes but Ned argued no seeing as everyone else can see him too.’

Apparently mollified the teacher takes up their supposed topic of discussion with the rest of the class.

‘Dude how did you do that?’ Ned asks, eyes wide.

Peter scratches the back of his head. ‘I may have picked it up from Mr Stark; he has a habit of throwing off suspicion that he’s not been listening by pretending to have been thinking about something related.’
‘This is why we’re friends,’ Ned laughs, then turns his attention back to the teacher before they get told off again.

It took far too long for the bell to ring in Peter’s opinion, but finally it was the end of the day. He shoves all of his books into his bag, for once not actually being careful, and rushes to the door, Ned hot on his heels.

‘Dude slow down I’m not as fast as you!’ his friend shouts from behind him. They pause long enough at the lockers for them to get the rest of their stuff for the weekend.

‘I know but I don’t want Mr Stark to have to deal with a scene if loads of people spot him,’ he mumbles, slamming his locker shut, slinging his weekend bag over one shoulder and trying not to tap his foot waiting for Ned to finish. ‘Plus he told me not to make him wait.’

‘Are you going to tell him about Deadpool?’ Ned asks quietly, finally closing his locker and the two of them head towards the front of the school. ‘Plus I’m pretty sure Mr Stark is the dictionary definition of making a scene.’

He ignores the last comment as they weave between the crowds of students all heading in the same direction. ‘I’m not sure what he needs to know.’

‘Err maybe the fact that you’re now BFFs with an insane mercenary?’ Ned suggests.

Peter casts a quick glance around to make sure no one heard Ned’s statement. ‘Keep your voice down. And I am not BFFs with Deadpool. We just hang out at the end of patrol every now and again.’

‘You have food at the end of basically every patrol. I’m surprised no one’s taken a picture and sent it to a paper yet.’

‘We’re careful. He says he doesn’t want to ruin the goody-goody image,’ he knows his voice has gone a little sour but he can’t help it. The more he’s got to know Deadpool the more he wonders if the guy is actually as bad as people have made him out to be.

‘He’s a murdering psychopath, of course it would ruin the image,’ Ned counters.

‘He’s not anymore, Ned,’ he argues as they get closer to the main doors. ‘I swear, he wants to change.’

‘Really? So why now? What is it that’s making him want to change?’ Peter can’t stop the blush that starts to rise at Ned’s question. His friend’s eyes go wide. ‘Oh no. Pete, tell me you’re joking.’

‘Look it’s all on his side I swear. But the point is just being friends with him has made a difference. He tends to only take protection jobs now.’

The look Ned gives him tells him exactly how much he believes that. ‘Yeah completely one sided. Which is why you’re sticking up for him this much.’

‘Ned just drop it,’ Peter snaps. Ned opens his mouth to say something else when they hear someone’s excited shout of ‘Oh my god is that Tony Stark?’

Peter groans and the two of them rush out of the doors. Sure enough there is Tony Stark,
leaning against a car that he’s parked right outside the gates. Not even a blind man could have missed him. Students are already starting to gather a little away from him, obviously unsure if they should approach or not.

‘See what I mean about not being fussed by a scene?’ Ned points out.

‘Oh shut up and come on,’ Peter grumbles, pushing through the thickening crowd to reach his mentor.

‘Hey watch it you little punk,’ someone snarls as he pushes past them.

‘Ah there you are,’ Mr Stark says as he catches sight of Peter. ‘Thought I was going to have to get Bucky to come and flush you out.’

Oh yeah that’s all he needs, the Winter Soldier storming his school to come find him. ‘Sorry Mr Stark, I didn’t mean to keep you wait-’

‘Kid breathe,’ Mr Stark chuckles, gesturing him forwards. ‘I’m messing with you. Who’s your friend?’

Peter pulls Ned towards the car with him, trying desperately to ignore all the muttering behind him. Well at least people will believe his Stark Internship story now. ‘Mr Stark, this is Ned Leeds. Ned, Mr Stark.’

‘Ah the guy in the chair right?’ Mr Stark lowers his voice once they’re closer and shakes Ned’s hand. Ned looks like he’s about to collapse from heart failure. ‘The one who hacked into my suit? Got to admit I’m impressed kid. Maybe you should come up with Pete, sometime.’ Ned makes a noise somewhere between a laugh and groan. ‘Anyway we need to make a move. Come on Underoos, I’ll let you ride shotgun.’

Waving goodbye to Ned as Mr Stark climbs into the driver’s seat, Peter makes his way to the other side of the car and climbs in the passenger seat, pushing his bags through the gap into the back. Without caring about the large numbers of people around them Mr Stark speeds off, Peter only just able to secure his seatbelt by the time they reach the end of the road.

Maybe he’d prefer Happy pick him up so he actually makes it to the facility in one piece.

‘You’re unnaturally quiet, kid,’ Tony comments as they weave through the New York rush hour, heading towards the outskirts. ‘What’s up?’

‘Praying I’ll make it there alive,’ comes the muttered response.

‘Oh come on I’m not that bad a driver,’ he says, narrowly missing a motorcyclist as he changes lane. He notices the wide eyes and bursts out laughing. ‘Ok so I’m not the most careful driver, but I have yet to have an accident in a car I modified.’ As he opens his mouth again Tony waves for him to forget it. ‘So come on it can’t just be my driving, otherwise you wouldn’t have said anything about it.’

He hears the kid sigh, but doesn’t add anything more until Peter finally says what’s on his mind. ‘Are you sure it’s a good idea for meet the whole team so soon after everyone’s come back? I
mean I did fight like half of them the first, and last, time I met them.’

‘You’ll be fine, kid,’ Tony assures him as they finally leave the city limits and start heading upstate. ‘Just be yourself and try not to get too nervous. Now tell me what’s been happening at school until we get there.’

‘Wait you blew up a cupboard in the science lab making a new version of your web fluid and still managed to get away with it?’ Tony asks, pushing open the door to the common area.

‘Well I made it out to be an accident, which it kind of was, cause see it was Flash knocked the other chemical over and it spilt into the drawer I was using and then everything went boom. So I said I’d been keeping it down there so I didn’t accidentally combine the two things we weren’t supposed to mix.’

‘And the teacher believed that?’ Tony frowns.

‘Well yeah, I mean he didn’t have any reason not to,’ Peter shrugs. He can see the very second the kid catches sight of the other occupants of the room: his mouth snaps shut and his eyes go wide.

‘Ok so Rhodey you already know,’ Tony says.

‘Hey Colonel,’ Peter squeaks as Rhodes waves at him in greeting.

‘And you may have already met them but this is Sam Wilson and Bucky Barnes.’ The other two occupants stand up from where they’ve been sitting on the couch.

‘So this is the kid that tried to kick our asses in Berlin?’ Sam asks. ‘Kind of wondering how he got so close seeing how scrawny he is.’

‘Hey now Sam, play fair,’ a voice says from behind them, and Steve walks in with Natasha. ‘I literally ran circles around you when I first met you and you still got on the team.’

‘Yeah yeah, that and you needed my wings,’ he replies.

‘Nice to meet you properly, kid,’ Steve says, holding out his hand.

Peter takes it hesitantly. ‘Yeah you too, Captain, Sir.’ He still looks like he wants to high tail it out of this situation.

‘Nice to see you again, kid,’ Natasha says, giving him a rare smile.

‘You too Miss Romanoff.’

‘Ok we need to stop with the Miss Romanoff, because it makes me feel like-’

‘Peter!’ a happy shout from behind them has Peter turning around just as Wanda throws her arms around him in a big hug.

‘Uh, hey,’ he squeaks, ‘yeah, uh, what was that for?’
Wanda laughs as she lets go of him. ‘I didn’t get to say thank you for saving my life last time we met,’ she explains.

‘Oh, err, you’re welcome? Though I don’t think you would have been in that situation if I hadn’t of been there in the first place.’

‘Kid? Learn to take a compliment,’ Tony says from behind Wanda.

‘The amount of time he spends listening to everything you tell him Tony it’s a wonder he’s still as nice a kid as he is,’ Rhodes says from his spot on the couch.

He notices Wanda lean forwards and say something in Peter’s ear, the kid nods and manages to look a little less pale. The atmosphere in the room is still a little tense as everyone seems unsure of what to do next.

Bucky glances at him before moving towards Peter and taking him by the shoulder, leading him back towards the couches. ‘So kid you’re going to have to teach that move you pulled on Steve back in Berlin. I haven’t seen him taken out like that since we were teenagers and he was the weedy kid getting beaten up in back alleys. Problem is he’s now the guy who’s three times the size of everyone now and he’s getting too big for his boots.’

‘Hey!’ Steve says. ‘Just because you can’t beat me doesn’t mean you can try and team up with the kid, Buck. You always told me to pick my fights better, why don’t you take some of your own advice huh?’

‘Hey me and the kid are going to be the dream team when it comes to taking you down, Rogers,’ Bucky laughs, holding his hand out. ‘Bucky Barnes.’

‘P-Peter Parker,’ the kid takes Bucky’s hand, still sounding dazed.

‘Ouch,’ Bucky says, rubbing his hand. ‘You’ve got a good grip kid.’

‘Oh I’m so sorry, Mr Barnes-’

‘Cool it, kid. I’m impressed not hurt,’ Bucky laughs, patting him on the shoulder. And suddenly the tension in the room starts to ease and Tony releases a breath he didn’t even realise he’d been holding.

‘Oh am I late?’ Vision asks, phasing through the wall next to Tony.

‘Only a little, Vis,’ Wanda laughs, then takes him over to where Sam, Bucky and Rhodes are sat with Peter and Natasha.

Tony notices Peter’s made sure he’s sat next to Rhodes, someone he’s already familiar with, and Bucky has sat himself on the kid’s other side by dragging a chair over.

‘He seems like a good kid, Tony,’ Steve says, coming over to him, ‘if a little intimidated at the moment.’

‘Someone will say something and get him going,’ Tony shrugs. ‘And he’s a great kid; he’ll do better than the both of us ever did,’ he can’t help the smile of pride that creeps onto his face.

Steve’s about to say something else when Bucky’s voice drifts over from the group. ‘What do you mean you don’t play football? Surely you’d leave them all in the dust?’

‘I never did before the spider bite,’ Peter replies, voice gaining confidence, ‘so I couldn’t suddenly
‘Why don’t we play a game here then?’ Steve suggests, stepping towards the others.

‘Oh no,’ Sam says. ‘No way not with you and him on the team,’ he gestures to Bucky. ‘We’ll all be flat as pancakes within two minutes.’

‘Alright what about soccer then? Should be slightly less scary for you Sam,’ Steve grins.

‘Sounds fair,’ Tony says. ‘But those of us with powers or enhanced abilities have to hold them back. For fairness’ sake obviously.’

‘Yeah and the sake of our bones,’ Sam adds.

‘Alright team let’s go,’ Steve says.

‘Aww, no “Avengers Assemble” this time?’ Natasha teases as they all start to make their way outside.

Tony falls in beside Peter at the back. ‘How you doing, kid?’

‘Honestly, Mr Stark? Still a little overwhelmed, but I’ll be fine.’

‘Just be yourself,’ he reminds him. ‘Now let’s go have some fun.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! Hope you enjoyed this chapter, and a huge thank you again to everyone who has left kudos on this story, and to BB4ever for yet another review.

I’ve not really got much to say this week, so I’ll just finish by reminding you that we’re only down to one chapter a week from now on. Sorry!

L x

As always here’s your sneek peek at the next chapter:

‘So, kid, how’s the crazy fan been?’ Bucky asks, voice innocent but the grin on his face is anything but.

Peter’s jaw has fallen open, his eyes impossibly wide and he looks between Bucky and Tony. ‘How did you know about that?’

Tony at least has the decency to look sheepish. ‘Yeah, he and Rhodes may have been there when I listened to one of your reports. Sorry, kid.’

‘Oh now we need more information,’ Sam says, putting his cutlery down, and Steve gives him and Bucky his best ‘Captain America’ stare, but it doesn’t faze them one bit.

‘Is she cute? Is there just one? It’s not a crazy cat lady is it?’

Peter’s gone bright red to the roots of his hair and he hides his face in his hands. ‘I can’t believe this is happening.’
Dinner Time

Chapter Summary

The team have a game of soccer, which starts off with no powers and ends up differently. Then there’s a team dinner, and Peter gets asked some awkward questions about his fan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It took slightly longer than expected to get everyone ready, especially since some had to go and get changed first. Eventually they’re all gathered on the grass outside the facility and Rhodes is setting up the goals with spare jumpers, having decided it would be safer for him to sit this one out and act as the umpire. Not that he’s expecting anyone to listen.

It all feels very much like a group of friends spending time in the park. Or a family.

Tony shakes himself out of his thoughts as Bucky’s shout of ‘Shotgun I’m on Pete’s team!’ cuts through them.

‘Fine then us two girls are sticking together,’ Natasha says, grabbing hold of Wanda’s elbow.

‘Mr Stark?’ Tony can’t tell if the kid is asking him to be on his team or save him from the former assassin who seems hell bent on becoming his new best friend.

‘Alright Underoos I’ll save you from Elsa,’ Tony laughs at the look on both of their faces.

‘I still hate that film,’ Bucky groans.

‘What film?’ Steve asks.

Tony and Peter’s faces light up in identical grins. ‘We are so showing you Frozen!’

‘Ok you two spend way too much time together,’ Sam says, walking over to the girls. ‘I’m getting as far away from that as possible.’

‘Steve?’ Tony’s not sure if Bucky’s tone is a deliberate copy of the kid’s but it does the job and Steve joins them with a good natured sigh.

‘I thought you were saying you wanted to find ways to beat me up, now you want me to save your arse?’

‘You’re the best, Steve,’ Bucky grins.

‘Well I take it I should join the other team to make things even?’ Vision says, returning from where he’s been helping Rhodes to set up the goals.

‘How did we end up with both freaky mind control powers on the same team?’ Tony asks.

‘How did we end up with both super soldiers on the same team?’ Natasha mimics.
‘Ok children, any more of that and I’ll send you to the Headmaster’s office,’ Rhodes says. ‘Powers and abilities can only be used when you are against someone who is on a similar level to you. Otherwise none can be used. All agreed?’

Everyone nods, an atmosphere of friendly competition is beginning to rise between the two teams.

‘Anyone who goes against the rules and decides to not listen to me: just remember I have dirt on you all. Especially you Tony,’ Rhodes grins.

‘Yeah, yeah,’ Tony waves him off, ‘you’ve already spilt most of it, Rhodey.’

‘Oh really? What about the full on war someone started in our dorm after receiving a food package from his Aunt-’

‘And how about we start the game?’ Tony cuts him off, sending him a glare.

‘Alright, decide on your goalkeepers and get into position. Two minutes till whistle goes,’ Rhodes says.

‘I’m in goal,’ Tony says, heading towards their end.

‘Err… why?’ Bucky asks.

‘Two super soldiers and one kid with enhanced abilities from a spider bite are going to be much more use running around than a guy more used to letting a suit do all the fast moving.’

‘Fair point.’

‘Have fun kids. You let that thing get anywhere near me and I’ll find some way to make you suffer,’ he says as he jogs away. He watches the other three have a quick discussion before Rhodes calls Peter over to the middle to start the game.

For the first fifteen minutes or so everyone does really well at sticking to the ‘no powers’ rule. And then Steve kicks the ball to Peter with a little more force than he maybe should have done and the kid may have got a bit carried away and danced a little more intricately around Sam than was strictly necessary which resulted in a goal; Bucky may have been a little enthusiastic in his celebrations with the kid, and Wanda decided to take matters into her own hands. Or powers.

The next time Peter has the ball and goes to kick it he’s kicking air and the ball is sailing over his head, surrounded in scarlet light, to land at Sam’s feet.

‘Hey no powers!’ the kid yells, taking off after Sam at a speed that is definitely faster than a normal powers.

‘So what was that earlier?’ Wanda teases. Tony has to block out their bickering as the military man gets the ball closer to his goal. Just as he looks up to make the shot, Tony notices something over the other man’s shoulder and grins.

‘Hey Sam, on your left!’ he shouts. The man takes the bait and looks back just as Steve swipes the ball from his feet.

‘You stole my line!’ the captain whines at Tony, then takes off down the field. Again scarlet light curls around the ball and Sam finds it back at his feet ready to fire it in past Tony.
‘Hey no fair!’ he scowls at Wanda.

‘Guys I thought we said no powers,’ Rhodes says, ‘do I have to take a goal away from each of you?’

‘Ok it’s on. Powers are in play,’ Peter says, a determined look on his face that is eerily reminiscent of a certain Captain.

‘Hey what about us guys that aren’t freaks of nature?’ Sam asks.

‘Don’t worry Sam I got us covered,’ Tony says, inputting a few commands into his watch and watching half of his suit and Sam’s wings come flying towards them.

Sam comes to a stop near him. ‘Man you really don’t stop with the inventions do you?’

‘Yeah I like to keep upgrading. The old man always said once you stop improving something it’s time to throw in the towel,’ he says, stepping into the legs and arms of his suit, sending the rest to the side lines.

Sam straps his wings on and fires them up. ‘Did I ever tell you how much I missed you Tony?’

‘Not enough, honey bun,’ Tony laughs, ‘now I’m pretty sure we need to stop fraternising and focus on the game.’ Sam laughs and runs off and he realises this is the first time Sam’s had his wings back since coming home. And really, Tony muses, there probably wasn’t a better way for him to have returned them to him.

He manages to pay attention just in time to see the ball come hurtling towards his face, this time directed from Natasha’s kick. He sends a repulsor blast at it and it goes flying to the right; Bucky quickly takes off in pursuit, Sam close on his heels. The metal-armed man is the first one to reach it, but it goes sailing into the air again, courtesy of Wanda, and makes its way back towards the rest of the field.

‘I got it!’ Peter says, firing a web at the flying object, and promptly gets dragged along behind it. ‘Hey!’ his shout of surprise is quickly swallowed as he gets dragged face first into the dirt and he lets go of the web. Another blaster sends the ball away again.

‘Alright Wanda new rule. If someone else touches the ball you have to let it be touched by another of your teammates before you can use your power on it again,’ Rhodes shouts, obviously giving up on trying to keep the game in check.

‘You got it!’ she shouts back, a smirk on her face, confident in her team’s victory. Probably because Sam had taken that moment to swoop down and pick the ball up in his hands and fly towards their goal.

‘Hey dude we’re playing soccer, no hands!’ Rhodes shouts.

‘Yeah and those of us that don’t have special powers need all the advantages we can get,’ Sam retaliates.

‘Hey, Captain sir, can I have a boost?’ Peter asks. Steve looks a little wary but nods and cups his hands as the kid runs at his, boosting him so high that he sails over the top of Sam. ‘Wow this is awesome!’ he shouts, then shoots webs at Sam’s back, effectively dragging himself through the air to land between his shoulders.
‘Hey, what the hell kid?’ Sam tries to roll in the air to throw him, but to no avail,

‘Thanks Mr Wilson,’ the kid says, stealing the ball from his hands and jumping off, throwing the ball to Bucky as he does. Tony feels his heart jump into his throat as the kid gets closer to the ground, and only breathes a sigh of relief when Steve manages to catch him before he hits the ground.

‘Hey, Captain sir, are you made of bricks? You’re really solid,’ he asks as they both climb off the ground.

Despite his previous scare, or maybe because of it, Tony bursts out laughing. ‘Kid, I may be made of bricks but you certainly aren’t. You trying to break every bone in your body?’ Steve pulls him to his feet as Bucky scores.

‘Oh I’ve fallen from worse and been fine,’ Peter shrugs, running off to rejoin the game.

‘Welcome to my world, Cap. Now you see why I’m getting so many grey hairs?’ Tony shouts. Steve’s response is lost to the game.

Steve walks into the main kitchen towelling his hair from the shower; only Tony is in there, everyone else still getting ready after the soccer game.

‘Hey Cap,’ he says, not looking up from where he’s rooting through the cupboards. ‘What do you fancy for dinner tonight? It’s my turn to cook, unfortunately for all of you.’

‘Wait, you’re cooking?’ Steve asks. ‘What do you mean it’s your turn?’

‘Oh right we didn’t tell you did we? So when Wanda came back we decided every Friday night is team dinner and film night. We take it in turns to cook something and everyone sits and eats together. Plus if the kid’s visiting it forces him to spend time with everyone rather than trying to convince me to let him tinker with one of my old suits. I think I’m just going to do spaghetti. That alright with you?’

‘Uh, yeah sure,’ he responds, still trying to get his head around the fact that Tony would be cooking. ‘You need any help?’

‘No thanks,’ he says, straightening up and getting a chopping board out. ‘You mind going and telling the others it’ll be ready in about thirty minutes? Oh and tell Bucky it’s his turn to lay the table, since he’s managed to worm his way out of it the last three times.’

‘Uh, yeah sure,’ Steve says, turning and leaving the kitchen. His mind is racing, and he’s trying to work out just what it is that’s causing it. It’s only after he’s passed Rhodes and Sam talking on their way to the kitchen and Wanda tells him she’ll get Vision that he realises how domestic the whole situation is.

It’s only as he walks down the corridor to Peter’s room, the last person he has to let know that dinner is going to be ready soon, that he realises the other thing that’s been nudging at his mind. During their whole conversation Tony hadn’t looked at him once. In fact, although they seem to talk as though everything is fine, Tony rarely looks at him when he’s talking to him. And that causes a painful twinge in his stomach.
He’s pulled out of his thoughts by the sound of his name being spoken through the door he’s stood outside.

‘Yeah, May, I was on a team with Captain Rogers, and Sargent Barnes and Mr Stark and we kicked ass. I mean even though we were up against Wanda and Mr Vision and all their powers. It was awesome.’ Peter’s on the phone to his aunt. Right.

‘No I was totally freaking out when I first met everyone. Like seriously these guys are awesome and they’re the Avengers and you know last time I’d met most of them I was helping fight them. Yeah I did tell you about that it was when I went to Germany. Anyway it was all like super awkward at first, then Wanda came up and gave me this huge hug to thank me for saving her life. Which totally overplaying what I did by the way. May! No I am not going to date her, why would you even suggest that? Because she’s going out with Vision is pretty high on that list, and I’ve only met her like a couple of times. Ok seriously this is why I don’t talk to you about girls.’

Resisting the urge to chuckle Steve figures he better try and save their youngest recruit from this awkward conversation. He knocks on the door and opens it enough to stick his head through. ‘Tony says dinner will be ready soon kid, you better head down before he has to track you down himself.’

‘Thanks, Captain Rogers I’ll be there in a minute,’ Peter says, relief evident on his face.

Steve smiles and closes the door as he heads down the corridor he hears the end of Peter’s conversation. ‘I got to go, May, dinner will be ready soon. No it’s great, honestly, the soccer game really helped and its dinner and movie night tonight. I promise I’m enjoying myself, May. Alright I got to go. Love you too.’

Dinner ends up being a very lively affair. For one thing Rhodes won’t believe Tony made dinner without needing at least five fire trucks turning up and makes a point of going to check the kitchen to make sure it’s not a blackened ruin.

‘I told you I hadn’t set fire to a kitchen in years,’ Tony sulks as he dishes out the food.

Rhodes is eyeing it warily. ‘That doesn’t mean you can cook, Tony.’

‘It smells great Mr Stark,’ Peter says, appearing in the doorway. ‘Is there anything I can do to help?’

‘No thanks, kid, just come grab your plate and take a seat.’

Steve has to admit it does smell good and he’s wondering why Rhodes is making such a fuss. The group finds out as he delights in telling them the story of Tony setting fire to the entire MIT accommodation block trying to cook omelettes.

Unfortunately everyone is then slightly apprehensive to try the spaghetti bolognaise he’s made.

‘Thanks a bunch, Rhodey,’ Tony rolls his eyes.
Peter, always eager to please his mentor, takes a huge forkful off his plate and shoves it into his mouth. His eyes light up and he gives everyone a thumbs up. ‘It’s good,’ he manages to get out around a mouthful of spaghetti.

‘You’d say anything to make Tony happy,’ Rhodes snorts. Peter tries to pout put ends up nearly losing his mouthful instead.

Steve decides to take pity on the inventor and the teenager and takes a mouthful himself. He can’t help being surprised. ‘Tony did you make this from scratch?’

‘Yeah, why?’ he’s looking a little nervous.

‘It’s really good,’ he says, taking another spoonful. He looks at Rhodes and grins. ‘If you don’t want yours I’ll have it.’

‘Hey, get your own food,’ the other man says, digging in. The look on his face has both Peter and Steve laughing.

‘Told you it was good,’ they both said.

‘Tony, when did you learn to cook?’ Rhodes eyes the inventor suspiciously.

‘Well I didn’t exactly trust Vision to cook when you were in hospital. The guy doesn’t have taste buds. No offense, Vis.’

‘None taken,’ Vision says with a shake of his head. ‘Though I do wonder if we could invent the technology that would enable me to taste.’

‘So how come you haven’t cooked since I got out?’ Rhodes asks.

‘You wouldn’t let me,’ Tony points out as everyone else digs in. ‘Plus it meant I had a good excuse not to do one of the jobs.’

‘You bastard,’ Rhodes laughs.

The chatter around the table turns to smaller groups. ‘Hey Miss Roman-

‘Kid call me Miss Romanoff and I will kick your arse from here to Queens and back again as many times as it takes for you to remember not to call me that,’ Natasha says, a half smile on her face.

‘Err,’ Peter looks between her and Tony and gulps. ‘Miss Natasha can you pass the bread please?’

Tony bursts out laughing at the look on Natasha’s face. ‘Well it isn’t Miss Romanoff, Nat,’ he supplies.

Natasha frowns. ‘You do realise you don’t have to keep up with all this Mr and Miss, right Peter?’

Peter starts looking uncomfortable. ‘Yeah, but-‘ The tray of bread hovers in front of him, suspended by tendrils of scarlet light. ‘Oh! Thanks Wanda.’

‘No problem,’ she replies, grinning at Natasha.

‘Ok how come she’s Wanda and I’m Miss Natasha? Are you saying I’m old, kid?’
‘What? No! I-’

‘Nat leave the poor kid alone,’ Steve says. ‘Otherwise he’ll never come back.’

‘He’ll keep coming back until he finally convinces Tony to let him tinker with an old Iron Man suit,’ Rhodes says through a mouthful of spaghetti. ‘Tony you’re never getting out of cooking again.’

‘So, kid, how’s the crazy fan been then?’ Bucky asks, voice innocent but the grin on his face is anything but.

Peter’s jaw has fallen open, his eyes impossibly wide and he looks between Bucky and Tony. ‘How did you know about that?’

Tony at least has the decency to look sheepish. ‘Yeah, he and Rhodes may have been there when I listened to one of your reports. Sorry, kid.’

‘Oh come on now we need more information,’ Sam says, putting his cutlery down, and Steve gives him and Bucky his best ‘Captain America’ stare, but it doesn’t faze them one bit. ‘Is she cute? Is there just one? It’s not a crazy cat lady is it?’

Peter’s gone bright red to the roots of his hair and he hides his face in his hands. ‘I can’t believe this is happening.’

‘How do we know it’s a girl?’ Vision asks, tone genuinely curious. ‘Why could it not be a boy?’

Steve face palms at the identical grins that appear on Bucky and Sam’s faces, and Peter looks torn between running away from the table and wanting to finish his food.

‘Wait, is it a boy?’ Bucky asks. ‘Or do you have one of each? Are they asking for pictures? Please tell me-’

He’s cut off by a sharp thwick and a chunk of webbing fixes itself around his mouth. Sam holds his hands up in surrender as Peter turns his wrist towards him. ‘Anything to add?’ the kid asks.

There’s silence for a couple of seconds then Tony bursts out laughing, tears streaming down his face. The rest of the table joining in, even Vision managing a chuckle.

‘Kid you’re sticking by me,’ Natasha says. ‘I’ve got so much to teach you.’

‘Aww Mommy Spider and Baby Spider,’ Sam teases; which quickly turns to a frown when he finds webbing covering his own mouth after the comment.

‘Oh yeah, you’re definitely sticking by me,’ Natasha laughs.

‘Does this mean I’m forgiven for the Miss Romanoff thing?’ he asks shyly.

‘Oh yeah, kid, you’re forgiven,’ she says.

Both Sam and Bucky starts making incoherent noises and pointing at their mouths.

‘Uh, uh,’ Steve says, shaking his head. ‘You two deserve it. Hey kid, how long until it wears off?’

‘Err… two hours Captain Rogers,’ Peter says, taking a big bit out of a chunk of bread,
apparently getting a little bolder now he realises he’s not going to get told off for his actions.

‘I think that’s about enough time for those two to learn to keep their noses out of other peoples’ business,’ Steve grins at the two men shooting him daggers across the table. ‘They can reheat their dinner.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: First of all thank you as always to all of you for your continued support of this story; to my wonderful reviewers and to everyone who has left kudos on this story. You are all amazing!

I'm afraid this is the last of the bonding chapters with Peter and the team for a while, but next chapter does see a return of everyone's favourite loud-mouthed mercenary so I hope you'll forgive me.

As always do let me know what you think and if there is anything in particular you'd like to see. I hope you're still enjoying the story.

L x

As always here's your peek at the next chapter:

Before Peter can reply his senses go haywire and he feels something pressing into the back of his head through the mask. The merc’s eyes go wide and he scrambles to his feet.
‘One more step and I’ll put a bullet through his brain,’ a voice Peter doesn’t recognise says. He tries to turn his head to take a look but the gun presses harder into his head. ‘Don’t even think about it. Hands on your head, Spider-Man. You even think about webbing anything and I’ll blow a hole in your skull.’
Broken Friendship

Chapter Summary

Tony takes on some reports. Peter let's Deadpool help out on a patrol, but things don't go according to plan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

‘Mr Stark can you say with certainty the Avengers are a fully cohesive team once again?’

Peter and Ned look up from the floor of Peter’s living room where they’re busy building a couple of tie fighters to go with the Lego Death Star they’d finished months ago. On the TV Tony looks calm as always.

‘Absolutely. We are working around our remaining differences and coming to understandings. We are also working to show the rest of the world that we have learned from our mistakes and we will do everything in our power to ensure they are not repeated,’ Tony’s voice is confident as he continues to field questions from the reporters.

‘He’s really trying to get back the Avengers’ popularity back isn’t he?’ Ned comments, putting down a finished model.

Peter shakes his head. ‘He’s trying to give people confidence in the team again. Germany kind of ruined that.’

‘Everyone else calls it the Civil War, why do you refer to it as Germany?’

He shrugs. ‘That’s what the team calls it. Guess I just picked it up. Besides Civil War sounds a bit overdramatic if you ask me.’

One question from a reporter catches his attention again. ‘What of Wanda Maximoff? Her powers have caused deaths, are you positive we won’t have a repeat of Lagos?’

‘What?!’ Peter shouts, jumping to his feet, his hands clenching into fists at his side. ‘You bastards—’

‘Peter! Language!’ May shouts from further in the apartment. Ned shushes him as Tony starts to answer, his face is hard and Peter is very glad he’s not the one on the receiving end of that look. If he’d thought Tony had been angry with him before, it was nothing compared to the obvious fury being directed towards that reporter.

‘Wanda Maximoff is a member of the Avengers and, as such, has made a promise to protect this world and everybody on it. She is making a concerted effort to improve control of her abilities so as not to cause any unintentional harm in the future; and if I’m honest is working harder than I did building the first Iron Man suit in a cave in Afghanistan,’ the last part of that sentence is spat at the crowd. ‘And perhaps I should remind you that without those powers more than half of the population of Sokovia would still have been within the city limits when it started heading skyward. As it was only a quarter of the population still remained to be evacuated.’
‘Looks like he’s shamed them into silence,’ Ned mutters as it takes about twenty seconds for anyone to brave another question.

‘Yeah he has that amazing ability to either make everyone shout at him or stun them into silence,’ Peter laughs, unclenching his fists and sitting back down on the floor to return to his unfinished model.

‘Mr Stark how would you describe your relationship with Captain Rogers?’

Peter frowns at the question.

‘Well we’re not going to be giving you a wedding date any time soon if that’s what you’re asking,’ Tony quips, his usual light tone is back.

There’s a ripple of laughter through the room. Then someone asks. ‘You mean after the Civil War there’s no hard feelings?’

There’s an uneasy quiet again in the room and Peter looks up from his model. ‘Do you really think they would have come back if there were?’ Tony argues.

‘Only one more question now,’ one of aides says from Tony’s side. He sees Happy standing in the background looking menacing and can’t help a small smile at the sight of his unofficial ‘super-babysitter’.

‘What of the Winter Soldier, Mr Stark?’

‘Are you asking me if I’m intending to marry him instead of Captain America?’ Peter notices the tightness around Tony’s eyes that gives away the man is not happy. He’s become very good at reading his mentor’s moods so as not to annoy him. That’s a definite warning sign.

‘Are you honestly telling us that he can be trusted after being brainwashed by Hydra? We know he was responsible for attacking the Avengers whilst in custody in Germany because of it. He is a former wanted criminal and we are expected to trust him on American soil?’

‘Ok,’ all the usual jovialness is gone from Tony’s face now, his patience has run out. ‘If this is just going to turn into you all wanting to attack individual members of the team then this press conference is at an end.’ He starts to walk away from the podium.

‘Mr Stark-’

‘No!’ Tony leans back to the podium. ‘Need I remind you that not that long ago you would all happily sing the praises of Sargent James Barnes, the only member of the Howling Commandos to have given his life in service to his country. When I came back from having been tortured in Afghanistan you were all full of sympathy; this for the man who you nicknamed “The Merchant of Death”. So let me ask you a question: why can’t you give sympathy to a decorated war hero who went through more than I ever did?’

He ignores the shouts as he walks off the stage, Happy following a couple of steps behind. The news anchors now take over, discussing Tony’s answers and reactions.

‘Well that was…intense,’ Ned says, putting down his next completed model and picking up the next one Peter should be working on. Peter just nods. ‘Hey, Pete? What is he like? The Winter Soldier I mean.’

He laughs a little. ‘He’s a pain in the arse a lot of the time, he likes to wind people up,
especially Mr Stark and Captain Rogers. And Mr Wilson actually. And me. But he’s a nice guy; when I met the whole team for the first time after everyone was back he was the first one to make a real effort to make me feel included.’

‘So he’s not a psycho killer?’

‘Why would the Avengers have a psycho killer on the team, Ned?’

‘I don’t know. Hey what’s the Scarlet Witch like?’

‘Wanda? I think she’s trying to make me her little brother or something. But she’s really cool, and her powers are awesome.’

‘Pete, didn’t you want to go out on patrol tonight?’ May comes in and asks, tying her hair back in preparation for cooking food. ‘Ned did you want to wait with me for him to get back and have dinner?’

‘Oh, yeah, patrol right,’ he says.

‘Oh no thank you, May,’ Ned smiles. ‘I’ll head home. I’ve got some homework left to do.’

‘You better have done all your homework, Peter. You aren’t going out on patrol until you have. Are you still listening to me?’

‘Of course I am, May,’ he says as he says goodbye to Ned and walks to his room, only half listening to what his aunt’s saying. ‘Spider-Man gets grounded for not doing his homework,’ he mutters to himself as he gets out his suit. ‘If that ever happens Sergeant Barnes is never finding out. I’ll never hear the end of it.’

‘I think Mr Stark would have a few things to say about it as well,’ Karen says once the mask is over his face.

‘Oh hey, Karen. Yep which is exactly why everything is done. You ready for patrol?’

‘Always, Peter,’ she says as he climbs out of the window. ‘Did you remember to do your algebra you’ve been procrastinating on for the past two days?’

‘Oh man. I’ll do it when I’m back.’

Peter sits on the edge of a building, kicking his heels against the brickwork and looking out over Queens. ‘Pretty slow evening today,’ he comments to Karen. ‘Anything showing up on the police scanners?’

‘Nothing coming up, Peter. Only reports of police being called to intervene in domestic disputes, and I wouldn’t suggest getting involved in those,’ the AI responds.

‘Oh yeah, no thanks,’ he laughs, ‘I can barely cope when May’s shouting, let alone trying to cope with two people.’

‘Spidey!’
Peter looks over his shoulder at the red clad mercenary approaching him across the rooftop.

‘Oh hey Deadpool.’

‘How is my favourite arachnid superhero this evening?’ the excitable man asks, sitting down next to him. ‘Want a taco?’

He shakes his head. ‘No thanks. Been a pretty quiet evening so far so I’m not really hungry.’

‘All the bad guys too scared to deal with the Spider-Man now?’ Deadpool teases, listing up his mask just enough to let him eat one of the tacos he’d brought with him. It had taken them a while to get to the stage where the merc was comfortable enough to eat around Peter; he’d never asked if the scars covered more than just his face, nor what had happened to give him them. Deadpool was obviously not comfortable about them, so he avoided mentioning them as much as possible. Not that they phased him at all.

‘Apparently so. Or at least tonight they are,’ Peter sighs. ‘Even Karen can only pick up domestic call outs on the police scanners, and my spidey senses are saying everything is boring.’

‘And you don’t fancy going and resolving some domestic dispute? It’s better than watching daytime TV!’

‘Yeah no,’ he shakes his head firmly. ‘I have trouble when family shouts thanks to sensitive hearing. I don’t need to hear two people screaming at each other about whose turn it is to wash the dishes.’ He turns to look at the mercenary. ‘Where have you been the last week? I haven’t seen you around.’

Deadpool shrugs, quieter now. ‘I had to head out of town for a few days.’

Peter feels a sinking in his stomach. ‘You had a job didn’t you?’ He turns to look back out over the city.

Next to him the other man sighs. ‘I had to, baby boy. Not all the jobs at Sister Margaret’s can pay, if I take the occasional big paying job I can keep on with those.’

‘Sister Margaret’s? Peter asks.

‘A bar in town,’ Deadpool pulls his mask back down, tacos now finished. ‘Someone needs some help they can put in a request there. I’ve threatened boys stalking teenage girls, got granny’s back their stolen money, even once beat up an abusive ex-boyfriend. Not mine obviously. Problem is, Spidey, they can’t all pay. And ever since darling Captain America took down SHIELD, there’s not been much work coming in from those wonderful people.’

‘So what was it you were doing?’ he asks, trying to get his head around all of this information.

‘Un-aliving some gang members,’ he responds, voice harder now. Peter doesn’t say anything in response. ‘I don’t take contracts unless it’s people on the wrong side of the law, baby boy. Not anymore.’

He nods. ‘I know, I just- I wish you didn’t have to do them at all.’

Deadpool shrugs. ‘Got to pay the bills, sweet pea. Ever since I got my Freddy Kreuger look there’s not much else I can do until Halloween comes around.’

He rolls his eyes beneath his mask. ‘I’m sure it’s not that bad. Why don’t you try for parts in
horror films?’ He laughs and drops down to hang on the wall just out of Deadpool’s reach.

‘You hurt my feelings, baby boy!’

‘What? You’d be perfect for the horror role! You apparently have the face for it, and you’ve
got all the killer fighting moves. You could be the next big bad,’ Peter laughs, cautiously crawling
back up the wall, staying just out of reach of the merc.

‘Hmph,’ Deadpool crosses his arms, pretending hurt, and looks the other way.

‘Awww come on. I’d dress up as you for Halloween,’ he teases.

‘Err not meaning to change the subject, baby boy, but my asshole senses are picking up
something across the street. Two shady characters by the parked car in the alleyway,’ the man says,
pointing across the street.

Peter turns to look at where he’s pointing, and his spidey senses start tingling. ‘Karen? Can
you get me sound?’

‘Sure thing Peter,’ she says.

He turns to look at Deadpool. ‘I hope those “asshole senses” isn’t a jab at my spidey ones.’

‘Would I?’ Deadpool asks, grin obvious beneath his mask.

‘Yes,’ he replies, before signalling for the man to be quiet as he listens to their conversation.
‘Sounds like they just did a drug deal and they’re about to head back to their base. You fancy giving
me a hand Mr. I-Want-To-Turn-Over-A-New-Leaf?’

Deadpool’s eyes go wide. ‘You mean it? You want me to work with you?’

‘Consider this your interview,’ Peter laughs as the two men get into the car and pull away.
‘Think you can keep up or do you need a lift?’

He immediately regrets his question as the grin shifts beneath the other man’s mask. ‘Don’t
think I need to answer that do I, Spideykins?’

Peter just groans. I’m so going to regret this, he thinks as they take off after the car.

The journey went surprisingly well; for the most part they were able to follow along the rooftops,
and Peter only had to help Deadpool when they reached particularly large gaps between buildings,
and the man was more than happy to hang on to the webslinger’s arm as they swung between them.

How the guys in the car hadn’t heard the merc’s excited shouts was beyond him.

‘Dude, I know I’m not one to talk, but don’t you ever shut up?’ Peter says as they creep
towards the edge of the building, watching where the two men enter. ‘Karen, keep an eye on where
they go for me.’

‘Will do,’ the AI replies.
‘I am known as the merc with the mouth for a reason, baby boy.’

‘Now I know why the team comments on me talking so much,’ he mutters to himself. ‘Second floor,’ he tells the merc. ‘We need to get close so I can record the meeting and we can alert the police.’

‘You don’t want to go web them up?’ Deadpool asks, sounding disappointed.

‘Well, yeah, but we need evidence first otherwise I’m just webbing up random people,’ he points out. ‘Come on we need to find a way in. And no killing anyone.’

‘Spoilsport,’ the man grumbles.

‘Promise me you won’t kill anyone Deadpool,’ he says, looking back at the mercenary.

‘Fine I promise not to kill anyone,’ the man replies. ‘I can still hurt them though right?’

Peter rolls his eyes. ‘As long as they’re alive.’

The two of them creep down a fire escape and enter through the third floor, the door is already half broken so it doesn’t take much for Peter to pull it open. Thankfully it doesn’t make too much noise. Silently the two of them creep along, following Karen’s instructions, and reach the second floor.

‘Alright Karen start recording ready to send to the police,’ Peter whispers.

‘Already on it, Peter,’ the AI replies.

He signals Deadpool to follow him as they continue along a corridor where voices are coming from a room further down. They drop down into crouches just beside the door so they can hear what is said, and Peter sends his drone into the room to get a visual on what was happening.

They stay there for a good twenty minutes, Peter’s legs are going numb by the end of it, but he’s got names of people they supply to, the drugs they’re selling, names of their suppliers, and dates of meetings. Despite the numbness in his limbs he’s feeling pretty good about the situation. He’s not sure how he could have done a more thorough job.

_I can’t wait to tell Mr Stark_, he thinks, stretching a leg with a grimace to try and get some life back into it.

‘How much longer?’ Deadpool hisses in his ear. Peter jumps, not realising the merc had gotten that close. Why does his spidey sense decide to take a holiday around the man?

‘Let’s go,’ he whispers. Without giving the merc a chance to keep up he launches himself through the door, webbing two of the five occupants. ‘Hey guys, mind if we join the party?’

‘Shit its Spider-Man!’ one of the remaining three shouts, pulling out a handgun.

‘Hey Spidey! You’re supposed to leave some for me!’ the red blur says as he tackles the armed man and one other. ‘Bear hug!’

‘Why do I feel like I’ve brought a child into this situation?’ he muses out loud. ‘Hey, man, let’s put that down yeah?’ He webs the third man’s hand to the table as he tries to pick up his friend’s discarded weapon, where it had fallen when Deadpool tackled him. ‘Someone might get hurt.’

He turns, shaking his head as Deadpool wrestles with the two on the floor, knocking one
unconscious and putting the other in a strangle hold.

‘I thought we agreed no killing?’ he says as the man goes limp in the merc’s arms.

‘He’s fine!’ the man says. ‘Well he’s going to have a killer headache when he wakes up, but other than that he’s fine. Do you not trust me baby boy?’

Before Peter can reply his senses go haywire and he feels something pressing into the back of his head through the mask. The merc’s eyes go wide and he scrambles to his feet.

‘One more step and I’ll put a bullet through his brain,’ a voice Peter doesn’t recognise says. He tries to turn his head to take a look but the gun presses harder into his head. ‘Don’t even think about it. Hands on your head, Spider-Man. You even think about webbing anything and I’ll blow a hole in your skull.’

Peter does as the man says. ‘Peter shall I activate the stun ability of the drone?’ Karen asks. There’s no way for him to say yes without alerting the man, so he tries an affirmative noise.

‘Deadpool and Spider-Man in the same place? Well isn’t this just my lucky day? I wonder what price you two would fetch?’ the man tosses a knife to the man Peter had webbed to the table. ‘Cut yourself free and get the others cut out.’

‘I really wouldn’t do that if I were you,’ Deadpool’s voice is threatening, and Peter is sharply reminded that the man he’s brought into this with him is a killer. Please don’t do anything. Karen’s about to stun this guy.

‘What? Sell you to Hydra? Why not?’ the man laughs. ‘This one especially would fetch the highest price. A safety blanket if you will against the Avengers.’ Peter feels fingers reaching under the back of his mask. ‘What’s say we take a look at the little superhero, and find out just who it is that seems to have caught Iron Man’s interest?’

Panic fills his chest as the material starts to rise up, the man at the table has cut himself free and is heading towards the other two. Hurry up, Karen!

A loud bang echoes through the room, and suddenly the gun and fingers against the back of his head are gone. Another loud bang and he hears a thump behind him. Oh no.

Peter spins around. His fears are confirmed when he sees the two bodies on the floor, a hole in the middle of each of their heads. Spinning back around he sees Deadpool holding a gun, there’s still a bit of smoke coming from the end and the acrid smell of gunfire fills the room.

‘No, no, no, no,’ Peter repeats the one word mantra and stumbles out of the room, pushing past Deadpool.

‘Spidey-’ whatever he was going to say is cut off as Peter manages to get his mask over his mouth before throwing up further down the corridor, gripping a doorframe to keep his balance. He hears the merc curse behind him.

Suddenly he can’t be near the other man, the sight of blood and brains on his eyelids when he closes his eyes against the burning in his throat.

Without seeing where he’s going or what he’s doing he pushes away from the mercenary. Somehow he makes it outside and finds a rooftop to curl up on, hugging his knees to his chest.

‘Peter are you alright?’ Karen’s voice sounds as worried as an AI can be. ‘Should I contact Mr
'Stark?'

‘No! No I’m fine, Karen. I just need a minute,’ he replies, rocking himself backwards and forwards until his stomach finally starts to feel more under control and he notices the wetness on his cheeks. When had he started crying?

He’s not sure how long he’s on the rooftop when he hears footsteps behind him. He doesn’t need to turn to see who it is.

‘What do you want Deadpool?’

‘I’m sorry,’ the merc says, his voice quiet. ‘But I couldn’t let him kill you and I couldn’t let him unmask you, Spidey.’

‘You didn’t need to kill him!’ Peter shouts, scrambling to his feet. ‘Karen was about to get Droney to stun him; I just needed a couple more seconds. You promised me you wouldn’t kill anyone!’

The merc looks down at his feet, raising his hands in a placating gesture. ‘I didn’t know that. I panicked alright, and I did what I thought was best. I did what I had to save you.’

‘What about the others? What did you do with them?’

Deadpool pauses before he answers. ‘I took care of it, baby—’

‘No! Don’t call me that!’ he screams. ‘You promised me, Deadpool.’

‘I just wanted to keep you alive, alright?’ the merc shouts back, clearly having lost patience.

‘He was more interested in selling us anyway,’ he spits at the older man. ‘We could have got out later.’

The laugh that escapes Deadpool’s mouth makes him pause. ‘Oh yeah, good one, Spider-Man. Maybe you should ask your buddy the Winter Soldier just how easy it is to escape from Hydra.’ He takes a deep breath and sighs. ‘I said I’m sorry, alright? I panicked and I went on instinct. In the past that’s the only option I’ve had because I’ve always worked alone. I’m not like you, Spider-Man, I didn’t have people backing me up, giving me snazzy gear and that would come and find me if something happened to me. Most of the people I knew thought I was dead when I got my abilities. It’s always been me, myself and I. So if my methods don’t match up with yours I’m sorry but that’s just the way it’s always been.’

That makes him pause. But it does nothing to stop the pain in his chest. ‘There’s a reason I don’t let people get killed Deadpool,’ he says, tone still cold. ‘Because before Mr Stark found me I was by myself as well. I got someone close to me killed because of these abilities.’

Deadpool looks at him, and for the first time Peter wishes he could see his face under that mask, because he has no idea what the man is thinking. ‘I’m sorry.’

‘I don’t want your sympathy, Deadpool,’ he snaps, then turns and runs off the building, shooting a web and swinging towards home.

Chapter End Notes
A/N: Hey everyone! So, I really hope you don't hate me for the argument between Peter and Wade? Because I still love you all, especially my reviewers! So yeah, things have kind of come to a head, because we all knew Deadpool was going to kill someone eventually and Spider-Man wasn't going to like it.

Also I feel extra bad posting a pretty down chapter considering I'm sure we all need some cheering up after hearing Stan Lee has passed away. Such a wonderful creative mind is going to be sorely missed in this world. In a way to remember him I may end up posting another chapter tomorrow; he's given us such wonderful and rich characters to have our own creative time with, I'd like to give you guys a little more of this story that he and his characters have inspired.

I've been wondering about whether to do a Christmas Special of this fic and post it at Christmas, but I'm never sure how I feel about them. Would you guys want a short multi-part side story to this of an Avengers Christmas? Let me know and I'll start working on it.

Thank you again for your continued support.

RIP Stan Lee.

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

'There's only three people still alive that have stuck by Tony through everything, Cap. That's me, Happy and Pepper. Anyone else who stuck around through his temper tantrums and mood swings died a long time ago. Everyone else he trusted? They betrayed him or walked away from him.'

'I did both,' Steve says with sudden clarity. 'Oh god, Rhodey-'
Steve leans back in his armchair, smiling as he listen to Rhodes, Sam and Bucky exchanging war stories. He enjoys listening rather than contributing his own; most of his are well documented and it’s nice to hear stories from a more ‘normal’ perspective rather than incredibly dangerous missions. Plus he gets to see his childhood best friend relax more around the team. During the day he’s always more aware of how he acts and what he says, especially in front of the daytime staff at the facility. He’s not even sure Bucky’s left the compound since he arrived in America.

He’s broken from his musings by the sound of the elevator doors opening.

‘Tony!’ Bucky greets the new arrival enthusiastically. ‘You just missed Sam’s story about flying into a tree.’

‘I didn’t fly into it,’ Sam grumbles, ‘my pack malfunctioned and I crashed into it. Hey, you alright Tony? You look beat.’

Tony waves him off as he heads towards the bar. ‘Long day,’ he says. ‘Man I need a drink. Anyone else want one?’ he offers as he pulls out glasses and a bottle of whiskey. Steve shakes his head but the others nod.

‘What happened?’ Rhodes asks, taking his glass. ‘I don’t think I’ve seen you this tired since the time you had a crazy puzzle decorating your neck.’

Tony frowns at him as he hands Sam his drink and returns to the bar for his and Bucky’s. ‘Just a bad meeting, Rhodey. I’m not being slowly poisoned if that’s what you’re asking. Unless Ross’ voice counts,’ he adds as he hands Bucky his glass and collapses into one of the armchairs.

‘Wait, what?’ Steve asks, feeling alarm burning in his chest.

‘Well when the genius here had his first arc reactor he decided not to tell anyone it was slowly killing him. Instead he decided working himself into an even earlier death in an attempt to ignore it was a much better solution,’ the Colonel replies.

‘I was not ignoring it,’ Tony counters, eyes closed as he leans his head back on the chair. ‘I was trying to find a substitute element.’

‘I take it you did, right? Although how could the reactor kill you if it was in your suit?’ Bucky asks.

‘It used to be in my chest. For a long time was the only thing stopping shrapnel from entering my heart. It used to contain palladium until Dad gave me a hand from beyond the grave and we made a new element.’

‘Don’t ask,’ Rhodes suggests.

‘What element did you make?’ Sam asks.

There’s a pause before Tony quietly answers. ‘Yinsinium. It’s what powers all the arc reactors.’

Rhodes fixes Tony with a look that the genius misses thanks to his closed eyes. ‘Stop avoiding the question, Tony. You’re hiding things again and you know I hate it when you do that.’
‘Can’t a man come home and have a drink in peace, honey bear?’

‘Tony,’ Rhodes growls.

Tony sighs, finally opening his eyes and rubbing them with one hand as he sits forward. ‘I promise I’m not hiding anything, Rhodey. It was just a particularly difficult meeting with the committee this afternoon; Ross didn’t like some of the things that I said in a press conference and I’ve spent from around three this afternoon arguing with a roomful of people.’

Steve glances at the clock. ‘Tony it’s nearly two in the morning! They can’t have kept you in there for nearly twelve hours?’

Tony gives a sour laugh. ‘Oh yes they can, Cap. They have numerous times in the past. At least they remembered to feed me.’

‘Just how often do you have to meet with them?’ Sam asks.

Tony shrugs. ‘Sometimes they only want my wonderful presence once a week. Sometimes it can be every day. When we were working to get you all back it was a lot more regular.’

‘Since when have you been doing press conferences about the Avengers?’ Rhodes frowns.

‘I wasn’t, I was doing a press conference for Stark Industries; I may not be CEO any more but I still own the company and design the majority of the stuff. The problem is every time I’m in a press conference for SI they always ask about the Avengers. Hence why Ross pulls me in to drag me over hot coals every time I have one.’

‘Just how are you managing to fit in designing stuff for SI when you’re working on all our stuff, as well as all these meetings?’ Sam demands.

Tony shrugs. ‘I don’t need that much sleep, Sam. I never have. So I tend to have more hours to cram stuff into than most people.’

‘Oh no,’ Rhodes’ voice is dangerous, and Steve notices Tony shoot his friend a worried glance. ‘Tony Stark I swear if you are pulling all-nighters again I swear to God-’

‘Rhodey come on, it’s fairly normal for me to pull the occasional all-nighter,’ he defends himself.

Rhodes glares at him. ‘FRIDAY how many all-nighters has Tony pulled in the past week?’

Tony opens his mouth, obviously to tell the AI not to answer, but her voice cuts him off. ‘The boss has gone to bed three nights in the past week, Colonel.’

‘Traitor,’ Tony frowns and looks down at his drink.

‘Tony you are stopping this right now or I’m telling Pepper.’

The inventor’s eyes go wide. ‘Rhodey you wouldn’t.’ At the hard stare he receives in reply he sighs. ‘Ok maybe you would.’

‘Go to bed, Tony,’ Rhodes says.

‘Can I at least finish my drink first?’

‘Drink it on the way. Go!’
‘I’m so installing the Macarena into your armour,’ he grumbles as he stands up. ‘Sorry kids, Daddy’s sending me to bed.’

‘It’s for your own good,’ Rhodes shouts after him. ‘And you’re still not going to make my suit dance!’

Tony just waves his hand as he stumbles towards the corridor that leads to their bedrooms. They watch him go until he’s out of sight.

‘FRIDAY can you let me know if he doesn’t make it to bed in the next five minutes?’ Rhodes asks the AI.

‘Of course,’ the chirpy voice says and Steve suspects the AI is happy someone is making Tony look after himself.

‘I didn’t realise he’d been working himself that hard,’ Sam mutters, swirling the last bit of his whiskey around the glass, frowning at it.

‘None of us did,’ Steve responds.

‘Tony’s always been self-destructive,’ Rhodes sighs. ‘But especially when he thinks he’s got something to repair.’ No one says anything more for a few minutes before Sam and Bucky head off to bed. Steve remains where he is, mulling over their resident inventor.

‘It’s bugging you isn’t it?’ Rhodes asks him.

Steve looks up, surprised to find the other man still there. He thought he’d left with Sam and Bucky. ‘What is?’

‘The fact he won’t look at you.’

Steve briefly wonders which was more obvious: Tony’s actions or his reaction to them. ‘Why?’ he asks, instead of voicing his other question.

‘Why won’t he look at you?’ Rhodes asks. Steve nods, part of him dreading to hear the answer. Rhodes sighs and puts his glass down on a side table. ‘Steve if Tony knew I was going to tell you half of the stuff I’m about to he’d do more than make my suit do the Macarena. So I’d appreciate it if you don’t pass on any of what I’m about to say.’

Steve wonders what on earth he was about to hear. ‘Alright.’

‘When Tony was a kid he didn’t have the best relationship with his dad, but he told me one drunken night at MIT that the one thing they would be able to bond over was when Howard would tell him stories about you.’

‘About me?’ Steve is so shocked he’s not sure he heard correctly.

‘Yeah, you ended up being his childhood hero,’ Rhodes smiles at the look on Steve’s face. ‘Apparently he even dressed up as you one Hallowe’en to go trick-or-treating with kids from his school. Howard had your old shield from when you were doing the shows and let Tony use it for his costume.’

‘You’re joking.’

Rhodes shakes his head. ‘If I know Tony he’s still got it somewhere. But anyway, for much
of his childhood you were his idol, his one way of being close with his dad.’ Rhodes looks sad and he sighs. ‘Then he started acting out as a teenager, getting drunk underage at parties, arguing with his dad. He just wanted some kind of attention from Howard that was all about him, I think, that was Howard acknowledging him as his son and wanting to spend time with him because of that and not because of a long-lost friend he was still desperately trying to find with every spare second he had.’

Steve felt guilt creeping into his stomach. It seemed a lot of the issues in Tony’s relationship with his father had stemmed from him.

‘Don’t blame yourself, Cap,’ at his shocked expression Rhodes chuckles. ‘You have the same look on your face Tony does when he’s blaming himself for something. Trust me I know it very well.’ Steve feels his face heating up in embarrassment. ‘Howard was never going to win any awards for being the world’s best dad, regardless of who was or wasn’t in the picture. He was better with machines than with people, very much like Tony. So anyway, when Tony started acting out, trying to get some form of attention, Howard started comparing him to you. I think it was as some form of revenge for Tony’s behaviour, making you out to be this perfect person that Tony could never emulate when he knew that you’d been a hero for Tony for so long.

‘That’s when Tony started resenting you and any part you’d played in his and his father’s relationship. Eventually he moved past it, and just put it to the back of his mind, especially when his parents died. Then they dragged you out the ice, and everything came rushing back: the fact you’d been his hero, then the resentment, and also the few good memories he had with his father.

‘You know he actually admitted to me he was really nervous to meet you that first time. He also admitted he acted like the world’s biggest asshole because of it; and he was a little hurt when you weren’t exactly his biggest fan to begin with. Somehow, and I have no idea how, but he managed to put all his past feelings aside and decided to give you a clean slate. Now that’s not something Tony ever does so I hope you feel special, Cap. But that’s how you were able to become such good friends.’

‘I’d hoped we still were,’ Steve admits quietly, looking down at the carpet. ‘But now I’m not so sure it’s possible.’

‘There’s only three people still alive that have stuck by Tony through everything, Cap. That’s me, Happy and Pepper. Anyone else who stuck around through his temper tantrums and mood swings died a long time ago. Everyone else he trusted? They betrayed him or walked away from him.’

‘I did both,’ Steve says with sudden clarity. ‘Oh god, Rhodey-’

‘He has forgiven you, Steve,’ Rhodes reassures him. ‘Otherwise he never would have tried to get you home in the first place. But he’s still hurting, and he’s not sure if you’re going to stick around this time. He’s scared of getting hurt again, Steve, so he’s scared of getting close to you again. He won’t admit any of this, of course. But once he realises you’ll stick around, he’ll let you back in. You’ve just got to be patient.’

Steve finds he can’t form words around the lump in his throat as Rhodes stands up to leave, patting his shoulder as he does and leaving the super soldier with his thoughts.

What have I done?
The next morning Steve enters the common area, slightly out of breath from his morning run; the room is empty, and for once he’s glad of that, having gone by himself to try and clear his head after last night’s talk with Rhodes.

The coffee pot is just finishing as he reaches it. He smiles to himself and reaches into one of the cupboards to find a mug. ‘Thanks, FRIDAY. I appreciate you having it ready for me,’ he tells the AI as he starts to pour the hot liquid.

‘No problem, Captain,’ the cheerful voice responds, ‘just following orders.’

Steve pauses as he puts the coffee pot down. ‘What do you mean following orders?’

‘Boss’ orders, Captain.’

Head swimming slightly, Steve opens the fridge door and pulls out the milk. ‘Tony told you to have my coffee ready?’

‘Amongst other things, Captain,’ comes the reply. ‘It’s all part of the family calendar protocol.’

‘The what protocol?’ he finishes making his coffee and leans back against the counter. This is possibly the longest conversation he’s had with this iteration of Tony’s AI, he’s only just gotten used to the fact that it’s not JARVIS anymore.

‘Family calendar, Captain. Boss set it up when Miss Wanda returned.’

‘Huh,’ then after a pause he asks. ‘So what else is on the family calendar protocol apart from my morning coffee?’

‘A variety of small tasks, their main role is to make life more comfortable for each individual member of the team.’

‘Like what?’

‘Well boss has me make sure Miss Wanda has a cup of hot cocoa ready for about an hour after dinner because she likes to sit and relax with it; there’s also a special blend of herbal tea from Sokovia he has me fly in for her because it helps her sleep and I have it ready for her when she goes to bed. He also asked me to make one for Sargent Bucky as he’s finding it helpful too. I have to keep the temperature slightly warmer in Colonel Rhodes’ room as it’s more helpful with the odd cramps he gets from his injuries; and your room has to be a couple more degrees warmer than his. Would you like me to tell you anything else?’

‘Err, no thanks FRIDAY, I think I get the picture.’

‘Agent Natasha is approaching for her morning cup of coffee as well, please replace the pot so I can get her blend prepared.’

‘Wait she has a different blend to mine?’ Steve asks, doing as the AI asks.

‘Of course, yours is slightly less caffeinated so as to not cause any adverse reactions with the serum in your body. Agent Natasha’s is a blend that is flown in from Budapest, it is one she and Agent Clint grew very fond of during a mission there.’
‘Hang on do we all have different coffee blends?’ he asks, Natasha walks in at that moment and shoots him a worried glance.

‘Of course, Captain. I make sure that each person has their unique one prepared for them when they make coffee.’

‘Did you know about this?’ he asks Natasha.

‘Steve are you having a freak out over coffee?’ she asks incredulously.

‘No, I just didn’t realise that everyone has a special coffee that FRIDAY prepares for us automatically. I just assumed it was all the same.’

‘Really? Huh that’s cool, I wondered why everyone was so happy drinking that blend from Budapest. I swear when Clint and I made you try it you hated it.’

‘Did you know about the family calendar protocol?’ he asks her.

‘The what now?’ Natasha frowns at the question as she collects her coffee.

‘Apparently it’s one of FRIDAY’s programs Tony set up,’ he then explains what the AI had told him and part of what Tony had revealed to them last night. As promised he didn’t mention his conversation with Rhodes. Through it all Natasha listens without comment, her face unreadable.

‘You sound surprised to learn all of this, Captain,’ an emotionless voice says behind him. Steve spins to see Vision phasing through the wall. ‘Why is that?’

‘It’s not that I don’t think he’s capable of doing something nice for people,’ Steve hurries to explain. ‘It’s just…’ he struggles to find the words for what he’s feeling.

‘It’s the kind of thing you expect him to have mentioned,’ Natasha says quietly from where she’s sat on the counter next to the coffee machine.

Vision nods with a small smile on his face. ‘Before that would have been true, yes. But I think Tony has stopped enjoying having so much attention on himself since the original business with the Accords. I also do not think he realised just how much he needed the team until that confrontation, especially with Miss Potts ending their relationship just before.’ The humanoid tilts his head to the side as if he’s thinking and then adds. ‘Do you know what happened the first time Wanda and I went out to have a coffee somewhere? It wasn’t too long after she’d come back, but it was long enough that we thought there wouldn’t be any trouble. We went to a coffee shop and the barista refused to serve us. She said she didn’t want dangerous people like us in her shop. Wanda was devastated. When we got back she went straight to her room and refused to come out for the rest of the day.

‘When Tony asked me what had happened he was furious. I’ve truly never seen him that angry. He asked me for the name of the coffee shop, and I told him but asked him not to do anything or it could make the situation worse. He reluctantly agreed once Colonel Rhodes gave him his support. The next time he took Wanda to her demonstration at the military base he stopped at a different café on the way home. Apparently it took a good ten minutes of arguing and cajoling before he managed to get her to go in, it was only when he told her he used to stop there regularly with his mother that I think she agreed.

‘When they went in the owner greeted Tony like an old friend, and then made such a fuss of Wanda I hear she nearly cried. She told me the owner gave her a free slice of cake and sat with them and asked all about her time at the facility. She even joked that she needed to tell him if Tony was
being too hard on her and she’d sit him down and set him straight. When they came back it was as if a dark cloud had been taken away from her. They stop there on their way back from every demonstration now, and she’s taken me there several times.’

‘He took her somewhere she’d be accepted without question,’ Natasha says quietly, ‘which was exactly what she needed, especially after all the news reports that refer to her as a weapon of mass destruction.’

Vision nods. ‘Losing the team hit him harder than I think even he realises. Now that we’re all back together, he’s going to do everything he can to make sure everyone’s happy here.’

‘He’s not very good with words,’ Natasha nods in understanding, ‘so this is his way of saying he’s sorry and how much he wants us here.’ She gives a short harsh laugh. ‘To think I once gave a report to Nick that said he wasn’t worth considering for the team because he didn’t play well with others. Now it seems he’s the one most determined to keep the team together.’

‘I better take Wanda her morning tea, she’s a little grumpy when she wakes up without it,’ Vision says. ‘After Bucky had a clock thrown at his head when he tried to wake her up once, it’s fallen to me to be the alarm clock. Phasing does have its uses.’

Steve can’t help the bark of laughter, mentally reminding himself to ask Bucky about that story. Once Vision has left though, he soberes up again and looks over at Natasha.

‘There’s something more about this that’s bugging you isn’t there Steve?’

He sighs and goes to the sink to rinse out his now empty mug. ‘I just want things to be the way they were between us, Nat. But I’m not sure they can be. I think I betrayed him more than I realised.’

‘He’s already forgiven you Steve, otherwise he wouldn’t have asked you to come back,’ she says, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder.

‘I’m not sure I’ve forgiven myself.’

‘That makes two of you then,’ she says through a small laugh. ‘You’ll be best friends again in no time, Steve. You work too well together not to. Just be patient with him, you know how much he hates heart-to-heart conversations.’

Steve just nods as she takes her coffee and pads out of the room. Something in the back of his mind balks at the suggestion. Why? He wonders, frowning into the sink in front of him. He misses having Tony as a friend so why is it his stomach twists painfully at that thought. Maybe it’s just because I don’t want the kind of friendship I have with the others, he muses as he wanders towards the gym. Maybe it’s because our friendship has always been slightly different. He decides a punching bag will help get all these thoughts in order as he steps into the elevator.
Detention
Chapter Summary

Steve and Tony have a heart-to-heart as Tony continues to try and protect the team at the cost of himself. Peter gets a detention, and sees Deadpool again for the first time since the ‘incident’

The team sits in stunned silence as they watch the TV screen, Pepper still hovering near the door her expression telling them all she very clearly is not happy with what’s just taken place. Steve isn’t entirely sure he is either.

‘He’s all but made you untouchable,’ Natasha says quietly as they watch Tony walk off the stage, the hundreds of reporters in the press conference still shouting questions after him. ‘Secretary Ross can’t touch you without getting some form of backlash from the public.’

‘He’s not going to risk it at any rate,’ Rhodes agrees, looking over at Steve. ‘Tony taking the blame for Berlin-’

‘But it wasn’t his fault,’ Steve says, mouth dry as he forces the words out.

‘It was all of our faults,’ Rhodes agrees.

‘By taking the blame publicly for it,’ Pepper says, stepping forwards, ‘he’s taken the pressure off of all of you.’

‘Isn’t he going to get backlash from the media about this?’ Wanda asks. ‘They’ll be tearing him apart.’

‘In his own words,’ Pepper responds, voice tired, ‘Tony is “used to the media’s bullshit. Besides they love to tear me apart, I’m just giving them something I can actually control for once.” I didn’t like it either, but he wouldn’t listen.’

‘He’s also tried to make everyone rethink Bucky’s role in the team,’ Sam points out. ‘He’s trying to reinstate the war-hero image from the exhibition, rather than the Hydra weapon the media’s been fixating on.’

‘He wanted to rebrand the Winter Soldier,’ Pepper adds quietly. ‘You do realise if anything does go wrong now it won’t be Bucky the media will be focussing on.’

‘- it’ll be the fact Tony broke his word,’ Natasha finishes.

‘We can’t let him keep doing this,’ Steve is surprised his voice comes out so firm, he was sure it’d be a wavering mess. Everyone turns to him in surprise.

‘What do you mean, Steve?’ Sam asks, though judging by the look of approval on his face he’s already guessed the answer.

‘Tony’s been taking the heat for all of our mistakes,’ he replies, hands curling into fists at his side in frustration. ‘He seems to think that everything that happened with the Accords is something
he has to fix alone. But like Rhodey said we were all at fault and we all need to start doing something to help. We’ve been sat around too long, we need to speak to Tony and work out how we can manage this so we all play a part.’

He turns in surprise as Pepper lets out a small sob and rushes to where he’s sitting to give him a hug. Too stunned to do anything other than react on instinct, Steve puts an arm around her shoulders as she cries into his shoulder. ‘Thank you,’ she whispers, barely loud enough for him to hear.

‘Come on, Pep,’ Rhodes soothes the woman. ‘You know we all care about Tony, it’s just the stubborn jackass won’t let us show him half the time.’

‘I’m sorry, I know,’ she says, pulling away and drying her eyes, trying to slip on her pristine mask once more. ‘I just- he’s been worse than when he got back from Afghanistan, Rhodey, and I’ve not been able to help him. I’ve not been able to do anything-’

‘It’s our turn to look after him, Pepper,’ Natasha says, handing the woman a tissue which she gratefully accepts.

‘It’s what we do,’ Steve adds, ‘we’re a team.’

‘We’re a family,’ Bucky says from behind him. I thought I was supposed to be the corny one, Steve thinks, but doesn’t say anything. He agrees.

Despite best intentions Steve is the only one who is still awake when the elevator doors open and Tony walks in, bleary eyed and steps sluggish. It’s probably for the best though, having the whole team trying to talk to him when he’s this tired was only going to end in a fight.

‘What you still doing up, Cap?’ he asks, voice a little husky from tiredness, looking over towards the kitchen area.

Everything Steve has planned to say in this moment flies from his mind. All he was going to say about everything that Tony is doing and that he needs to let the team help disappears. ‘Tony I’m so sorry.’

‘Why? What did you do? Snap another phone in half? Because to be fair sometimes I wish I could do the same. I’ll see if I can work out a way to reinforce one better for you,’ he says, heading towards the counter and keeping his back to him.

‘For everything,’ he carries on regardless.

‘You may have to be a bit more specific, Capsicle. Even though I’m a genius I’m not sure I follow.’

‘Tony could you at least turn and look at me? Please?’ he tries to keep the frustration out of his voice and sighs when Tony’s shoulders tense up but he doesn’t turn around. ‘Alright, well, just listen then. I-’ Steve pauses, thinking that starting this conversation about him was not the best way to do things. ‘No, first: thank you, Tony. For everything you’ve done to get the team back together, for what you’re doing for us now, not just with being a buffer for the media, and for trying to keep us together in the first place. And for everything you did even before that. I don’t think we’ve said
thank you enough.’

‘Steve, what-’

‘Hey I asked you to listen didn’t I? Just let me finish. Please?’ when there is no move made to argue he takes a deep breath and carries on. ‘I also want to say sorry, Tony. Starting with how I didn’t give you the opportunity to prove what you’re really worth when we first met and for being a jackass to you. I guess I was just lashing out because everything was so new and you reminded me in so many ways of Howard and yet you’re so different from him. It was like everything I was feeling about being in this time was wrapped up in you and I took it out on you.’

Tony says nothing, but he’s gone very still at the counter, whatever he had been going to get is forgotten and he’s hanging on Steve’s every word.

‘And most importantly I want to say sorry for everything that happened around the Accords. I should have taken you aside and spoken to you properly about them instead of getting on my high horse,’ at this Tony lets out a snort, and then quiets down again. ‘I was the one who caused the team to pick sides, and didn’t even consider seeing if we could change them until it was too late. And all the time you were trying to get me to see there was more than one way out of the situation.’

‘Then you heard “Bucky” and everything went to hell,’ Tony’s voice was raw, but there was no accusation in his tone, no bitterness.

‘Tony I don’t want you to think I chose him over you because I considered you less of a friend,’ he says, taking a few steps towards the genius. ‘I stood by him because I knew he was being accused of something he didn’t do and I couldn’t stand by and let injustice win when one of my best friends was involved.’

Tony sighs and nods, but still doesn’t turn to face him.

‘I’m sorry I never told you about your parents,’ his voice is quiet, barely a whisper now, and it hurts to talk past the emotion he’s desperately holding back. ‘I told myself I was sparing you, but I was being selfish and sparing myself. I’m so sorry for everything, Tony.’

There’s silence for what feels like several minutes. Then Tony speaks, and his voice sounds like he’s holding back tears. ‘Did he tell you he asked me to see them?’

‘What?’

‘Bucky,’ Tony finally turns to face him, and there are unshed tears in his eyes, but his voice is stronger now. ‘He asked me to take him to see my parents’ graves back when we thought he wasn’t going to be healed in time. He told Dad he was sorry for what he’d done, even though he knew I didn’t blame him for any of it.’

‘Tony-’ Steve feels his heart breaking at the sight of the man before him and walks up to stand a couple of steps in front of him, wanting to reach out and touch him, but unsure if he can.

‘I don’t blame you for any of it, Steve,’ he tells him, voice quiet but steady. ‘Not any more. When you first left I was angry and hurt, but now I just want the team back to how it was.’

He reaches out and places a hand on Tony’s shoulder, feeling the man relax under his touch. ‘I’m sorry I hurt you, Tony.’

The inventor gives him a small smile, patting the hand on his shoulder. ‘Me too, Cap.’ Then he walks past him and heads towards his bedroom, leaving Steve with a small smile of his own, and
his hand tingling with warmth.

‘Parker a word please.’

Peter groans as his algebra teacher catches him as he attempts to sneak out of class with everyone else. ‘Is anything wrong sir?’ he hopes feigning innocence will help.

‘Where is your homework for this week, Parker? This is the second piece you’ve failed to hand in on time.’

Second? Oh right, the first was last week after the...incident with Deadpool and the drug dealers. He’s been so distracted since then he may have been slipping a bit with his homework. ‘I’m really sorry Mr Wheeler, I must have done it in another book and left it at home.’

The look he receives tells him exactly how much of that story his teacher believes. ‘Parker I don’t know what’s been up with you this past week, but I know I’m not the only one you’ve been handing in homework late to, if at all. I’m going to have to give you detention tonight, you do realise this means a note is going to be sent right?’

Peter sighs. ‘Yeah I understand sir. I’m really sorry I’ve not been as focussed as normal. I promise I’ll be better. Is there any chance you can wait until tomorrow to send the note to Aunt May? I’d like to be able to tell her myself tonight if that’s alright?’

His teacher gives him a strange look. ‘You don’t know?’

‘Don’t know what?’ he asks, suddenly feeling rather nervous.

‘Peter if you get a detention to do with school work or your grades start slipping the school has been informed to notify Tony Stark. It’s to make sure that your internship doesn’t affect your education.’

Ok forget being nervous, now Peter’s terrified. ‘What? But when is it being sent? I mean what will it say?’

His teacher just shakes his head. ‘I’m sure Tony Stark will discuss that with you when you next see him, Parker. Now hurry on to your next lesson before you get another detention for being late.’

Peter leaves the room feeling like he just wants to hit his head against the wall. Great, Spider-Man gets a detention for not doing his homework. Mr Stark is going to kill me.

As he takes his seat in his next lesson, shaking his head at Ned’s curious look, a new wave of dread catches him and he holds in a groan and resists the urge to smack his head on the desk. Spider-Man gets detention for not doing his homework – Sargent Barnes isn’t going to let me hear the end of this.

For once he’s not looking forwards to going to the facility this weekend. He briefly wonders if he can get away with saying he’s sick, but then that would just make Mr Stark send for him to go to medical and then his life would be even worse.
After a lecture from May when he got home, and still no word from Mr Stark, which is honestly more terrifying than if the man had picked him up from detention, Peter sits in his suit on top of a building, swinging his legs back and forth. It’s been fairly quiet this evening, which for once he wishes wasn’t the case. He’d had to physically prove to May that he’d done all of his homework before she’d let him go out on patrol. And Ned’s parting words of ‘nice knowing you’ earlier when he’d told him about Mr Stark getting notifications if he got detention hadn’t helped matters.

He was in a bad mood and he wanted to web someone up. Maybe upside down. Hey he was in a particularly foul mood.

‘Hey Baby Boy,’ a subdued voice comes from behind him.

‘I’m not really in the mood, Deadpool,’ Peter growls. ‘I’ve had a pretty crap day and I don’t think you’re here to make it any better.’

There’s a long silence. ‘Tacos?’

He turns around to look at the mercenary, not entirely sure he’s heard correctly. ‘Did you just offer me tacos? Dude you murdered people in front of me, and you think tacos are going to make it better?’

The other man shrugs helplessly, holding out a cardboard box to him. ‘Tacos?’

He can’t help it, he bursts out laughing. ‘Are you actually insane?’

‘I’m pretty sure if I say yes then technically I’m not. Aren’t people who are insane not supposed to know they’re insane?’

Suddenly Peter feels tired. The week of being distracted, of forgetting homework assignments and playing catch up, of nights with little or no sleep that are filled with nightmares when he actually does, worrying what Mr Stark is going to say at the weekend, it all catches up to him. Somehow, before the incident, Deadpool had become a friend to him. Right now he just wants a friend.

‘Please don’t do that again,’ he says quietly.

He’s pretty sure that’s a hopeful expression seeping through the mask. ‘You forgive me?’

Peter shrugs, standing up and holding out his hand. ‘Only if I get my tacos.’

Deadpool gives a shout of happiness and, before Peter can react, he’s picked up and being spun around in a bear hug by the red clad mercenary. ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry,’ he keeps saying into Peter’s ear.

‘Hey, Deadpool? Finding it difficult to breathe here.’

‘Sorry!’ he yelps, dropping Peter so quickly the teen struggles to keep his feet.

He crosses his arms over his chest. ‘Give me my tacos.’

Deadpool grins. ‘You can have as many tacos as you want, Baby Boy,’ and thrusts the box
gleefully into his hands.

Peter tries to keep the smile off his face as he lifts the mask enough to eat. He doesn’t do a very good job of it. But at least there’s an answering one when he offers the box to the merc.
Tony Stark Does Parenting

Chapter Summary

Steve and Bucky go to collect Peter from school and find out he's being bullied. Tony Stark does parenting, and the team settle down to a film night.

Basically: super-family chapter

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Just when Peter is certain his luck couldn’t get any worse he steps out of the main school doors and sees who is picking him up.

‘At least it isn’t Mr Stark,’ Ned tries to comfort him.

Peter shoots him a frown. ‘You have no idea how much Sergeant Barnes enjoys winding me up. This is going to be horrible.’

‘Captain America’s here, maybe he’ll keep him under control?’ Even Ned doesn’t sound convinced by his own suggestion.

Steve and Bucky are standing next to one of Tony’s less flashy cars; Steve’s doing his best to be polite and welcoming to any kid that tries to talk to him, but it’s difficult when his dark haired friend is alternating between winding up Steve and seeing if he can scare off kids with his glare alone.

‘There he is!’ Bucky catches sight of the two of them, a grin lighting up his face. ‘You do realise we’ve been waiting ages right? And aren’t interns supposed to bring coffee?’

‘Told you,’ he mutters to Ned, ignoring the Winter Soldier.

‘Buck we’ve been waiting ten minutes. Leave the poor kid alone.’

‘Oh come on, you know I can be worse than this. This is me being friendly.’ Peter has to bite his tongue very hard not to comment at that statement, and shoves his backpack into the back seat.

‘Don’t you normally have a weekend bag, Peter?’ Steve asks.

Peter curses softly, then his eyes go wide at the look on the Captain’s face. ‘I’m sorry, Captain sir. Um, I left my bag back in my locker, I’m really sorry. I’ll run and get it now and be back in a few minutes. I promise.’

‘Can I get a coffee this time at least?’ Bucky grins.

‘Trust me you don’t want our school’s coffee.’

‘Why? Is it that shit?’

‘Bucky! You’re stood outside a school,’ Steve frowns at his friend.
Oh come on! These kids say worse on a daily basis.

And just how do you know that?

Tony told me.

Oh yeah because Tony Stark is the most reliable source when it comes to appropriate language. Anyway that’s beside the point.

Peter leaves them to their bickering as he runs back to his locker and grabs his weekend bag along with a couple of extra bottles of web fluid, managing to find the perfect balance between normal and super-speed so it doesn’t take too long. He’s hoping he can convince Tony to let him experiment on his webs in the facility’s labs. Though considering what’s happened this week he’s not holding out much hope on that option.

He half considers grabbing one of the crappy cafeteria coffee’s for Bucky, but decides he’s already wasted enough of Steve’s time to waste any more taking a cheap shot at the dark haired man. Besides he’s going to be in enough trouble as it is.

Slowing to a jog as he exits the main school doors, he notices the crowd around the two Avengers has diminished enough to be easily spotted through the bodies. Peter holds up his bag like a trophy, grinning despite himself, and Steve shoots him a smile and two fingered salute before turning and attempting to manhandle the Winter Soldier into the car before he can say anything to the teen.

Peter’s so distracted laughing at the sight of two super-soldiers rough housing worse than any of the teenagers in the school that he doesn’t notice the other person until they crash into him.

Hey! he spins to face them as scalding coffee seeps into his shirt. It just had to be coffee, he grumbles.

Oops, sorry Parker, didn’t see you there, Flash’s mocking voice makes him groan. I expected you to be carrying a tray of coffees for your superhero bosses. I mean that is what interns are supposed to do right?

Seriously, Flash? At least Bucky knows that joke is crap, Flash obviously thinks he’s the world’s best comedian.

Thought I’d give you a hand and bring at least one over for you. Though seeing the mess you made of it, I’m surprised they keep you around, Penis Parker. Maybe they just feel sorry for you. I know I would.

Peter opens his mouth to respond, but finds his mind has gone blank. Flash’s words are a bit too close to his own deeply hidden thoughts to be easily pushed aside.

Everything alright boys?

Flash turns to face Captain America with his most charming smile. ‘Of course, Captain Rogers. Just a small accident.’

Peter feels a weight on his shoulders and looks to see Bucky, metal arm sitting around his shoulders in a move that he’s sure is supposed to half intimidate Flash and half show Peter his support. ‘That all it is, Pete?’ the Winter Soldier asks.

Yeah, I wasn’t looking where I was going,’ he mutters. Briefly he considers shaking off the
arm, but finds he’s too grateful for the gesture.

‘Hey no harm done, Parker. Well not to me anyway. I’ll see you on Monday.’ With that Flash disappears.

‘Come on let’s get going,’ Steve says, giving Peter a worried look before leading the way to the car. Bucky takes his bag, lightly squeezing his shoulder with his hand, before nudging him along, his arm never once leaving its place around him.

‘Hey Pete you know how to play poker?’

‘Um, not really,’ he answers.

Bucky grins as they climb in the car. ‘Perfect. Tony and I are trying to convince Steve to let us play tonight. We can teach you and then Mr Grumpy over there has no reason to complain.’

‘You make me sound like such a kill joy,’ Steve grumbles as he starts the car and they pull away. Peter relaxes in the backseat, the banter is familiar and he thinks he’s gotten away with the incident with Flash.

Then Bucky turns to look at him, and he knows from the look in the man’s eyes he’s only going to accept the truth. And he’s going to know if Peter’s hiding something. ‘Alright, Peter I spent enough time before the war looking after Steve when he was getting picked on to know what was happening back there. Does that kid do it often?’

Instead of a verbal answer, Peter turns to look out of the window and nods.

‘How often?’

Peter shrugs.

‘Is he the only one?’

‘What’s with the Spanish Inquisition?’ he asks.

‘Pete we’re just worried,’ Steve cuts off whatever Bucky was going to say. ‘We had no idea this was going on. Tony never mentioned it, so it’s a bit of a surprise.’

‘Mr Stark doesn’t know,’ Peter sighs, not tearing his eyes from the buildings passing by. ‘I don’t want him to know. It’s nothing I can’t handle, it’s just harmless teasing. I’m like one of the nerdiest kids in school, and now everyone knows I wasn’t lying about the Stark Internship, plus I’m one of the most socially awkward guys there. It’s not like there’s no lack of material.’

‘Pete-‘

‘Please,’ he cuts Steve off. ‘Please don’t tell Mr Stark. It’s fine, honestly. I have May, I have Ned and MJ, and I have you guys. I don’t need anything else. I’m happy, and I’m happy at school despite a little bit of teasing from some of my classmates. Please promise me you won’t tell him. He’ll make a big thing of it and then it’ll just get worse.’

Bucky looks to Steve who just nods, keeping his eyes on the road. ‘Alright we promise not to tell Tony,’ the dark haired man says. ‘On one condition: the moment it gets worse you tell one of us straight away. Deal?’

Peter grins. ‘Deal.’
Bucky unzips his hoodie and throws it in the back to Peter. ‘Take off the coffee stained shirt and stick that on, kid. Otherwise Tony’ll think I’m the one throwing drinks over you.’

Peter smiles gratefully and peels the soaked shirt off of him, shoving it into his bag and pulling on the hoodie. It’s a little big but it’s warm and soft, and as the banter starts back up again he can’t help but feel lucky he can count the Avengers amongst his friends.

One look at Tony’s face when they reach the facility and Peter knows he’s in big trouble. Play it cool, maybe he won’t make a scene, he tells himself, wondering if Tony Stark has ever not made a scene in his life.

‘So, Peter, how’s school been?’ he asks in way of greeting.

Play it cool, play it cool, he repeats to himself like a mantra. Oh god I’m so dead. ‘Yeah it’s been alright. Same old stuff you know. Well Flash got put back onto the reserve team for the Decathlon which he wasn’t too happy about, kept trying to convince them to swap him with me seeing as I’d, you know, run off to try and stop Liz’s dad at the last competition. Not that they know that of course. Well Ned does, obviously, but-’

‘Peter,’ at the tone in his voice, Peter snaps his mouth shut with an audible click.

‘Yes, Mr Stark?’

‘Anything you want to tell me? About school?’

Out of the corner of his eye he sees Steve and Bucky exchange worried glances and know they’re wondering if Tony’s somehow found out about his issues with some of the other kids. Oh I’m so dead. I should have told Ned he can have my Lego.

‘Err… no, nothing that I can think of. Except you know what I was saying about the Decathlon team anyway. Well unless you want to hear about the new exchange programme they’re starting up? There’s a whole bunch of rumours that since Wakanda is opening its borders that we might actually have some kids from there on the exchange programme, but I think that’s just a lot of wishful thinking to be honest. I mean not that it wouldn’t be awesome to go to Wakanda and -‘

‘Kid cut the crap,’ Tony’s looking pretty pissed now. Way to go Peter, let your mouth run off as if that’s going to help. ‘You want to tell me what the detention was all about?’

Peter looks down and his shoes, unable to meet the eyes of his mentor.

‘Ok well let me tell you what the school told me then, shall I? That for a week you were either late with, or didn’t actually complete your homework assignments. And you missed half a day of school just before this all started.’

‘I missed the bus and the next one broke down?’ Peter mutters, still looking down at the floor.
‘Seriously, kid? You expect me to buy that crap? Spider-Man doesn’t need a bus to get to school. Don’t lie to me, Peter.’

He’s actually considering trying to hide behind Steve and Bucky right now. Not sure he’s ready to tell Tony the full story yet, he settles with saying, ‘I just got a bit distracted for a few days. I’m back on top of everything now, Mr Stark.’

‘Well you can bet you aren’t getting distracted by anything here, including dinner, until you’ve done your homework. And just what kind of thing was getting you so distracted? Patrols?’

‘Yes. No. Kind of.’

‘Well which is it? Yes or no?’

‘It’s not important, it’s all sorted now.’

‘Well it must have been important to completely change your work ethic. So come on, spit it out.’

‘I don’t want to talk about it alright?!” Peter yells, finally looking at his mentor and fighting back the tears blurring his vision. There’s absolute silence in the room; Bucky and Steve are looking between him and Tony with wide eyes, because this is the first time Peter’s ever shouted at anyone. Let alone Tony.

As for Tony he’s standing with his arms crossed over his chest, the expression on his face slowly melting from pissed-off to concerned. ‘Pete-

‘Mr Stark I’m sorry I didn’t meant to shout, I just-

‘Peter,’ Tony sighs, uncrossing his arms as Peter shuts his mouth again and swallows. They’re all quiet again for a few moments. When Tony speaks again his voice is quieter, but still firm. ‘You know everything that happens when you have the suit on is still recorded right? It’s just as a precaution in case something happens to you, we’ve got something to go on. I don’t watch any of it, Pete, I just wait for your reports from the patrols and listen to them instead. You know why? Because I learned I had to trust you to handle yourself, and trust that you would come to me if you needed help.’

He can’t look at him, because if anything this calm understanding and request for Peter to trust him enough to tell him what is wrong is worse than if he was shouting at him. Worse than when he took the suit away. But he also knows that if he tells him about Deadpool, Tony’s probably going to try and run him out of the city, if he doesn’t try to arrest him. And Peter doesn’t want to lose his friend.

‘It wasn’t anything too bad, Mr Stark. I just had a difficult patrol and it took a few days to get my head around it.’

‘Anything you want to talk about, kid?’ Peter shakes his head and hears Tony sigh. ‘Alright. Go put your stuff in your room, then come and do some of your homework before dinner. Nat’s on cooking duty tonight.’

Peter nods and picks up his bag and heads towards his room, Tony ruffles his hair as he passes him and he feels a little of the tension leave his shoulders.

‘Wow, Tony you really have adopted that kid haven’t you? What’s with the whole “no dinner before you finish your homework” bit?’ he hears as he walks down the hallway.
‘Screw you Barnes.’

‘Can I be godfather when you adopt him?’

Peter sits at the table, listening to the sounds of Natasha moving around the kitchen, Steve’s offered to help and is taking orders pretty well considering he’s more used to giving them.

‘Steve, we have a machine that can do that you know?’ he hears the spy sigh.

‘Yeah but it tastes better when it’s done by hand.’

‘No it tastes exactly the same. Plus it’s quicker. Do you want to eat tonight or tomorrow? I know for a fact your super-soldier stomach is going to start protesting if we don’t get this finished within the hour.’

‘So will mine!’ Peter chimes in, trying to give his brain a break from algebra. He hates algebra. It’s one of the few science and maths things he struggles with.

‘Nat you’re distracting Peter from his homework, let me do my tasks in peace.’

‘I’m distracting him? You’re the one taking five minutes to juice three lemons. You have super strength, just crush them in your hand!’

‘Hey, either of you any good at algebra?’ Peter calls through.

‘Kid it’s been nearly ninety years since I was in school, I’m not going to be much use with homework,’ Steve replies.

‘Unless you want a history lesson,’ Natasha quips, she laughs and Peter hears the sound of something hitting a wall. ‘If you want help with math, Peter, you’re going to have to speak to either Tony or Rhodey.’

He really doesn’t want to face Tony again just yet. ‘Any idea where I can find the Colonel?’

‘He’s out at the moment visiting the guys at the base Wanda does her demonstrations at,’ Steve tells him. ‘You could wait till after dinner to speak to him, or ask Tony.’ He detects a hint of sympathy in the Captain’s voice.

‘Thanks,’ he says, turning back to his list of homework. He’s done most of it during a free period, just like he always does before coming to the facility, but he’d been avoiding his algebra homework.

‘Algebra the only thing you’ve got left to do?’ Steve asks, poking his head back out of the kitchen door.

‘Well I’ve got to think of something to do for a history project as well,’ he answers. ‘It’s not a homework task exactly, but we’ve got to have an idea to propose to our teacher for our next lesson.’

‘Can it be on anything at all, or you got a specific topic?’ the blond asks, coming over to sit opposite him, drying his hands on a towel.
‘We’ve been looking at individuals who’ve made big changes in modern history,’ he answers. ‘We don’t have to stick with someone in modern history, but we’ve got to do a presentation on someone who has had a big impact on the world in some way and explain why. Some people have already made their choices and we’re not allowed to do the same as anyone else.’

‘Who’s already been chosen?’ Steve asks.

Peter flashes him a grin. ‘You’ve already been chosen,’ he hears Natasha’s chuckle from the kitchen and the blond’s cheeks are tinged pink. ‘I think the only other ones are Martin Luther King Jnr, George Washington and Christopher Columbus.’

‘Some of the heavy hitters,’ Natasha comments from the kitchen. ‘You had any thoughts?’

‘Well,’ Peter scratches the back of his head. ‘I didn’t really want to go for any of the really big names, you know? But I wanted to go for someone close to them. Like an adviser or something. Someone who was an influence on them, but not necessarily in the spotlight themselves. I just think that’d be much more interesting.’

‘I think that’s a fantastic idea, Peter,’ Steve smiles at him. ‘I know I wouldn’t have been able to do half the things I did without some of the people around me in the war.’

‘Like who?’ Peter asks. ‘Just as an idea for who I could be looking for with some other people.’

Steve nods and then looks at a spot behind Peter’s shoulder, obviously lost in thought. ‘Well without Dr Erskine the serum wouldn’t have existed, and I never would have been chosen to be given it for one thing. Tony’s dad Howard was the one who made the machine that administered the serum, and he made my original shield; plus he flew me behind enemy lines on that first mission. Peggy Carter of course, she and Howard ended up founding the original SHIELD you know.’

Peter nods. He’d heard all of these people mentioned when they were told about Captain America as part of learning the Second World War. He’d considered all of them, thinking his research would be easy enough to do – all he’d have to do is ask the Captain about them himself. But something just didn’t feel right about focussing on any of them. It felt like he should know them if he was going to be presenting them since they had been important to several members of the team.

‘But the most important person was Bucky,’ Steve continues. ‘Without him I’d have been beaten to a pulp long before I even met Erskine. Plus if he hadn’t of been taken by Hydra I’m not sure I would have gone to save all of those soldiers.’

‘And Captain America would forever just be a stage act,’ Natasha laughs from the kitchen.

Steve scowls. ‘Oh shut up.’

But Peter’s had a lightbulb moment, and he starts grinning. ‘Captain I think you’ve just found me my history project.’

Natasha’s laugh from the kitchen is infectious. ‘Oh I can’t wait to see Barnes’ face when you tell him he’s a history project.’

At that moment Tony walks into the dining room, looks between the door to the kitchen where Natasha’s still laughing away, to Steve’s expression which is caught somewhere between trying to look stern and trying not to laugh, and Peter’s wide eyed innocent expression at the Captain’s question. ‘Peter I hope you’re not doing this in some form of revenge for him winding you up earlier.’
‘Of course not, Captain sir. You said yourself he was a big influence on you.’

‘Err… what did I miss?’ Tony asks. Steve briefly explains, still caught somewhere between exasperation and amusement.

‘Can we not tell him and get Peter to do it all in secret?’ Natasha asks. ‘Then just show him the finished project?’

‘I still need to clear it with my teacher,’ Peter says, suddenly feeling shy now that Tony’s entered the room again.

‘I think I’m with Nat on this one,’ Steve says, eyes sparkling with mischief. ‘Thinking about it, I owe him a bit of embarrassment.’

‘It’s not like it’s difficult to get him talking about stuff to do with Steve, especially from pre-serum,’ Tony points out, an answering grin to the others’ now on his face. ‘How’s the rest of your homework coming on, Pete?’ He shoots Steve a frown at the grin on the blond’s face at that question; the soldier raises his hands in surrender and stands up, picking up his discarded hand towel.

‘Nearly done, Mr Stark,’ he replies. ‘I just um… hey Mr Stark? Can you give me a hand with my algebra? I’m not very good at it.’

Tony blinks a couple of times, completely taken aback by the question. Then he nods and pulls out the chair next to him. ‘Sure thing, kid. Let’s take a look.’

Peter lets go of the breath he’s been holding and smiles at the older man. He pulls the books back towards them and turns to face his mentor. Over Tony’s shoulder he notices Steve’s soft smile before the man enters the kitchen again to help Natasha, and Peter’s attention is taken up with Tony’s explanations.

Steve joins Tony in the kitchenette of the common area as the rest of the team start pulling up enough chairs and cushions for them to sit in front of the TV. Peter’s chattering away about how he still can’t believe that Bucky’s not seen any of the Star Wars films, and is thinking out loud about the best order to watch them all in. Sam and Rhodes are adding their input and there’s a good natured debate going on about whether they should bother with the prequels at all.

‘How much popcorn do you think we should do?’ Tony asks, opening the cupboard that Steve is sure is filled only with popcorn boxes ready for these film nights.

‘Depends on if the kid is going to insist we watch every film tonight,’ Steve chuckles.

Tony shakes his head with his own answering chuckle and then hands Steve three boxes and gestures to the waiting bowls. ‘Three flavours one flavour in each bowl, just keep the bags going until we’ve filled them all.’

‘You really think we need this much?’ he asks, looking at what seems to be industrial sized mixing bowls.

‘Well Rogers we’ve got two super soldiers and a kid with an enhanced metabolism to feed before the rest of us even get a look in. Plus we’re going to lose the equivalent to half a bowl to the
floor as people throw it at each other. No matter how delicious Nat’s dinner might have been we’re still going to need all of this.’

Steve laughs. ‘Point taken,’ then the two of them set up a production line of sorts to get the popcorn prepared. When they’ve filled one bowl Tony calls to Wanda to say it’s ready and she uses her powers to bring it over to the rest of the group. Sam and Rhodes are having an argument over the best way to lay the cushions on the floor, while Peter and Vision appear to be having a discussion on the web fluid.

When he passes Tony the next bag of popcorn Steve notices the relaxed smile on the inventor’s face. ‘He means a lot to you doesn’t he?’

Tony blinks and looks at Steve in surprise. ‘What?’

‘Peter,’ he clarifies. ‘He means a lot to you doesn’t he Tony?’

For a minute he thinks the genius is going to argue with him, but then Tony gives a small laugh and nods. ‘Yeah. He’s a good kid and he seems to be creating these terrible parenting habits in me.’

‘Like making him to do his homework and telling him off over detention?’ Steve teases him.

Tony groans. ‘God don’t remind me. I felt like Dad,’ Steve notices how his voice sours a little at the mention of Howard. ‘It’s stupid really,’ Tony continues. ‘I mean I was in and out of detention at school and it’s not exactly done me much harm. He doesn’t know it but he’s got a guaranteed job at Stark Industries as soon as he’s finished all the education he wants.’

‘And I bet you’ll be paying for it all.’

Tony huffs another laugh. ‘Yeah that was an interesting conversation with May Parker.’

They’re quiet for a moment, watching the team as they wait for the microwave to ping with the last bag for the second bowl. Natasha’s got fed up with the boys’ arguing and has sorted out the pillows herself; Bucky and Sam are trying to steal popcorn from the bowl and keeping the others away at the same time, but Peter’s sitting on the ceiling and dropping down by his webs every so often to steal some as Wanda distracts them. The two youngest members of the team sharing the spoils, and Wanda’s sharing some of their hard earned treats with Vision.

‘Why him, Tony?’ Steve asks as the microwave pings and he passes him the steaming bag. ‘I mean what made you want to keep him around at the beginning?’

Tony’s doesn’t answer as he passes the third box to Steve, emptying the last of the second flavour bags into the bowl and calling for Wanda to take it over. The soldier is just beginning to wonder if he’s ever going to answer the question when Tony’s quiet voice breaks the quiet in the kitchenette. ‘He reminded me of us.’

‘What?’ that was certainly not the answer he’d been expecting.

‘At first it was because he reminded me of myself. Well the better parts of myself anyway. He’s smart, he’s resourceful, and he can be stubborn when he wants to do what he thinks is the right thing. Then I realised the reason he didn’t have my bad traits as well is because he also reminds me of you.’

‘Me?’
‘He’s got your good heart, Steve, and he’s got your moral compass, rather than my screwed up one. So what he thinks is the right thing to do, usually is. But he wants to look out for the little guy, as well; and he has your aversion to bullies,’ Tony shoots him a smile out of the corner of his eye.

Steve can’t help the warm feeling in his stomach at Tony’s words. ‘He’s also got your run away mouth.’

Tony laughs. ‘No I think that’s all him, he definitely out talks me.’

‘Who would have thought that was possible?’ Steve teases.

‘Can it, Rogers,’ after a pause Tony adds. ‘Care to explain why he arrived wearing Bucky’s hoodie this afternoon?’

Steve desperately wants to tell him, but can’t break his promise to Peter. ‘He had an accident with another kid and got some coffee spilt down his shirt, Buck leant him his hoodie so he didn’t have to travel back soaking wet.’

Tony nods and they finish up the last bowl of popcorn before moving to join the others. The inventor tells Peter to put the film on and to get off the ceiling. Steve sits on the couch opposite Tony and can’t help the small smile when Peter takes a seat on the cushioned floor next to where Tony’s sitting. Natasha throws a blanket to Peter once he’s settled and the music starts, and Tony ruffles the kid’s hair. Peter takes a swipe at his mentor, but is nowhere near close to hitting him.

They all settle down to read the opening credits of *A New Hope*, but Steve can’t help his eyes keep flicking over to the inventor opposite him. For the first time in a while he looks relaxed and happy. Looking around at the rest of the team, he realises they all do. Vision has his arm around Wanda; Natasha has her feet under Bucky’s legs to keep them warm; Rhodey’s sat in the chair between their sofa and Tony’s; and Sam’s taken a seat next to Peter on the floor, a bowl of popcorn between them.

*Nothing is tearing this apart again*, Steve promises himself, catching Tony’s eyes and giving him a small smile before turning his attention back to the film.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. So these three extra chapters are being put up early as a tribute to Stan Lee. I thought considering the update yesterday was Peter and Deadpool having an argument, I’d get us all back to a superfamily chapter. And Tony Stark being a parent.

I hope you’re still enjoying this story. Thank you so much to everyone who has reviewed, and to the people who have asked for a Christmas story. It will definitely be coming your way, keep an eye out Christmas Eve! The next questions with it will be: do you mind if there’s a slight divergence from this story in that it will be established Stony? And do you want Deadpool to join in the Avengers' festivities?

Hope you all have a wonderful week. Thank you as always for your continued support. I love hearing from you all so please review.

L x
As always here's your sneak peek:

'Tony there's something you need to see,' she says, joining the others at the breakfast bar.

'What's up Nat?' he asks taking the tablet from her and frowning down at it.

'Deadpool's been spotted in New York,' out of the corner of her eye she notices Peter look up from his book.
Deadpool Spotted

Chapter Summary

The Avengers confront Peter about his friendship with the notorious mercenary; the team gets a call out and Peter goes missing after Tony snaps at him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Natasha enters the common area the next morning, the tablet in her hand causing the worried frown on her face. She sighs with relief when she sees Tony and Steve sat at the breakfast bar with Vision, Peter’s sat in one of the chairs reading a book for school. There’s still popcorn littering the floor where they’d sat watching the two films last night. They’d only been saved watching the third by the fact that both Peter and Wanda had fallen asleep and had been carried to their rooms by Steve and Vision.

‘Tony there’s something you need to see,’ she says, joining the others at the breakfast bar.

‘What’s up Nat?’ he asks taking the tablet from her and frowning down at it.

‘Deadpool’s been spotted in New York,’ out of the corner of her eye she notices Peter look up from his book.

‘Deadpool?’ Steve asks, Rhodes comes in and says a brief hello, heading towards the coffee machine.

‘A mercenary,’ Natasha explains and Tony flicks through the information on the tablet. ‘A very dangerous mercenary with exceptional regenerative abilities, word is he can’t be killed. Used to be in Special Forces before he got his abilities, name of Wade Wilson-’

‘Not Wisecracker Wilson?’ Rhodes asks from behind Tony.

‘You know him?’ Steve asks.

Rhodes shrugs. ‘Only by reputation. From what I heard he was one of the best soldiers we had, still has one of the highest number of confirmed kills, but he was dishonourably discharged and I never heard any more from him. Not really surprised he became a merc, quite a few soldiers do if they don’t leave from injury.’

‘You say he got these healing abilities after he left the army?’ Steve asks her.

Natasha nods. ‘No one’s exactly sure what happened, but it looks like it was part of a programme to create soldiers with mutated genes to be sold to the highest bidders.’

‘And the programme is still running?’ Natasha smiles sourly at the hard note in Steve’s voice.

‘Deadpool shut it down,’ she explains. ‘Seems he managed to escape and then took it upon himself to shut it down. Very permanently.’
‘He killed them all,’ Tony clarifies, eyes still scanning the information on the tablet. ‘He’s not exactly got the most stable of minds.’

‘And now he’s running around New York?’ Steve asks.

Natasha looks over at Peter, who’s been staying very quiet. ‘You seen him around on your patrols kid?’ He opens and closes his mouth a couple of times, a small frown on his face as if he’s trying to work out what to say. ‘Because you are being very quiet for someone who should have only just found out that there’s a dangerous mercenary running around his city.’

Peter turns bright red and tries to bury his face his book again.

‘Peter?’ Tony asks, looking worriedly at the boy.

‘I’ve met him a couple of times,’ Peter admits with a sigh. ‘When I’ve been on patrol. He’s not causing any trouble—’

‘At the moment maybe,’ Natasha cuts across him, ‘but that’s not going to last for long. Chaos follows Deadpool everywhere he goes.’

‘Deadpool’s here?’ Bucky asks as he walks in, his whole body going rigid. ‘Where?’

‘In New York,’ Steve fills him in quickly.

‘Pete please tell me you’ve not got mixed up with him,’ there’s genuine concern in Bucky’s eyes.

‘You’ve met him?’ Steve asks.

Bucky nods. ‘Yeah the guy’s a nutcase. I was put up against him a couple of times in my later missions; bastard made me muck up quite a few as well. He’s a damn good fighter, though he never shuts up.’

Natasha notices the small smile that Peter tries to hide and feels a twinge of unease in her stomach. ‘I’ve faced him a couple of times as well. Not someone you want to be on the bad side of, I’ve seen him make mincemeat out of damn good agents.’

‘Right,’ Tony’s face is set and he stands up, ‘Nat I need a location on this guy and I’m going to make sure he leaves New York unless he wants to spend the rest of his stay in a cell.’

‘Sure Tony, I’ll—’

‘No wait!’ everyone turns to stare at Peter who sinks back into the chair as if he wants it to swallow him whole.

‘Kid think very carefully how you phrase the next thing that comes out of your mouth,’ Tony warns him.

Natasha watches as Peter nods; then he sets his jaw and looks up to face his mentor and she knows they’re all in trouble. She’s seen that look before. On both Tony and Steve. ‘Oh this is going to be interesting,’ she says, moving back to stand with Bucky.

‘I think I’m going to go wake Wanda,’ Vision says, phasing through the wall.

‘Vision! Door!’ Tony yells at him before turning back to Peter. ‘Come on, kid. We’re waiting.’
‘Mr Stark I know what you’ve just been saying isn’t going to help you believe me, but he’s not a bad person.’

‘We are talking about the same Deadpool right?’ Bucky asks from Natasha’s left.

‘Yes,’ Peter rolls his eyes. ‘Wears a red suit, won’t shut up, absolutely nuts, has two katana and way too many guns. Like where do you even keep all that stuff?’

‘Kid, focus,’ Natasha says, fighting back a smile.

‘Right, sorry. Yeah I’ve met him a few times on patrol. He’s not taking jobs in the city, he’s just… I don’t know. I think he wants a new start.’

‘Kid I’m all for giving people a second chance,’ Tony says, ‘but this is just a little too far. He’s still taking mercenary jobs, he’s still murdering people, and he’s living on your door step. I don’t want you getting caught up in any of his shit.’

Natasha rolls her eyes at Steve’s muttered ‘Language.’ Tony turns to leave but Peter scrambles to his feet.

‘Please Mr Stark, just leave him alone.’

Tony sighs and faces the teen again. ‘Why are you set on defending him, Peter?’

Peter looks down and Natasha knows he’s hiding something; she doesn’t want to call him out on it though, not in front of the others. Not in front of Tony. ‘He saved my life,’ comes the quiet response.

There’s a brief silence where you could have cut the atmosphere with a knife. Then all of the adults start asking questions at once.

‘Alright stop!’ Tony cuts them all off, then moves to one of the sofas, patting the seat next to him. ‘Tell me what happened, kid.’

‘Do you promise to leave him alone?’

Tony pauses. ‘I promise to consider it once you tell me what happened.’

Peter seems to consider that good enough, so he sits next to Tony and tells them about what happened over a week ago. How he’d been following a couple of drug dealers wanting to find out where their supplies were coming from and had met Deadpool at the site; since both of them wanted to take out the gang they’d decided to work together, on the condition Deadpool didn’t kill anyone and they left them for the police to take care of. They heard how the two had worked together, Deadpool sticking to his promise until Peter had been caught unawares.

‘The guy was going to unmask me and sell us both to someone from Hydra,’ he finishes his story. ‘Karen was getting Droney’s stun dart ready but Deadpool didn’t know that. He shot the guy holding me before he could take my mask off. I,’ Peter looks down, ‘I wasn’t particularly grateful because he’d killed the guy. I ran off and left him there. That’s why I was so distracted with my school work,’ he glances up at Tony, then back down at the floor again. ‘But I saw him the other day on a patrol and we talked it out. He said he was sorry but he was trying to help me.’ There’s quiet in the room. Tony continues to study Peter’s bent head, while the other three exchange looks.

‘Anything else you want to add, Peter?’ Tony asks him.
Peter takes a breath then nods. ‘Yeah, Mr Stark. This is going to sound strange but… my spidey-sense doesn’t go off around him.’

Bucky lets out a bark of laughter. ‘I’m sorry your what?’

‘It’s like a sixth sense,’ Peter explains, ‘it lets me know if I’m in danger. Anything from something being thrown at me, to helping me dodge punches, to someone who wants to hurt me. It’s a bit like an alarm system. But around Deadpool it’s never gone off.’ He snatches the apple out of the air that Bucky’s just thrown at him without turning round. Then throws it back and turns and glares at the dark haired man. ‘Told you.’

Tony sighs and nods. ‘Alright kid, I’ll leave him alone.’

‘Wait, what?’ Bucky demands. ‘You can’t be serious, Tony.’

‘He’s saved the kid’s life,’ he replies. ‘And it seems he’s been around Peter quite a bit recently. The last time I tried to do things on his behalf I ended up making things worse for him, so this time I’m going to trust his judgement.’ He fixes Peter with a strong look. ‘The moment you feel something is off. The moment he changes, even a fraction, you contact us. That’s not a request kid.’

‘I understand, Mr Stark,’ then he surprises them all by throwing his arms around Tony and giving him a hug. ‘Thank you.’

Natasha elbows Bucky in the ribs as he starts sniggering at the shocked look on the inventor’s face. Just as it looks like his brain has caught up with what is happening an alarm goes off. Peter jumps up and looks around wide eyed.

‘What’s happening?’ he asks.

‘We’ve got a situation,’ Tony replies. ‘Kid stay here and tell the others to wait here for briefing. Cap? Come with me, we’ll go get the situation from Ross. Bucky, Nat? Go round up the others.’

Sam sits with the rest of the team that’s been left behind, listening to the comms as Tony, Steve, Wanda and Natasha deal with the attack on the chemical factory. It looks like it’s the same people that had taken Peter hostage, hence why a small number of the team had been called in.

Peter had wanted to go as well, but Tony had left him in no uncertain terms that he was staying with the rest of the team at the facility.

‘There’s a reason that Steve, Nat and Wanda are the ones to go with Tony, kid,’ Rhodes had explained to him. ‘This shouldn’t be too dangerous, and Ross only wants a small group to go, so Tony’s taken two of the Avengers who were most prolific on the opposite side of the Accords situation to show the Council and the public that we’re all able to work as a team again. Wanda’s gone because they need her fire power, and so she can show everyone the control she has on her powers again. If he’d taken me or Vision with him there would still be murmurs that he doesn’t trust the others properly, that’s why we’re there. It’d be even worse if he took in an unofficial member of the Avengers in as well. Tony’s having to use every opportunity to make a PR statement without being too obvious about it.’
The kid had settled down after that, or at least hadn’t been grumbling quite so noisily.

‘We got enhanced weaponry here, guys,’ Tony’s voice comes through the speakers. ‘Nat, Wanda keep an eye out. Steve, try not to lose your shield this time.’

‘He’ll be fine, Tony. Our resident shield snatcher’s with us,’ Bucky chuckles, grinning at Peter.

‘I was just doing what I was told,’ he mumbles.

‘Guys less chatter please,’ Tony says, there’s a loud clang and Tony grunts.

‘Tony you alright?’ Steve’s worried voice cuts across them. ‘What was that?’

‘I’m fine, Cap. Just dodging falling debris, you know the usual. Nat there’s two up top taking pot shots, want to sort it out?’

‘Kind of busy, Tony.’

‘I’m on it,’ Wanda says.

Sam notices Peter frowning, his head titled to one side as if he’s listening to something. ‘Hey, kid. What’s up?’

‘The weapons,’ he says quietly, as if he’s piecing together his thoughts as he’s talking. ‘They sound different.’

‘Different how?’ Rhodes asks.

‘The ones the people had who held me hostage, they sounded kind of like normal weapons but with a bit more power behind them. These though. They don’t sound like normal weapons, they sound more like what the Vulture had,’ his voice gets quieter towards the end, and Sam sees him hunch in on himself.

‘Tony you able to get us a bit more audio on the weapons?’ Sam asks.

‘Why?’ he asks, and they hear a couple of repulsor blasts.

‘Kid’s picking up on something.’

‘Alright give me minute.’

‘How’s this?’ Natasha asks, before a loud blast comes through the comms.

‘Do we want to know how you managed that?’ Steve asks.

Sam’s looking back at Peter though, and there’s something in his eyes that reminds him of Tony when he’s figuring something out. He beckons him forwards. ‘Go on, kid. Even if you don’t think it makes sense it’ll help.’

Peter nods. ‘Mr Stark?’

‘Make it quick kid we’re taking quite a bit of fire,’ Tony says.

‘Right sure thing, Mr Stark,’ he briefly repeats what he told Sam. ‘Thing is Mr Stark these are sounding more like Vulture’s weapons I’m sure of it. But it’s not quite the same. Sort of like alien
‘That would explain a few things,’ Wanda says.

‘We won’t know for sure just what kind of thing is going on with these until we get them back to lab. For now treat them like you would have done the Chitauri weapon. Now less chatter people, it’s hard enough to dodge these things as it is,’ Tony says.

‘But Mr Stark, what if they–’ A loud bang through the speakers cuts Peter off.

‘Tony! You alright?’ Steve’s voice sounds worried.

A pained groan comes through and they all breathe a sigh of relief. ‘I’m alright. Damn that came out of nowhere.’

‘Mr Stark–’

‘Peter I need you to shut up,’ Tony snaps, Sam sees him snap his mouth shut and step back to the side, eyes down. ‘I need all of you to shut up and let us finish this, because there’s way too much energy being sent around near combustible fluids.’

Thankfully it doesn’t take them much longer to get the situation under control. Within the hour Natasha’s informing them they’re heading back. Sam notices Peter sneak out the door while everyone else’s attention is taken up, but decides not to stop him. He probably needs some time alone before Tony gets back.

They’re waiting in the common area when the other four get back. Wanda especially looks tired and Vision gets up to lead her to a sofa, fussing softly over her. Tony groans and takes a chair, rubbing his shoulder as Steve and Natasha head to the kitchenette.

‘You guys alright?’ Sam asks them.

‘Tony took a hit, but aside from acting like a baby over it he’s fine,’ Natasha smirks.

Tony scowls at her. ‘I had a brief look at the weapons on the way back and the kid was right, definitely modified alien tech. Not well done though. Where is Peter anyway?’ he looks around the other occupants of the room.

‘He left just as you were heading back. I assume he went to his room,’ Sam answers.

Tony winces. ‘I shouldn’t have snapped at him, he’s probably taking it personal.’

‘Probably?’ Rhodes raises an eyebrow. ‘Tony the kid practically worships the ground you walk on, of course he’s going to be upset if he pisses you off.’

‘I wasn’t–’

‘We know,’ Rhodes says gently, ‘but Peter still remembers you taking away the suit. And considering your reaction to the detention–’

‘I thought out of everyone Steve was going to be the laying-down-the-rules father figure, but
you blew him out the water,’ Bucky sniggers.

‘Shut it,’ Tony grumbles, and Sam feels a little bad for him at the guilty expression on his face.

‘FRIDAY can you let Peter know I’m on my way to his room to say sorry?’ he says as he stands up.

‘Peter’s not in his room, boss,’ FRIDAY replies.

‘At least take these before you go,’ Steve walks over and hands him some painkillers and a glass of water.

‘What, no scotch?’ At Steve’s glare Tony holds his hands up in surrender and takes the medicine. ‘Sorry, Mom, no need for the death stare. Well then where is he FRIDAY?’

‘He’s not at the facility, boss.’

Tony stills and frowns. ‘What do you mean he’s not in the facility?’

‘He’s not showing up on any scanners in the facility or grounds.’

‘Well then track his phone. Maybe he went for a walk,’ Sam can hear a note of worry creeping into Tony’s voice.

‘His phone is on the countertop,’ the female AI responds. All heads swivel to Natasha, who picks up the abandoned phone with a frown.

‘FRIDAY where is he?’

‘I don’t know, boss. Last time I picked him up he was walking around the grounds.’

‘Ok, where’s the suit?’

‘In his room.’

‘Shit,’ Tony curses, running a hand through his hair.

Sam stands up, placing a comforting hand on the other man’s shoulder. ‘We’ll look for him the old fashioned way, Tony. Maybe he’s gone for a walk like you said and he just left his phone here. He’s fine.’

Steve steps forwards, taking charge. ‘Wanda, you and Nat stay here in case he comes back and we miss him. Tony, Vision and Rhodes can check inside the building. You guys know him best and the places he’s most likely to try and hide away here. Bucky, Sam and I will check outside. Anyone finds anything you get FRIDAY to let us know. Meet back here in an hour.’

The hour’s nearly up by the time Sam finds him. It’s a hunch he has based on something Tony mentioned a while ago, about making sure the hangers had protection from scanners in case they ever needed to make a quick escape. He’d made the changes before Bucky had come back in case they had to spirit the Winter Soldier away.
He nearly misses him, but something makes him look up on his way out of the one hanger and he spots a rather dejected looking shape sat on the ceiling.

‘How the hell did he even get up there?’ he mutters to himself. ‘Hey kid, come on down will ya? I haven’t got my wings with me and I don’t fancy shouting.’

‘Is Mr Stark angry?’ he asks as he crawls down the wall, and honestly Sam has to work very hard not to freak out at the sight of the kid crawling down the wall head first.

‘Angry? Why would he be angry with you? Currently he’s freaking out thinking you’ve run away or been kidnapped or something. I’ll be surprised if he’s got any hair left by the time we get back.’

Peter looks away from Sam. ‘All I ever do is make more problems for him.’

Sam frowns and then sits on a crate, patting the space next to him. As Peter cautiously climbs down the rest of the way to sit next to him he asks FRIDAY to let the others know he’s found Peter and they’ll be back soon. ‘From what I gather, kid, you and Tony have a bit of an interesting history, and it sounds like at some point he made a rash decision that means you feel you have to constantly prove yourself to him. Am I right?’

He shrugs and doesn’t meet his gaze. ‘Kinda. I mean I did screw up, Mr Wilson. I don’t blame Mr Stark for taking the suit away; I really wish he hadn’t, but I know why he did. I just don’t want him to feel that way again.’

‘Ok firstly we need to stop with Mr Wilson, alright? I’m Sam.’

‘But Mr-’

‘Kid,’ Sam’s tone is warning, but still light.

‘Ok… Sam.’

‘That’s better,’ he gives the teen a smile. ‘And secondly? The only person who thinks you have anything to prove to Tony is you. Everyone else can see he thinks the world of you, Peter; and just because he may snap at you when he’s caught up in a situation like that, or because the two of you might have a disagreement about something, or maybe because you get a detention,’ he shoots him a grin at the last one and Peter blushes bright red, ‘isn’t going to change that. He’ll be more upset if you just go along with something because you think it’s what he wants. The important thing about any relationship, whether it’s with a friend, family member, mentor or partner, isn’t that you never disagree, it’s what you do afterwards. Just look at the Avengers. You were there when we all had the mother of all disagreements, but we’re back together now aren’t we?’

Peter nods then smiles at him. ‘Thanks Mr-’ he stops himself with a sheepish smile. ‘Thanks, Sam.’

Sam gives him a gently nudge with his shoulder. ‘Anytime, kid. Now let’s go make sure Tony still has hair.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! Firstly a huge thank you to everyone who has commented, left
kudos and read this story. Honestly I can't thank you enough, your support makes writing this so much more enjoyable. It seems to be that a lot of people want a Christmas Special, so that will definitely be coming to you as a Christmas present from me to all of you wonderful people!

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. I thought it was only a matter of time until Tony and Peter had a bit of a rocky moment in their father/son relationship. Poor Tony probably won't have any hair left soon!

I'm posting a little early this week as I'm away this weekend and didn't want you to think I'd forgotten you! Have a lovely week everyone :) 

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

Unfortunately he doesn’t notice the person sneaking up behind him. ‘Work can wait, Tony’ Sam says from just behind him.
‘Sam, no!’ he hears Nat’s shout as two hands push into his shoulders and he’s falling. Then he hits the water.
He opens his mouth to shout, and inhales warm water. Closing his eyes, he thrashes around, trying to throw off the ghostly hands that are pushing him down. Phantom sparks of electricity dart across his chest, reminding him to protect the battery. If the battery stops he’s dead from shrapnel. His hands reaches to his chest, but the reactor’s gone.
Swimming

Chapter Summary

Tony has a bad reaction to going swimming, and the team decide they need to intervene in their resident inventor's health.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After Peter had gone home Tony finds himself being dragged down to the facility’s pool by Sam, Steve, Bucky and Natasha. Sam complaining he needs another ‘normal’ person there for when Bucky and Steve start racing.

‘What’s Nat if not a normal person?’

‘She says she’s playing lifeguard until she’s finished reading some reports,’ Sam replies. ‘Then she’s going to, and I quote: have us drowning in our own tears of frustration.’

‘Wow, brutal.’

‘Which is exactly why I need you to have my back.’

‘Yeah well I’m not getting in until I’ve finished looking at the scans of the weapons. So you’ll have to cope with the soldier twins alone for now.’ Ignoring Sam’s protests he heads to one of the loungers and sets his things down. He could leave reading the scans until later, but he needs an excuse to mentally prepare himself for facing the water.

‘Come on, Tony, don’t be a spoilsport,’ Bucky calls from the centre of the pool, where he’s already treading water. He looks strange without the metal arm.

‘Some of us actually have work we need to do, Barnes,’ he retorts. ‘Otherwise the rest of you don’t have your bills paid. As soon as I’m done I’ll get in there and kick your arse.’

‘Big talk for someone still standing on the poolside,’ Bucky taunts, spluttering as Steve sends a wave of water into his face.

Tony struggles to keep his mind focussed, because seeing Captain America in nothing but swim trunks laughing with his friend is doing strange things to his stomach. What the hell? He shakes his head trying to get rid of the thoughts.

Unfortunately he doesn’t notice the person sneaking up behind him. ‘Work can wait, Tony’ Sam says from just behind him.

‘Sam, no!’ he hears Nat’s shout as two hands push into his shoulders and he’s falling.

Then he hits the water.

He opens his mouth to shout, and inhales warm water. Closing his eyes, he thrashes around, trying to throw off the ghostly hands that are pushing him down. Phantom sparks of electricity dart
across his chest, reminding him to protect the battery. If the battery stops he’s dead from shrapnel. His hands reaches to his chest, but the reactor’s gone.

Then he’s clawing at his chest, lashing out at the hands that are grabbing at him again. All the time water is filling his lungs and mouth and he doesn’t dare open his eyes, doesn’t want to see the world blurred and dark.

The hands holding him under are becoming more solid, more real. He’s losing strength, but he needs to get away. Needs to breathe.

His back hits something solid and suddenly there’s air.

Still the hands won’t let him go, but now he has air he has more strength to fight back. To save Yinsen. Voices are shouting at him but he gave up trying to understand the words not long after he was taken. He always got the general gist.

Someone manages to pin him against themselves, arms wrapping around his torso and pinning his arms in place, legs trapped beneath theirs. The voice is strange though. They’ve never tried to sound comforting before.

A hand appears on each side of his face, and he dares to open his eyes at another soft voice. His vision starts to focus on red hair and worried green eyes.

‘Nat?’ he croaks.

‘Yeah it’s me, Tony. Stay with us alright? Just breathe with Steve for me. Come on, Tony, breathe.’

Steve? Tony’s brain starts to slow down and he takes in Bucky standing behind Natasha, hand to his face.

‘I think he broke my nose,’ his muffled voice comes through his hand.

‘You’ll survive,’ the reply rumbles from behind him and Tony finds it comforting. Steve’s the one holding him, Natasha’s in front of him reminding him how to breathe. He’s not in a cave.

‘You still with me, Tony? Afghanistan was ten years ago, now. Do you remember making Yinsinium? Changing the arc reactor?’ At those words he panics, looking down at his chest and trying to get his arms free from Steve. Natasha takes his face in her hands again and gets him to look into her green eyes. ‘Tony the arc reactor’s gone. You healed yourself remember? It’s not in your chest anymore, you don’t need it. You’re safe. You’re with us, at the facility.’

‘Breathe with me, Tony,’ Steve’s voice says from behind him, the vibrations from his chest seeping through his back. ‘In. Out. In. Out.’ Feeling the chest behind him rising and falling in sync with the words helps Tony follow the instructions. Slowly he starts to relax. His body begins to tremble as he does. Gradually Steve’s hold becomes less of a restraint and more of a hug, keeping him grounded.

‘You good?’ Natasha asks him after a while. He closes his eyes and nods, not trusting his voice.

‘Tony I’m so sorry,’ Sam’s voice is quiet and raw.

He shakes his head and opens his eyes. ‘No, its fine, Sam. Really.’
‘Fine?!?’ Sam demands. ‘Tony take a look at your chest. We thought you were going to drown.’

Tony frowns and looks down at his chest. His shirt is ripped and there’s gouges in his chest where the arc reactor used to be. ‘Huh. Did I do that?’

‘What happened, Tony?’ Steve asks quietly.

Natasha looks at him as he struggles to answer and takes pity on him. ‘Hydrophobia,’ she replies. ‘From his time in Afghanistan.’

‘Waterboarding?’ Bucky’s question is quiet. Natasha only nods in response.

‘How long have you known?’ he asks her, feeling Steve’s arms tighten slightly around him.

She opens her mouth, then seems to change her mind on what she was going to say. ‘Since I first met you when everything happened with Vanko and Hammer. Pepper mentioned it took you weeks to have a shower without a panic attack after you came back, and you still refused to go near baths.’

‘You didn’t have that in the report you sent to Fury. I would have thought phobias brought on by torture were a big no-no when it comes to members of superhero squads.’

Natasha looks at him for a few seconds. ‘I didn’t think Nick needed to know. You’d been through enough and Pepper said you were getting better with it.’

‘Well that obviously hasn’t gone as well as we thought,’ Tony laughs bitterly. After a beat he looks back at her. ‘Thank you. For not telling anyone.’

She shrugs. ‘You’re fine underwater in the suit, so I didn’t see it affecting you in the field. Still kept an eye on you just in case.’

He looks over at Sam, whose face says he feels like he’s just attempted to murder Tony and his whole family. ‘Sam? Stop it. It’s not your fault.’

‘Tony-’

‘No,’ he shrugs Steve’s arms off, ‘don’t blame yourself. I’m the idiot that can’t be honest about the fact I’m not perfect.’ He ignores any other comments and heads for the door. ‘I’m going to lay down for a bit. I’ll see you at dinner.’

He also tries to ignore the chill that settles around him now he no longer has a super soldier wrapped around him.

As Tony enters the common room the next morning he knows he’s in trouble. First of all he’s overslept and he’s got a meeting with the Council he has to leave for in less than thirty minutes if he’s not going to be late. Again.

Secondly the whole team is sat in the common area, and it looks like they’ve been waiting to perform some kind of intervention. At least that’s what he understands from Steve’s apologetic look as he walks in the door.
Alright what did I do this time?” he asks, wondering if he can fake an alarm to get him out of this situation. Maybe send a message to Peter asking him to call him with a pretend situation? No, the kid can’t lie even if his life depends on it.

‘Don’t pull that crap, Tony,’ Rhodes says from his seat on the couch. He winces recognising that tone and knowing he’s up the proverbial creek without a boat, let alone a paddle. ‘You told me you’d gotten over the worst of the hydrophobia. What else about your mental and physical health have you been keeping secret?’

‘Would you like me to get FRIDAY to give you updates on my toilet trips now?’ Tony snaps.

‘Dammit Tony take something seriously for once in your life!’

‘What do you think I’ve been doing for the best part of a year, Rhodey? How the hell do you think everyone is sitting here in this room right now?’

‘Tony,’ Steve cuts across the two of them, shooting Rhodes a look to keep his mouth shut. ‘Rhodey’s just worried. We all are. Apart from him and Nat none of us even knew you had hydrophobia, and Rhodey thought you’d managed to get it under control-’

‘It is under control,’ Tony turns to make himself a cup of coffee, trying desperately not to look at anyone and resisting the urge to run out of the room and into a suit. ‘Well mostly under control. I can go for a swim as long as I have time to psych myself up for it. I only freaked out yesterday because I wasn’t ready. Besides it’s only gotten worse again recently because I’ve been getting slightly less sleep than before.’ He manages to catch himself before saying ‘because the nightmares have come back’. Nightmares that now feature a phantom shield in his chest as the arc reactor flickers out.

‘Tony,’ Wanda’s voice makes him pause in his task, but he still can’t turn to face her. ‘You’ve done everything to get us back together and to make sure we’re all ok. We just want you to do the same for yourself.’ He swallows and rapidly blinks away the traitorous tears forming behind his eyes.

‘You don’t exactly have the best track record when it comes to looking after your own health,’ Vision points out. After a pause he adds, ‘What? It’s true.’

‘We’re having a discussion about tact,’ he hears Wanda mutter and gives a small chuckle.

‘I don’t want to walk into your workshop and find you with another puzzle on your neck,’ Rhodey’s soft voice adds and Tony has to fight the rising guilt at the memories that raises.

‘We just want to help,’ Steve says, moving to stand next to him and putting a hand on his shoulder. It’s only when he turns to face him that he realises Steve has placed himself between him and the rest of the team to try and block out some of the intensity of the situation.

He looks into the earnest blue eyes, showing all the concern the rest of the team must be feeling as well as him, and suddenly Tony realises exactly how tired, how drained he actually feels. ‘I’ve never been very good at letting people help,’ he points out quietly. ‘Just ask Nat: “doesn’t play well with others” remember?’

‘I think you may have changed a bit in over six years, Tony,’ she responds from somewhere behind Steve’s broad shoulders.

He sees the hope starting to shine in the soldier’s eyes and sighs. ‘Alright,’ he nods. ‘But I
warn you I’m going to be crap at this.’ The smile that lights up the blond’s face makes Tony feel that maybe sucking in his pride might be worth it. ‘First, though, I’ve got a date with the Council, and if I don’t leave soon then I’m not going to around long enough for this wonderful intervention to start.’ He manages to dart around Steve, screwing the lid of his thermos shut and heading for the door. ‘I’ll see you guys later. This time I should be more prepared for my team ambushing me.’

‘You’re such an ungrateful ass, Tony,’ Rhodes laughs.

Tony frowns when he notices the redhead falling into step next to him. ‘Where are you going?’

Natasha smiles at him. ‘With you. Saving you from “the evil government men” remember?’

‘Who says I need saving?’ he says, willing his brain to process this situation faster.

‘I’m driving,’ she says instead of answering as they walk along the corridor.

‘You don’t have to come, Nat,’ he says.

‘I know,’ she replies with a smile. ‘But I want to come and help you. I know how much you hate these meetings.’

He opens his mouth to protest some more, but finds his shoulders are a little less tense than normal as they head towards the garage. Instead he shrugs. ‘You’re not driving.’

‘How about I drive there so you can drink your coffee, and you drive back so we’re home faster?’

‘Deal.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! I am so sorry I'm late updating this week, we've had no internet for half the week so I've not been able to update. As an apology I'm putting up a second chapter in a couple of minutes so I'll do a longer note there. Thank you so much to all my readers, for everyone who has left kudos and for my wonderful reviewers who, if I haven't got round to replying to you yet I will at some point today.

I'm going to go post that second chapter now.

L x
Friends

Chapter Summary

Spider-Man and Deadpool meet an interesting character dressed all in red, and Deadpool tells Spider-Man a little of his past before leaving for a job.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘What you feeling tonight, Spidey, chimichangas or burritos?’

‘Honestly? I could murder a burger right about now.’

‘Hmm, with bacon and cheese and chillis.’

‘Double burger with extra cheese and bacon.’

‘Don’t forget the chillis, Baby Boy.’

‘Nah, you just want to smother it with burger sauce and it’s perfect.’

‘What?’

Peter just laughs at the shocked expression on Deadpool’s face, even through the mask it’s obvious, and looks around the streets below them. It’s been a quiet patrol today, so they’ve decided to take a break sitting on the edge of a building and Peter’s asked Karen to let them know if anything comes through the police radios.

He’d given up trying to keep the merc away during his patrols and instead agreed that he could join him twice a week if he promised to keep out of his way the rest of the time; he’d also promised only to step in when Peter was dealing with criminals, and not when helping out older and younger people. He wasn’t sure how they’d cope with Deadpool’s language. So far the older man had kept his word, and would only try and seek him out at the end of his patrol on the days when they weren’t supposed to be working together.

‘But no burger is complete without fucking chillis!’ the red suited man cries.

‘Peter I’m picking up some voices that you’ve met before,’ Karen says and he motions for Deadpool to keep quiet. ‘Sounds like some of the old members of the Vulture’s gang; the lower ranking ones that managed to get away,’ she clarifies. ‘Want me to give you sound?’

‘Go for it,’ he tells her, standing up. ‘Where are they? Let’s see if we can get closer.’

Karen gives him instructions which he relays to the mercenary and they make their way along the rooftops to where the voices are coming from a side alley. They look down and Peter, with his enhanced hearing, doesn’t need Karen to make the voices clearer, despite them talking low. He does get her to record what they’re saying.

‘We get the tech guy and everything will start slotting into place,’ one of the men says to the
other as they lean against the side of a car, obviously waiting for someone.

‘We tried this before with the weapons,’ the other responds, ‘and look where it got us: on the Avengers’ radar and Spider-Man taking out Vulture.’

‘Things’ll be different this time,’ the first one says. ‘This guy is way better with tech than the others were. He’s modified Stark’s tech in the past. He’ll be able to do what we need to the weapons. Then we can defend ourselves when the Spider or the Avengers come knocking.’

‘What if we can’t get him? Or what if he isn’t as good as he says he is?’

‘Then I pity the poor fucker, because the boss is not going to be very patient if anything starts to go wrong.’

They stop their conversation as a door opens and another man steps out, the one opens the door of the car for the newcomer to enter quickly; then they both get in and drive off.

‘Karen can you send that to Mr Stark please?’ Peter asks the AI, he gets an affirmative in response.

‘What do you think old Tin Can is going to do?’ Deadpool asks.

‘Seriously? Don’t let him hear you say that or you’ll be dead.’

‘I imagine he’ll be running me out of the city as soon as he realises I’m here anyway, Baby Boy. I’m surprised they haven’t been knocking at my door yet. Maybe I’m more subtle than I thought.’

‘I wouldn’t count on it,’ a voice behind them says. The two of them spin around, Peter with his web shooters ready to fire and Deadpool with his katana in hand.

‘Hey is it time for Hallowe’en already?’ the merc asks as they take in the stranger. ‘Did I miss like half a year or something?’

‘You’ll miss more than half a year if you don’t get out of my city,’ the man says, the dark red suit almost blending him into the shadows around them.

‘Hey it’s just as much my city as yours,’ Peter snaps, putting one hand on his hip.

‘You’re the Spider-Man right?’ the man’s head tilts to one side, as if he’s looking towards Peter but not at the same time. ‘You’re supposed to be protecting this city but you let a madman like him run around?’

‘I let someone who is willing to help me protect this city run around yeah,’ he replies, taking a few steps towards the man. ‘Who the hell are you anyway?’

‘All you need to know is I’m someone who’s trying to do the same thing as you.’

‘Yeah not really buying it,’ he snorts.

‘It’s Daredevil, Spidey,’ Deadpool says from behind him. ‘Papers like to call him the Devil of Hell’s Kitchen. You’re a bit far out of your normal stomping ground aren’t you Red?’

‘No way really?’ Peter looks between the two red suited men. ‘I heard Miss Natasha saying they were trying to get intel on you.’
‘I’ve no interest in joining the super-hero squad,’ Daredevil spits at him. ‘I’m only interested in him,’ he points towards Deadpool, ‘getting the hell out of here. And if not then if I can’t find a way to get rid of you myself I’ll drop the Avengers a line and make sure they finish the job.’

‘They already know he’s here,’ Peter says.

‘What?’ both the men ask at the same time and he resists the urge to roll his eyes.

‘They already know he’s here and Mr Stark is happy to trust my judgement on how long he stays.’ It feels like an eternity that he and Daredevil stare each other down. ‘You got anything else to add?’

‘They trust the judgement of a teenage boy?’ Daredevil eventually asks.

‘Yeah, they do. You got a problem with that speak to Mr Stark. Until then you leave Deadpool to me and get back to Hell’s Kitchen. You look after your neighbourhood and I’ll look after mine. You need a hand with anything you let me know. Until they stay out of my neighbourhood.’

Daredevil looks at him for a few more moments before nodding. ‘Stay out of Hell’s Kitchen. Both of you. The moment I think your judgement is impaired I’ll take him out myself.’ Peter watches him go, arms crossed over his chest and trying to ignore the pounding of his heart. He’s surprised the other two didn’t hear it.

‘So you got badass,’ Deadpool says, though his voice is quieter than his usual teasing tone. When Peter doesn’t say anything he adds: ‘Why did you do that?’

‘Do what?’ Peter asks, frowning as he turns to face the merc.

‘Stick up for me.’

‘We’re friends aren’t we? That’s what you do for your friends.’ Deadpool is silent for a couple of minutes, and it starts to worry him. ‘Deadpool?’

‘We’re friends?’

Peter feels something inside of him hurt at the older man’s tone. ‘Of course we are.’

The other man gives himself a visible shake and then, in a much more normal tone, asks: ‘The Avengers know I’m in New York?’

Peter nods and looks out over the city again. ‘They wanted to get you to leave but they agreed to trust my judgement.’ He turns to face him again, pretty sure his grin is visible through his mask. ‘So you better not annoy me.’

‘But I’m the most annoying person in the world!’

‘Hmm… that’s true. Sucks to be you I suppose.’

‘Hey!’ The man lunges for him and Peter dodges out of the way laughing.

‘You’ll have to do better than that if you want to catch me Deadpool!’
The next evening Peter is sat up on a rooftop catching his breath after a particularly busy patrol; he’s just finishing his call to Happy to leave his report when he senses the other man behind him.

‘Hey Deadpool,’ he says happily as he hangs up.

‘Hey Spidey,’ the merc seems a bit subdued tonight as he takes a seat next to the superhero. ‘Tough patrol?’

‘Busy at the very least,’ Peter says, leaning back on his hands to look up at the darkening sky. ‘And I’ve got quite a bit of work to do when I get back. You still on for patrol tomorrow?’

Deadpool is quiet for a moment, then he sighs. ‘I’ve got to leave town tomorrow, Baby Boy. I’ve got a job.’

‘Oh,’ and Peter doesn’t need to add any more. Doesn’t need to ask any more. Deadpool’s got a contract, which means he’s going to kill someone.

‘Spidey? I just wanted to say thank you for what you did yesterday.’

‘You mean with Daredevil?’

Deadpool nods. ‘And with what you did with keeping the Avengers off my back. I’m not used to people believing in me. Especially not when it comes to hero-doing, no-killing stuff.’

‘But you’ve not killed anyone in New York since we started hanging out,’ Peter argues. ‘Well,’ he turns away from the merc as he remembers, ‘except for that one time anyway.’

There’s an awkward silence for a couple of moments, then he hears Deadpool sigh. ‘I left a job unfinished once,’ he says, and Peter turns to look back at him. The merc’s head is down, looking at the street below them. ‘It was fucking stupid, but I was running late for meeting my girlfriend for our anniversary. So I left it unfinished and didn’t take out the last target, thinking I’d just deal with the bastard another day.

‘That night we decided we were going to start a family, me and Vanessa. She knew me before all this,’ he gestures to his body and Peter knows he’s referring to the scars which apparently cover every inch of his skin, ‘but she still wanted to be with me. We were talking about baby names when they came, the gang members. I managed to get all the fuckers. All except one. He shot her.’

‘I’m sorry.’

Deadpool gives a harsh laugh. ‘Oh don’t be sorry, Spider-Man. It was my own fucking fault. I should have known not to leave the cocksucker alive. I should have made sure they didn’t follow me home. I should have protected her better. I’m as much to blame for her death as the guy who pulled the fucking trigger.’ He pauses before heaving another sigh and look up, straight ahead over the city rather than at the boy sat next to him. ‘When that guy had the gun to your head I couldn’t just stand there and let someone else die because of me. I know I’d promised you not to kill anyone, but all I could see was Vanessa’s body and you joining her. I couldn’t be the reason someone else died.’

‘It wasn’t your fault,’ Peter tells him quietly. ‘We live these double lives and sometimes they cross over, and when it does you lose any ounce of control you thought you had. And you can’t blame yourself for anything that happens in those moments.’

Deadpool does turn to look at him now, and Peter has to look away at the intensity in that gaze, even through two masks. ‘You better take your own advice sometime, Spidey.’ He gets up and starts walking away. ‘I should be back by next week. Try to stay out of trouble until then, Baby
I’ll miss you, Deadpool,’ Peter says quietly. ‘Stay safe.’

‘Oh you know me, Spidey. I always end up coming back.’

Peter can’t help the small laugh as the merc disappears down the fire escape.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. So here's my apology for being late with updating chapter. Plus it's my I'm super excited because I have tickets to see Tom Hiddleston in the closing night of Betrayal' extra chapter! Yeah so I'm super excited about that, just thought I'd share.

So I'm not intending to bring all the Defenders in to this story, but I thought it would be a bit strange if Peter ran into Deadpool but never any of the other superheroes based in New York. Daredevil also seemed the most likely to try and track down Deadpool. There may be a couple more appearances from our horned friend, but he won't play a huge role.

Hope you enjoyed these two chapters. Let me know what you think about them, especially with regards Tony and his hydrophobia. I'm afraid the rest of the team are just starting to catch on to how broken he is, and now they're going to try and do a bit for him what he's been doing for them. Also the Stony action will start picking up soon I promise.

Thank you to everyone again who has left kudos on this story, a huge thank you to everyone who has left comments, and of course to everyone who is still sticking with it! I really do appreciate any comments that are left as they've generated a couple of small scene ideas and plot points for me, so please do keep leaving them.

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

Tony barely notices as the two of them leave, but thinks he manages a wave in their direction. He’s jolted back into the present as Sam comes to sit at the bench opposite him.

‘So I didn’t want to bring this up with those two around,’ he says, looking Tony dead in the eye. ‘And I’ll understand if you don’t want to answer the question. Your nightmares Tony: is there by any chance something associated with Siberia in there as well?’

Tony holds Sam’s eye, seeing if he can get any clues from the other man’s expression. ‘What makes you say that?’
Intervention

Chapter Summary

The team starts to help Tony, and there's more than a few revelations.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The next few days after the team’s ‘intervention’ for him had gone much better than Tony had anticipated. When he and Natasha had got back from the meeting with the Council Sam had come to speak to him to suggest he only spoke to a couple of the team about his hydrophobia and flashbacks.

Natasha gives his shoulder a squeeze. ‘I think it’ll be best if I sit this one out seeing as I was there for Whiplash and New York. You need people able to look at it with fresh eyes.’

‘That’s what Rhodey said,’ Sam agrees. ‘So he said he wouldn’t be there unless you wanted him to. They said I might be the best person seeing as I used to run support groups, but I’ll understand if you’d rather not Tony.’

Tony smiles at him and puts a hand on his shoulder. ‘I think the team’s right, Sam.’

The smile Sam gives him is full of gratitude and Tony knows the man wants to help because he feels responsible for his freak out in the swimming pool.

‘Who else was suggested?’ Natasha asks as the three of them head towards the common area.

‘Rhodey suggested Bucky was there instead of him, says the two of you seem to understand each other on a level that he doesn’t,’ the ex-soldier continues.

Tony chuckles quietly. ‘Well he’s not wrong. Seeing a guy’s worst memories and helping him come to terms with them does change your relationship.’ So does talking him down from suicide but he wasn’t about to tell them that little tidbit.

‘And Steve said he wanted to help too,’ Sam continues, ‘I think he feels its part of his responsibility as one of our co-leaders or something.’

‘Co-leaders?’ Tony asks. ‘Who’s the other?’

Sam and Natasha give him equal ‘are-you-seriously-being-this-stupid’ looks. ‘You are Tony,’ Sam answers as if it’s the most obvious thing in the world and then walks back to the common area shaking his head.

‘Wait, what?’ he looks at Natasha. ‘But Steve’s in charge. I just build everything, and house everyone and make them look cool.’

‘Whatever you say, Tony,’ she says with a small smile as she follows Sam.
Tony would be lying if he said the comment about Steve helping because he felt it was his responsibility hadn’t hurt a little; but during their chats the blond had actually seemed to be genuinely worried about him so he hoped duty wasn’t his only reason for wanting to help.

The four of them are down in his workshop as he talks away. Sam had noticed on the first evening that Tony constantly fiddles with things when he’s nervous so suggested he continued to tinker in his workshop while they talked. Tony isn’t sure he’s ever going to repay the man for that suggestion, and he’s already put together a long list of possible ways to do it in the future. Including paying for his entire wedding and honeymoon if he ever gets married.

It makes it easier to say the truth, even if he doesn’t reveal all of it, when he doesn’t have to look at them. What did surprise him was the second evening they did this and Steve brought down his sketch book, arguing that if Tony was allowed to do something to make him feel more comfortable then the rest of them should to make it easier. And Tony had to admit, tinkering with bits and pieces whilst Steve sketched on his pad, and Bucky and Sam sat on the sofa with cups of coffee, it made it easier to talk. They didn’t often ask questions, and if he said no to answering one they didn’t push him.

He’d started with the wormhole as that was where most of his nightmares started. He’d even shown them what he’d seen with the same machine they’d used with Bucky. But nothing could convey the cold he’d felt going through that wormhole, the sense of loss at not being able to contact Pepper and then losing JARVIS. How the last thing he’d thought he’d ever see would be the sight of that massive army, illuminated by the exploding nuke, and not knowing if it would be enough to wipe them all out.

Steve had asked the most questions about that time, and it had led on to what had happened with the Mandarin, and how it had all ultimately led to Ultron. A whole night taken up on the events that led to one of the biggest mistakes in his life. By the end of it he was drained. But to see the understanding dawning in Steve’s eyes had helped ease some of his tension.

They’d taken a couple of days to go over Afghanistan and everything that had happened during his recovery. Tonight he’s finally opening up about Obi, and he’s promised himself not to hold back anything. He’s already kept enough back, and he feels that he owes them the full story of Obadiah Stane. Hopefully it’ll let them piece together some of the things he hasn’t already mentioned.

He’s telling them about finding out at the function that Obi had been dealing under the table, sending Pepper to get the information for him, and waiting for her to get back.

‘What did the information say?’ Steve asks him. *Ever the tactician,* Tony thinks with an internal chuckle.

‘I didn’t get it till after everything went down,’ Tony says. ‘Obi was on to Pepper and she got grabbed in a meeting with Coulson, didn’t get back to me in time but she did get Coulson and go after Obi themselves.’

‘So what happened to you?’ Bucky asks.

‘Obi found me,’ he replies, his fingers moving slower over the pieces of an old repulsor in his hand. ‘His engineers couldn’t get the arc rector technology small enough to power up a suit and he knew we were on to him. So he came after the one I had.’

‘The one Pepper had framed?’ Steve asks.
‘No he wanted the more refined technology in my chest.’

‘But that would have killed you!’

‘I didn’t notice him come in,’ Tony ignores Steve’s remark. ‘Before I knew it he was behind me using some technology I’d stopped work on previously; it stuns victims and leaves them paralyzed for a short period of time. I just lay there on the sofa as the man who’d been my guardian took the arc reactor out of my chest, saying I’d outlived my usefulness, and walked off to leave me to die from the shrapnel.’

‘Tony-’

‘If it wasn’t for DUM-E,’ he cuts across Steve, ‘I wouldn’t have made it down to the reactor Pepper had had mounted and got it in my chest.’ The robot in question gives a whir of happiness. ‘Don’t think that means you’re forgiven for the fire extinguishers,’ he warns the robot, who just hangs its arm in defeat. He then tells them how they managed to defeat Obi, and watching the man fall to his death. How he still has nightmares of the man reaching over him to remove the reactor from his chest and leaving him to die slowly and alone.

‘Tony,’ Bucky sounds unsure and he pauses, obviously trying to work out how to phrase his question. ‘If the arc reactor has so many bad memories attached to it, and the whole “it’s the only thing keeping me alive” deal, why are all your new inventions basically putting it back into your clothes? You’ve made new sweatshirts with it incorporated and you’re getting the suit to fit inside of it. Why not just move away entirely? Find a new way to have it power the suit?’

Tony stops fiddling as he ponders the question. It’s something Pepper had asked him before. Well screamed at him during their last big fight before they agreed to stop trying to make something work that was obviously never going to happen. He puts the pieces down and subconsciously rubs at his chest where the reactor once sat.

Looking down he realises he has an answer. ‘I guess because it reminds me I’m alive. If the light was on I was alive and I’d stay that way. After Obi and New York it was comforting having that reminder. And when I’d wake up after a nightmare all I had to do was look down and see the light and know none of the dream was real anymore, I’d come through it all. Now, when I wake in the middle of the night that’s gone. Sometimes I hate that it’s gone and I almost wish I could put it back; and other times I just want to throw all of them onto a fire and watch them burn.’

No one says anything for a couple of minutes, and Tony doesn’t even pick up what he was working on, lost in his thoughts on the reactor.

‘Hey, Steve? Isn’t it your turn to cook tonight?’ Sam says from the sofa.


Bucky gives a small chuckle. ‘Come on you dork I’ll give you a hand.’

Tony barely notices as the two of them leave, but thinks he manages a wave in their direction. He’s jolted back into the present as Sam comes to sit at the bench opposite him.

‘So I didn’t want to bring this up with those two around,’ he says, looking Tony dead in the eye. ‘And I’ll understand if you don’t want to answer the question. Your nightmares Tony; is there by any chance something associated with Siberia in there as well?’

Tony holds Sam’s eye, seeing if he can get any clues from the other man’s expression. ‘What makes you say that?’
‘Because they may not have noticed that every time you mention the reactor in the nightmare you start to say something else and then stop. And there’s always a brief glance at Steve when you change the topic. Now I haven’t been around for all of your interactions, but if there’d been something about Cap and your reactor from any other time I’m pretty sure Nat would know about it and would have said something. Since she hasn’t my guess is something happened in Siberia that’s still weighing on your mind and you don’t want either of the other two to feel guilty about it. Am I right?’

‘What are you? Sherlock Holmes?’

‘I understand if you don’t want to talk about it yet, Tony. But I wanted you to know that I’d worked it out and you don’t have to feel like you can’t talk about it. I promise not to use it as an excuse to try and beat up Cap during a training session.’

Tony laughs. ‘Not like you could anyway.’

‘I can try,’ Sam says with a wry smile, and then the two of them lapse into silence.

Maybe it’s because the other man doesn’t push it, maybe it’s because he’s held onto this secret for so long, but Tony feels his mouth open of its own accord. ‘At the end of the fight,’ he croaks out, ‘when they finally got me down Steve drove his shield into my chest plate and cracked the arc reactor. It… it went out.’

‘Shit, Tony.’

‘I know he didn’t know everything that is attached to it in my head but…’

‘It felt like Stane all over again,’ Sam nods in understanding. ‘Tony, how did you even manage to contemplate bringing him back? And helping Bucky?’

Tony shrugs and looks away. ‘Even before the Accords the team was the only family I had left, except for Pepper and Happy. Happy works for SI and Pepper and I had just broken up so weren’t on the best terms. I just-I wanted that back. I needed my family back.’

Sam’s quiet for a few moments. ‘Tony? I know our track record doesn’t exactly speak for us, but now we’re back we’re not going anywhere again.’

Tony gives a small smile and picks the pieces of the repulsor up again. ‘Thanks, Sam. For everything.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hello everyone! Sorry I’m at the later end of when I usually update this week, it’s been a bit of a crazy week and I didn't get chance to update on Friday night like I usually do. I hope you enjoyed this chapter, and seeing some of the ‘Rogues’ stepping up to help Tony.

Thank you so much to everyone who has left kudos on this story, for the comments on the last chapter (which I am going to reply to I promise), and for everyone who is still reading this.

L x
Here's your sneak peek at the next chapter:
Then a voice he knows far too well comes over the prison speakers and says a word in poorly pronounced Russian. A word that has ice settling in Tony’s stomach. When the second word in the sequence is said he fires up his suit.
‘Bucky where are you?’ he shouts into the comms. ‘You alright?’
‘We’re over the other side of the prison,’ Steve’s voice replies. ‘Tony what the hell is going on?’
‘Is that Ross?’ Natasha demands.
Ross’ voice continues the sequence that Tony is surprised hasn’t made its way into his own nightmares yet. He hears a grunt of pain from Bucky through the link.
Sabotage

Chapter Summary

A small team goes to deal with an attempted prison break, but Ross has a surprise waiting for the team that has Tony seeing red.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

They’ve barely finished eating when the alarm sounds.

‘Sam and I’ll go get the brief,’ Natasha says, ‘you guys clean up and get ready. We’ll meet you in the common area in twenty.’

Tony gives her a grateful smile as she leaves the room, he’s really not in the mood to be dealing with Ross today. He helps the super soldier twins and Wanda clear up the table and load the dishwasher before they head downstairs. He makes a quip about having to do the dishes before going to save the world and gets a tea towel in the face from Steve as a reward.

By the time Natasha and Sam join them in the common area, Tony’s getting restless. He’s not used to having to sit and wait to hear about the situation. If it’s this nerve-wracking I’m making sure I’m in every briefing, he grumbles to himself as he paces the kitchenette, trying to ignore the amused look from Steve.

‘Tony,’ Natasha pauses, then takes a breath and continues, ‘we’ve been called in for a jail break. It’s the jail Hammer’s at.’

‘Trust that jackass to be the root of yet another problem,’ he groans, trying to ignore the knot of unease in his stomach. The recording Peter had sent him the other day flashes through his mind. No way, if Hammer’s the guy they want to help them then we’ve got nothing to worry about.

‘The Warden is asking us to go in help seeing as Hammer is a known Avenger antagonist,’ Sam explains. ‘Nat suggested that only people who know Hammer should go, that way if this is him trying to escape we can make sure he’s brought back in.’

‘Sounds like a good plan,’ Steve says, standing up and visibly slipping into being Captain America. ‘Nat you know him right?’ she nods in response. ‘Rhodey and Tony need to be there.’

‘I also know what Justin Hammer looks like,’ Vision says, standing up, ‘and I’ll be able to scan the area for him once we arrive.’

‘Vision comes,’ Tony says, feeling a little better at having the humanoid on the team.

‘We need more ground people,’ Natasha adds. ‘Tony and Rhodes are both air based, and the same can be argued with Vision.’

‘I’ll go,’ Bucky stands up, ‘plus I’ve got experience with jail breaks.’

‘I’ll come too,’ Steve says.
‘Alright let’s move it people,’ Natasha says.

‘Alright kids, I’ve linked us up with the Warden in the control room. You guys head on out and I’ll make sure the jet is all locked up so we don’t have someone running away with our stuff.’

‘I’d love to see you try and explain it to Ross,’ Natasha laughs as she lands the jet and grabs her bites.

‘Although I’m sure my genius could come up with something, let’s not test it,’ he suggests.

‘Avengers? Thank god you’re here. We’ve got most of the other cell blocks shut down and contained except for cell block 8 where the explosion happened. They managed to get into the dining area and the kitchens but no further,’ the Warden’s voice comes through the comms link.

‘Bucky and I’ll go lend a hand to the officers getting everyone under control,’ Steve says, lifting his shield as Bucky grabs some non-lethal weapons under his friend’s watchful eye.

‘I’ll start doing a sweep of the grounds and start rounding up any escapees,’ Rhodes says, lowering his face plate and taking off.

‘Thank you Colonel, we’re not sure how many have got out, but we know no one’s breached the perimeter,’ comes the harassed voice.

‘I’ll go with the boys,’ Natasha says, hurrying out after the soldiers.

‘Which cell did they target? Anyone we should be aware of?’ Tony asks, following Vision out of the jet and ensuring it was secured behind them.

‘It was Justin Hammer’s cell, Iron Man,’ comes the reply. ‘We think they were trying to get him out and ended up killing everyone in a three cell radius.’

‘Are we sure he’s dead?’ Tony asks.

‘I shall do a scan to confirm,’ Vision says, rising into the air.

‘No one could have survived that blast.’

‘Yeah well call me paranoid. I’ll head over to check the blast site and lend a hand to the officers in the cell block. Vis? Join me when you’re finished and let me know if you pick up anything from that weasel.’

‘Will do Tony.’
It takes longer than it should for them to get everything under control, and at one point Tony had even considered calling in Sam and Wanda, but eventually, at around three in the morning, the situation is back under control and Steve, Bucky and Natasha are helping get the last of the inmates into the spare cells while he, Rhodes and Vision look over the site of the bomb and help clear away some of the larger pieces of debris.

‘Still no sign of Hammer?’ he asks Vision.

The humanoid shakes his head. ‘I can sense nothing that could be considered Justin Hammer.’

‘FRIDAY you got anything different?’

‘No boss, there’s one more body underneath the rubble but I’m not sure you’ll be able to get a positive ID by sight.’

Tony turns to one of the prison guards working with them. ‘I want a list of all of the prisoners and their confirmed states as soon as you have it.’

‘Yes, sir,’ comes the reply.

‘Tony you can’t think Hammer’s going to pull a stunt like Vanko did, surely?’ Rhodes asks, lifting his faceplate to give his friend a concerned look.

‘It is still wise to check considering he was able to organise something similar in the past,’ Vision says, landing next to them.

‘See? Vision thinks I’m wise,’ Tony says.

‘I said you’re actions were wise not that you were,’ he adds as he walks past them.

‘I can hear you sniggering, Bucky,’ Tony grumbles.

‘I’m not even sorry,’ the Winter Soldier laughs.

Tony’s about to retort when there’s static over the speakers in the prison. ‘Looks like they’ve got things back on line,’ Natasha comments, ‘maybe we can go home soon.’

‘Thank god, I’m beat,’ Bucky yawns. Then says something suitably threatening to a prisoner that Tony ignores.

Then a voice he knows far too well comes over the prison speakers and says a word in poorly pronounced Russian. A word that has ice settling in Tony’s stomach. When the second word in the sequence is said he fires up his suit.

‘Bucky where are you?’ he shouts into the comms. ‘You alright?’

‘We’re over the other side of the prison,’ Steve’s voice replies. ‘Tony what the hell is going on?’

‘Is that Ross?’ Natasha demands.

Ross’ voice continues the sequence that Tony is surprised hasn’t made its way into his own nightmares yet. He hears a grunt of pain from Bucky through the link.
‘FRIDAY where’s Ross?’

‘In the main office, boss.’

‘Steve what’s happening?’ he asks.

‘Headache,’ comes Bucky’s raspy voice, ‘I’m alright. Steve get back to the prisoners.’

‘I’m on my way,’ Natasha says at the same time he does.

Tony arrivers just as Ross finishes the sequence and gets to see Bucky turn round and knock out a prisoner that had tried to take advantage of his distracted state. He sends another one flying with a repulsor and lifts his faceplate, hurrying towards the dark haired man. ‘You alright?’

Bucky grimaces and nods. ‘I’m fine, got a bit of pain when he started, but nothing more. He might not be alright if I get my hands on him though.’

‘Get in line,’ Steve growls, coming up to them after having thrown another inmate into a cell and slamming the door shut.

‘Well, Stark I must admit I’m impressed. You weren’t lying when you said the brainwashing wouldn’t work on him anymore,’ Ross’ sneering voice comes through the speakers.

Tony sees red.

‘Tony,’ Rhodes’ warning voice comes over the link.

‘Tony!’ Steve shouts as he drops the faceplate and launches himself along the corridors towards the office door.

‘Stark! What are you-’ Ross is cut off by Tony blasting the door open and throwing the man away from the microphone and against the far wall. The two guards in the room look towards their guns and then decide to take a step back.

‘Tell me, Ross, are you deliberately trying to sabotage the team now? Are you trying to break us up again? Or are you just moving on to trying to take down other members of the team now that you’ve realised you can’t take me out?’ Tony’s voice is cold and hard, and he feels a small sense of achievement at the look of fear that flickers across the other man’s face.

‘Tony don’t do anything rash,’ Natasha says, she sounds out of breath and Tony wonders how long he has until one of the others gets there.

‘I’m just testing all the bullshit that comes out of your mouth, Stark. Strangely enough I don’t trust your judgement when it comes to the rest of the team. If you ask me you were almost desperate to get them all back. What was the real reason behind it all Stark? You can’t tell me it was all for the sake of protecting the world like you had the Council believe. I think it was much more personal-’

Tony cuts off the man’s speech by punching the wall next to his face, feeling another twinge of satisfaction as Ross flinches.

‘Tony,’ the quiet voice of Vision next to him has him turn around. The humanoid simply shakes his head and Tony pauses, feeling some of the red haze falling from his mind.

‘Nat? Get the jet ready, we’re leaving. Vis and I will meet you all there in a couple of minutes,’ he says.
‘Tony, what are you-?’

‘It’s fine, Captain,’ Vision says, ‘we’ll meet you at the jet.’

When there’s no more arguing from the others Tony feels himself relax slightly and removes his fist from the wall.

Ross lets out a bark of laughter. ‘You’re following to heel like a dog, Stark. And the Council thinks you’re a leader of the team! At the end of the day you’re nothing without that suit, so you’ve just got to fall into step like a good little soldier.’

Tony stops, he sees the warning look Vision gives him, and turns, lifting the face plate and stalking back towards Ross. ‘I don’t need this suit to take you apart, Ross,’ he growls at the other man. ‘When you were just attacking me I took it and let you play your games. Now you’ve gone after my team. You want a war? You better be prepared to lose.’ He turns to the guards who are looking very pale. ‘I want that list of prisoners sent over to me within three days. Understood?’ The only reply he gets is two nods.

Before Ross can say anything else he storms out the door, Vision behind him, and they make their way back to the jet. Luckily the others are already there when they arrive and Natasha has already started firing up the engines.

‘I’ll fly,’ he says as he enters, stepping out of the suit and letting it fold up behind him. ‘Close the door FRIDAY.’

‘Tony-’ whatever Bucky was going to say is cut off by what he assumes is a shake of the head from Vision. He gives the man’s shoulder a squeeze as he walks by and takes the seat next to Natasha.

No one says anything the rest of the ride home, but when Natasha stands to go back to help patch up some scrapes on the two soldiers she rests a hand on his arm for a couple of moments. He takes it and gives it a squeeze in silent thanks.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. I hope you’re still enjoying this story. I’ve decided for the two weeks before Christmas to do a double update. So hope you enjoy the next chapter as well!

L x
Chapter Summary

Tony asks for help from the team, and Peter has an interesting week.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

When Tony comes downstairs the next morning, because 11:30 still counts as morning, he’s slightly relieved to only see Natasha in the common area. She looks tired after last night’s late mission, but he imagines he looks worse.

‘Any chance you can give me tips on how to still look fabulous even when tired?’ he jokes, heading straight to the cupboards and pulling out one of the largest mugs they own.

‘Alright, what do you want?’ she asks, a smile pulling at her lips as he sets the machine going.

‘Where’s everyone else? Usually there’s at least a couple of people in here watching TV or reading, or something.’

‘Vision and Wanda have gone out for a coffee and some peace and quiet. Rhodey and Sam said something about trying out some air manoeuvres.’

‘Which basically means they’re pissing around outside,’ Tony interrupts with a smile as his coffee finishes pouring.

‘And Steve and Bucky are downstairs sparring trying to take out their frustration over Ross on each other,’ she finishes. ‘Tony did you actually get any sleep last night?’

He drinks some of his coffee as he takes a stool at the breakfast bar next to her. ‘Nat you know I’m crap at this, but…’ he trails off, and a brief glance at her from the corner of his eye shows she’s patiently waiting for him to speak. ‘I can’t do this alone anymore, I need help.’

There he’s said it. He’s asked one of them for help for the first time without any prodding from anyone. Pepper will be so proud, he muses to himself.

‘What do you need me to do Tony?’

He blinks. ‘What no witty comeback first?’

Natasha raises an eyebrow at him. ‘Have you looked in a mirror this morning?’

‘I thought I’d save myself the money on replacements.’

She laughs and wraps her hands her mug. ‘Is this about Ross? You’ve got to be careful Tony, we can’t just try and take the guy out, it’ll ruin our relationship with the Council as well as the US Government.’
‘I know,’ he says quickly. ‘I know, we need to be less direct than would be ideal. I never intended to try and take him out physically. Though I’m sure you and Barnes could manage it between you,’ he says with a half-smile. ‘But all that would do would create a space for another person to step into. One we don’t know quite so well.’

‘You’ve been thinking about this a lot haven’t you?’

‘Spent most of the past week trying to work out what to do,’ he admits. ‘I’ve done all I can alone to try and protect the team, and I knew we were still going to have to do more. Ross’ stunt last night just proved it and hit home with a sledgehammer.’

‘What do you think the Council will say about it?’

‘I think if we draft a good enough letter we’ll keep them on our side, but we’ll have to be careful not to shout too loud or they’ll start pulling on the leash.’

‘You want me to help you bring this up with the Council?’ she asks, obviously taken aback.

‘Well you are my self-appointed right hand woman when it comes to the Council apparently,’ he chuckles. ‘So I figured we’d be better off working out how to approach it together.’ At her smile he feels a little bundle of nerves ease off in his chest. First part done. ‘There’s one more thing we need to do though.’

‘What’s that?’

‘We need to find a way to get the team’s profile up with the public. We need to get them seen and appreciated as individuals rather than just as part of the team. Kind of like Cap is.’

Natasha nods and sips at her coffee. ‘I get it. Get each of them their own reputation that is as safe as possible, so if anything does happen with Ross like last night there’ll be backlash from the public not just from the Council.’ She smirks at him over her mug. ‘You want to start a proper PR war.’

‘It’s the one thing he’ll never expect me to do,’ Tony nods. ‘He thinks I don’t give a damn what the public thinks, so he won’t expect me to go to them for the battlefield.’

‘Do you care what the public thinks, Tony?’

‘Not about me,’ he shrugs. ‘They’ve been making opinions about me as long as I’ve been alive, and given me more nicknames than I can keep up with. But the rest of you? Yes I do care what they think of you. You heard what happened with Wanda and Vision when they first went out?’ Natasha nods, face serious. ‘I don’t want that to happen to anyone else, and I don’t want it to happen to her again. It’s not fair for her to have to stay here all the time when she’s such a great kid.’

There’s a small smile back on Natasha’s face. ‘You really are turning into Papa Stark,’ she teases. At Tony’s frown she lets out a laugh. ‘We need to get all the team together and see what they can come up with.’

He nods. ‘You mind taking the lead with this? I may not have actually gotten any sleep last night and I’m still too wound up to mention Ross without blowing a gasket. Vision and Wanda can join us when they get back.’ As she nods he gives her a smirk.

‘What?’ she asks warily.

‘Do you want to say it and wind up Cap or shall I?’
An answering smirk creeps onto her lips and she moves to the speaker on the side of the wall. Pressing the button so her voice will carry throughout the facility she gives Tony a wink and says: ‘Avengers assemble!’

Once they’re all in the common area Natasha fills them in, Tony sits next to her on one of the sofas, trying not to let his head fall back and nod off.

‘It’s not a bad idea,’ Sam says when she finishes speaking. ‘Not only will it improve relations with the public but they’ll be more likely to trust us if we they get caught up in something we have to deal with.’

‘We’d be better off each of us focussing on specific areas rather than trying to reach out to everyone,’ Rhodes adds. ‘You’re never going to have everyone like you, it’s impossible.’

‘I could start up my support group again,’ Sam suggests. ‘Working with veterans that are trying to readjust to civilian life. Then Rhody, Steve and Bucky could all come along occasionally as well seeing at they have experience with it.’

‘As part of the support or guest speakers?’ Bucky jokes. ‘Because I’m sure I could be either.’

‘Maybe cross that bridge when we get to it,’ Natasha suggests, ‘but that sounds like a brilliant idea, Sam.’

‘Stark Industries will fund it, you just tell me what you need,’ Tony says. ‘One of the things I’ve been working on is setting aside some of the money the company gives to charity in order to fund projects like this. If I set some of it aside to be from the Avengers rather than SI then you can dip into that.’

‘That’s not going to affect Stark Industries is it?’ Steve asks.

Tony shakes his head. ‘There’s always a certain amount I kept to one side if emergency aid was required somewhere so it wouldn’t eat into any donations to other projects. I’ve been speaking to Pepper about getting some more set aside for us to use. Since this place and all SI’s buildings run on arc reactors we do manage to save quite a bit on energy bills.’

‘Maybe Steve could go back to doing shows,’ Bucky suggests, laughing as the blond throws a cushion at his head.

‘You know who would be a good person to ask for ideas?’ Sam pipes up. ‘Peter. Think about it: the kid will hear all the opinions at his school, and kids often repeat the opinions of their parents.’

‘That’s not a bad idea,’ Steve agrees. ‘Let’s ask him when he’s next here.’

They continue to bounce ideas, some serious and some not, and Tony lets his head fall back against the sofa. He closes his eyes for a moment when they start to sting.

When he next opens them he’s alone and lying sideways on the sofa and someone’s put a blanket over him.
Peter has to admit this is possibly not his smartest move on a patrol to date. But then he couldn’t exactly be expected to pass by the police having a stand-off with a shooter and not try and help.

None of the officers had told him about the other two gunmen though. So currently his spidey-senses are having the workout of their life as he dodges bullets. Thankfully the officers are actually trying to help rather than leaving him to it.

‘Still,’ he mutters to Karen as he catches his breath in a room of the building the showdown is currently happening in, ‘I wish they’d actually given me some kind of plan rather than just asking me to distract them. I mean I’m not exactly the greatest fan of guns.’

‘Are you sure I can’t call Mr Stark?’ she asks him for about the hundredth time.

‘How about a compromise? Ten more minutes and then you can call him,’ he suggests, spinning out into the corridor and managing to web one of the guys down. ‘Hey Karen is this suit bulletproof?’

‘I wouldn’t advise testing it,’ she replies.

‘Errr….’ He looks at the two gunmen who now both have their weapons facing him. ‘Let’s hope Mr Stark definitely put that in, because I don’t think I’m going to get much of a choice here.’

‘Any last words Spider-Man?’ one of them asks.

‘Hey fucktard!’

‘Oh boy,’ Peter says with a grin as one of the men turns and gets the handle of a katana to the forehead, dropping like a sack of bricks.

‘What the-’ the other turns and Peter takes the opportunity to web him to the wall.

‘Hey guys this is my good friend Deadpool,’ he says as the red clad mercenary comes into view. ‘And he has never had better timing.’

‘All in a day’s work Baby Boy,’ the man replies with a bow, sweeping up his katana as he straightens. ‘Now how about we blow this joint and go get some chimichangas?’

‘Aww you know me so well.’

‘Peter you free tomorrow?’

Peter snaps back to the present. ‘Sorry, MJ, what did you say?’

‘Too busy thinking of what story to make up about what the Avengers had you doing next were you?’ Flash sneers.
‘I asked if you were free tomorrow,’ MJ repeats, ignoring Flash’s comment. ‘For the team building we’ve just been talking about.’

‘I’m sorry MJ it’s my weekend with the Stark Internship,’ he replies, feeling bad about having to let the team down.

‘Why don’t we move to next weekend?’ Ned suggests.

‘Why should we move everything around for Parker?’ Flash demands.

‘Is there no chance you can get it moved to next weekend?’ MJ asks him. ‘This is the only one for over a month the rest of us can all do.’

‘I wouldn’t bother,’ Flash interrupts before Peter can open his mouth. ‘He’s too busy being best buds with Spider-Man, and doing stuff for Iron Man. Next thing you know we’ll be hearing he’s dating the Scarlet Witch or something.’

‘Hey kids is this the Decathlon?’ a voice says from the doorway of the classroom they’ve met in. ‘Because I’m looking for a baby genius.’

Peter feels his face flush red, but tries to hide his embarrassment. ‘Miss Natasha what are you doing here?’

The Black Widow is leaning against the doorframe with her arms folded, smirking at him. ‘I’m your ride this week, Pete. Tony got caught up in a meeting with the Council, and since Steve was in there with him and no one trusted Bucky to not make your life hell I volunteered.’

Peter breathes a small sigh of relief. He did not need the Winter Soldier coming to pick him up alone.

‘Miss Romanoff?’ MJ addresses the super-spy apparently not intimidated one bit. ‘Is there any chance Peter can do the internship next weekend? We were planning to do something with the Decathlon team tomorrow as it’s the only weekend everyone can do for over a month.’

‘MJ!’ Peter hisses, kicking the girl under the table.

Natasha doesn’t seem to mind the girl’s boldness. ‘Any other weekend I would have said no problem, but I’m afraid we need Peter to help with a project that can’t wait.’

‘I understand,’ MJ sounds disappointed but doesn’t press the issue.

‘What kind of a project could you need Parker’s help with?’ Flash mutters. Peter frowns, flushing red again.

‘The kind of project that is Avengers’ business only,’ Natasha’s voice has a teasing lilt, but there’s a hard edge to it. ‘If I told you about it I’d have to kill you.’

Flash flushes with embarrassment at being overheard. ‘Why don’t you kill Parker then?’

*Oh yeah because you’d love that,* Peter thinks.

‘Because Peter can keep his mouth shut,’ she replies, then turns to him. ‘Come on, Pete we better make a move if we’re going to make it back in time for dinner. Wanda’s cooking tonight with Vision.’

He tries his best to hold back the satisfied smirk at Flash’s face from the last comment, and
says goodbye to the rest of the team as he follows the spy out of the door. They stop off long enough

to grab his bags before she leads him to a sleek silver car.

‘Nice,’ he comments, putting his bags in the trunk.

‘It’s my favourite,’ Natasha admits with a smile. When they are making their way through the
rush hour traffic she adds: ‘So we saw in the news about you helping the police take out some
gunmen.’

‘Uh… yeah that was the other day. It was a bit, um, interesting at one point but it was fine in
the end.’ Peter tries to sound casual. ‘I nearly had to ask Karen to contact Mr Stark but it was alright.’

‘Yeah Tony was having kittens,’ Natasha says, a small smile on her lips. ‘He was halfway to
the suit before we heard the situation was resolved; then Steve had to forcibly remove his phone to
stop him from calling you and giving you the Spanish Inquisition over what happened. Rhodey
threatened to knock him out if he didn’t sit down. We’ve been teasing him about it ever since.’

‘But it was fine! Honestly. I mean yeah there was the one moment when I thought about
calling him, but I didn’t need to. It’s not like I was trying to do too much, I promise I would have
called if it got too dangerous.’

Natasha raises an eyebrow and gives him a quick glance before focussing back on the road.
‘I looked up the police report afterwards by the way.’

‘Oh really? Why?’ he asks, hoping his voice sounds casual.

‘Because it was a pretty hot situation, kid. I wanted to find out a little bit more,’ she replies.
‘It seems the police found two of the assailants webbed to the walls, but one was unconscious on the
floor, later in hospital he had a pretty good lump on his forehead. According to the police reports
they started saying there was another guy in red there. They’ve put it down to getting knocked on the
head and seeing double of you as there was no evidence anyone other than Spider-Man was there.’

There’s no actual question in anything she says, but Peter knows there’s one anyway. He
looks at his hands resting in his lap and sighs. ‘Deadpool turned up.’

‘I suspected as much,’ she says. ‘I suspect he turns up a lot more than you let on.’

‘He wasn’t supposed to be there at the shoot out,’ Peter says, ‘he was out of town on a job.
But he turned up just as I was about to call Mr Stark for help and took out one of the gunmen.’

‘Without killing him.’

Peter nods, then decides that she’s probably worked most of it out anyway so comes clean.
‘He joins me on a couple of patrols each week, but he only helps if I have to take on any criminals.
He’s my friend.’

‘Does he know anything about Peter Parker?’

‘No,’ his voice is firm. ‘I’m not that stupid. He knows I visit you guys every other weekend,
but that’s about all he knows about my personal life. Except for my burger and taco preferences.’

‘I don’t think I want to know about the last one,’ she says, changing lanes and heading out of
the city. ‘Just answer me this, Pete: if he went rogue could you take him out?’

Peter considers giving an affirmative, but then pauses. Could he take out Deadpool? ‘I’m not
sure,’ he answers truthfully. ‘I’d like to think I could, and if he was threatening to hurt people I’m sure I could at least keep him tied up. But if he did go rogue I’d have to call the Avengers.’

‘The fact you gave me an honest answer and not the one you thought I wanted means I’ll follow Tony’s lead and trust you on this,’ she says after a few moments of silence.

‘Really?’ he looks at her in surprise.

There’s a rare genuine smile on her face as she looks at him. ‘You’ve grown up quite a bit these last few years, Peter. You shouldn’t be so surprised we trust you.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! Hope you enjoyed your first pre-Christmas double update. Thank you to everyone for your continued support by reading, leaving kudos and commenting on this story. I'm hoping to put the first parts of the Christmas Special up tomorrow so keep your eyes peeled if you're interested in reading that.

As always please do let me know what you think, or if there is anything you'd like me to add or relationships you'd like me to explore a little more and I shall see what I can do.

L x

Here's your sneak peek at the next chapter:

Peter is one of the last ones to reach the common area that morning, and as he walks in he's greeted by the sight of Natasha tending to a cut on Bucky's forehead.

'You know better than to bother her when she's feeling like this,' she's scolding him. 'You're just lucky it was only a book she threw at you, and she didn't decide to send you through the wall.'

'I was just trying to make her feel better,' Bucky whines, wincing as she applies antiseptic to his cut.

'You know for a big bad assassin you are such a baby.'

'What happened?' Peter asks, heading towards the bread bin to make himself some toast.

'I tried to cheer Wanda up and ended up getting a book thrown at me,' Bucky grumbles.

'I'd throw more than a book at you if you tried to make me feel better,' Peter mumbles, wondering just what the soldier had tried to do.
Chapter Summary

Peter and Wanda bond, and Steve makes a confession to Tony.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 24 – Brother

It turns out Peter is a good source of information and suggestions, and when they’d told him what they needed his help on he’d been so enthusiastic that Wanda had given up trying to write everything down and Tony had to ask FRIDAY to make notes for them. Granted not all of his ideas were gold, but his suggestion that they try and do school visits has Tony’s mind racing with possibilities.

Pepper walks in to the main common area to find them all still brainstorming ideas. ‘What on earth are you doing?’ she asks, putting her work files down on the counter. ‘Tony you were supposed to do a video conference with some of the stakeholders earlier, where were you?’

‘Talking with Ross,’ his voice drips disgust.

‘Well next time he decides to keep you away from your responsibilities to your company and the world is not ending I’m going to have a word with him myself,’ she huffs, going to make herself a coffee.

‘Pepper darling, feel free to use any of that anger that is normally directed at me on Ross any time you feel like it,’ he laughs.

‘He’s rapidly replacing you as the most irritating person in my life,’ she scoffs, bringing her coffee over to where they’re all sitting, giving a quick greeting to the rest of the team. ‘So what are you all doing then?’

‘Mr Stark basically wants to start a PR war with the Secretary General so we’re brainstorming ideas on what the team can do,’ Peter beats them all to it, taking advantage of Bucky’s distraction at Pepper’s entrance to steal his bag of crisps.

‘A PR war huh?’ she muses, as Bucky tries to chase after Peter to retrieve his stolen snack. ‘You really have gotten serious, Tony.’

‘You got any ideas Pepper?’ Natasha asks her, shoving Bucky away as Peter takes the opportunity to duck down next to her on the sofa, sticking his tongue out at the soldier.

‘Well,’ she gives Tony a small smirk, ‘I do have one suggestion.’

‘I’m not going to like this am I?’ Tony groans, knowing that look all too well.

‘Well you know the bi-annual charity gala that Stark Industries usually holds for emergency
service personnel? It’s coming up in a month’s time and you’re supposed to be there.’

‘And? I’ll remember to wear a clean shirt, don’t worry.’

‘Why don’t the Avengers host it rather than Stark Industries?’ Pepper suggests.

Tony’s face lights up. ‘Pepper you’re a genius.’

‘You could open it out a little more as well,’ she continues. ‘Like we discussed doing. Instead of just for emergency services you can open it out to other people or companies that have done their bit to help their communities. There’s a guy I read about who’s just about to do his twelfth marathon in a year, and he’s done a different charity each time. And there’s a law firm in New York that don’t take money from their less wealthy clients. That’s just the top ones on my list.’

‘And the Avengers will host it? So it’ll be us raising the money for charities?’ Sam asks.

‘What charity is it for?’

‘Usually goes to one that helps ex-emergency services who’ve been injured in their line of work and their families,’ Tony explains.

‘Sounds like a good idea to me,’ Rhodes says.

‘I agree,’ Vision adds. ‘Not only is it showing we care about the local communities, but it will give people a chance to actually meet us face-to-face. Perhaps we should do some randomly distributed tickets? So members of the public can come as well?’

‘That’s a good idea,’ Pepper nods. ‘I’ll speak to our events staff and get it organised.’

‘Can I come as well?’ Peter asks.

‘Not as Spider-Man,’ Tony says, ‘but you can definitely come as our intern.’

‘What? Why?’

‘Because you can wander about in the crowd and be our eyes and ears to how people are really reacting to the team. They’re not going to tell us to our faces if they think we’re being hypocrites are they?’ Tony responds.

‘So I’ll be like undercover?’ he asks.

‘I’ll give you some training before,’ Natasha gives him a smirk and Peter seems mollified.

‘We should do the silent auction for dances again,’ Pepper adds, ‘that generated a lot of money last time.’

What’s that?’ Sam asks.

‘Pepper’s way to get rid of me for a couple of minutes,’ Tony replies. ‘Basically people place a sealed bid and whoever has put in the highest amount wins a dance with the nominated unlucky bastard. Usually me.’

‘Maybe we should have two or three of you this time,’ Pepper ignores his comment.

‘I can do it,’ Natasha volunteers, ‘makes sense to have a man and a woman.’

‘Do I get a say in whether I do it or not?’ Tony asks.
‘No,’ is Pepper’s reply. ‘Steve should do it as well so both of the team leaders are up.’

Steve looks like he wants to argue. Bucky laughs, ‘Stevie having to dance? Oh this is going to be hilarious.’

‘Watch it Buck, or I’ll make sure you’re in the running as well,’ Steve growls, then promptly moves the conversation on to what else would be entailed in the charity gala.

Tony is down in his workshop the next morning before everyone else is awake when he hears a knock on the door.

‘Boss, should I let Captain Rogers in?’ FRIDAY asks.

‘Sure go ahead,’ he says from underneath the car he’s working on. He rolls out as the door opens and he hears Steve enter. ‘What can I do for you, Cap?’

‘Tony I,’ Steve looks sheepish. ‘I don’t think it’s a good idea for me to be in the dancing auction.’

‘Why not? Come on Steve don’t leave me with the old grannies all by myself,’ he says, grabbing a towel from the side and trying to clean up his hands.

‘It’s just- well I- well there’s already you and Nat, why do we need a third person?’

‘What are you hiding?’ he asks in amusement, folding his arms over his chest.

Steve sighs. ‘Dammit. Tony I can’t dance.’

Tony lets out a bark of laughter, quickly sobering up at the hurt look on Steve’s face. ‘Sorry that just wasn’t what I was expecting. What do you mean you can’t dance? You grew up before the war, there were loads of dances on then, right?’

‘Well yeah but I never really went. No one wanted to go with the skinny kid who could barely breathe after a minute on the dancefloor. Bucky was the one who took all the girls dancing.’

‘But what about after the serum and you were the famous Captain America? Surely the girls were lining up to dance with you then?’

Steve shrugs. ‘Just didn’t feel right. I guess none of them was the right partner. Not until Peggy, and then I hit the ice before we could go for a dance.’

Tony’s quiet for a moment, studying the red-faced and sombre Captain. ‘How about I teach you?’

‘What?’

Yeah where the hell did that come from Stark? He decides to just roll with it. ‘Why don’t I teach you? We can do it down here where no one will see and no one ever needs to know that Captain America didn’t know how to dance before this gala.’

‘You mean it?’
Tony shrugs. ‘Sure why not?’

There’s an earnest and honest smile on Steve’s face. ‘Thank you, Tony.’

‘Yeah, yeah, whatever. Now go for a run or whatever crazy exercise it is you do in a morning. I need to finish this car.’

Peter is one of the last ones to reach the common area that morning, and as he walks in he’s greeted by the sight of Natasha tending to a cut on Bucky’s forehead.

‘You know better than to bother her when she’s feeling like this,’ she’s scolding him. ‘You’re just lucky it was only a book she threw at you, and she didn’t decide to send you through the wall.’

‘I was just trying to make her feel better,’ Bucky whines, wincing as she applies antiseptic to his cut.

‘You know for a big bad assassin you are such a baby.’

‘What happened?’ Peter asks, heading towards the bread bin to make himself some toast.

‘I tried to cheer Wanda up and ended up getting a book thrown at me,’ Bucky grumbles.

‘I’d throw more than a book at you if you tried to make me feel better,’ Peter mumbles, wondering just what the soldier had tried to do. ‘What’s wrong with her?’ he asks, worrying about his friend.

‘Since the experiment that gave her her powers,’ Vision explains from where he is sitting on one of the sofas, ‘whenever her time of the month comes around it throws her hormones into chaos and the first two days are normally very difficult for her. Her powers can also be in flux, which means objects can get thrown around. Even I know to stay away when she is feeling like this.’

‘Have you tried making her a banana split?’ he asks. At the disbelieving looks he receives he adds. ‘What? When MJ’s having her time of the month and being unreasonable we know to take her to have a banana split and if it’s really bad we let her choose the film.’

‘Kid if you think a banana split is going to work then be my guest and take it down to her,’ Bucky says. ‘But I’m having FRIDAY record it if it goes wrong.’

Peter crosses his arms and faces the man. ‘Fine but if I’m right and she feels better you owe me a favour.’

‘A favour is it Mr Parker?’ Bucky laughs, holding out his hand. ‘Alright you’re on.’

Peter shakes it before turning around to face the kitchenette, realising he may have a problem. ‘Um… we do have bananas right? And ice cream?’

Natasha laughs softly. ‘Just tell me what you need and I’ll find it for you.’
Fifteen minutes later Peter is knocking on Wanda’s door, his carefully crafted masterpiece on a plate he is holding with one hand.

‘What?’ Wanda’s voice snaps from the other side of the door.

‘I brought you a banana split?’

‘You brought me a what?’

‘Can I come in?’ his answer comes in the form of the door opening with tendrils of red light. He walks in, pressing the door closed behind him with his hip.

‘What’s a banana split?’ Wanda asks from the cocoon she has made of her blankets on her bed.

‘You’ve never had a banana split?’ At the shake of her head he goes over to the bed, showing her the plate, her eyes going wide at the sight: the banana has been cut in half and three scoops of ice cream, all of different flavours, lie in between with strawberries and blueberries in between. Vision had told him the fruits were Wanda’s favourite. It’s all topped with chocolate flakes, chocolate sauce and whipped cream, and Peter had had to dodge both Bucky and Natasha’s investigating fingers to get it down here untouched.

‘You made this for me?’ she asks. ‘Why?’

‘It helps my friend MJ feel better,’ he replies with a one shoulder shrug. ‘Do you want it?’ He offers the plate and spoon.

Unwrapping herself enough from her cocoon to take the plate from him, Wanda takes a bite. Her eyes light up and a smile crosses her lips. ‘This is incredible!’

‘Glad you like it,’ he lets out a sigh of relief and smiles back.

‘What else do you do to help your friend apart from make banana splits?’

‘Well technically we buy them for her rather than make them. I think this is the first time I’ve ever actually made one,’ he replies. ‘But we usually let her choose the films and have a duvet day.’

Wanda looks downcast. ‘I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to do that now, Peter.’

‘Why not?’ he asks, then ducks as Wanda’s alarm clock comes flying towards the back of his head.

‘I’m sorry!’ she shouts, nearly losing her banana split to the bed. ‘That’s exactly why. My powers sometimes go a bit haywire and send things flying around.’

‘Spider senses remember?’ he says with a smile. ‘I can tell that stuffs heading towards me super early. Come on let’s have a film marathon. What do you want to watch?’

‘Seriously?’ she asks, eyes wide. ‘Don’t you have stuff you’re supposed to be doing with Tony?’

Peter shrugs. ‘Possibly. But honestly? I’d rather stay here and help you feel better.’
Wanda gives him a big smile and pats the bed next to her, spritring a spare duvet from her wardrobe for him to wrap around himself. ‘What do you want to watch?’

‘Your choice,’ he reminds her, settling into his own cocoon.

‘Alright, but don’t moan when you have to watch three rom coms in a row,’ she giggles.

‘Nothing can be worse than MJ making us do a horror marathon,’ he counters with a laugh.

One film later and Peter enters the common area with the now empty plate and spoon, putting them in the sink and heading straight for the freezer. He tries really hard to hold back his grin at the looks Bucky and Natasha are sending each other.

‘Do we have any mint choc chip?’ he asks with his head in the freezer.

‘Yeah it’s at the back on the right,’ Natasha replies. ‘Why?’

‘Because we’ve just finished Clueless and Wanda doesn’t want to start Bring It On until we’ve got ice cream,’ he replies as if it’s the most obvious thing in the world.

‘How are you still alive?’ Bucky demands.

‘Aha!’ Peter holds up the ice cream tub in victory and grabs two spoons from a drawer. ‘Because I’m a genius?’

‘And you’ve not had anything fly at your head?’ Natasha asks.

‘Well yeah,’ he shrugs, walking towards the corridor. ‘But that’s what spider-senses are for. I’ve dodged or caught all of it.’

‘Can we get him to come back every time Wanda gets like this?’ Vision asks, phasing through the wall as he leaves the room.

Half way through the film, which they’re only half watching because they’re actually having too much fun gossiping about the rest of the team, Wanda gets a little quiet.

‘You alright?’ he asks her. ‘Did you want anything else?’

She shakes her head, putting her spoon back in the now half-empty tub. ‘Thanks for this, Pete,’ she says quietly. ‘I haven’t really had anyone to do this with since Piotr…’

‘What about Vision?’

‘It’s not the same with him, he’s my boyfriend,’ she answers, pulling herself from her
thoughts. ‘This… it feels like I’ve got a brother again.’

Peter pulls her into a one armed hug, putting his own spoon back in the tub. ‘It still feels like you’ve only just lost him doesn’t it?’

She nods. ‘I think he would have liked you.’

‘I’m sure we would have had tons of fun terrorising you together,’ he says, ‘I hear that’s what brothers are supposed to do to their sisters.’ She laughs in agreement and they both pick up their spoons again, turning their attention back to the film.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! First of all thank you to everyone who is still reading this story, to everyone who has left kudos, and for everyone who has left reviews. I'm so sorry I haven't responded to any recently, I will get around to it I promise, it's just been very hectic the past couple of weeks.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter with a bit more of a focus on the sibling relationship between Wanda and Peter. Do let me know what you think.

I'll go post the second update of this week now.

L x
Tony teaches Steve how to dance, but the two have a huge argument. The only one able to get through to Tony is Bucky.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 25 – Two Steps Back

Tony takes advantage of the betting in how long it’s going to take for Peter to get knocked out by one of Wanda’s flying possessions to get Steve to join him in his workshop for his dancing lesson.

‘Hey Tony, you alright? What did you need help with?’ Steve says as FRIDAY allows him entry to the workshop.

Tony spins on his chair and pulls his goggles off. ‘Hey Cap. I just thought we could get started on your dancing lessons while everyone else is too busy wondering if Peter is going to get an alarm clock to the head.’

Steve’s face starts to turn pink and Tony has to try to keep back his grin. ‘I don’t see why we can’t just get someone else to do it.’

‘Because no one else is going to have the same pull as Captain America,’ he replies. ‘Now come on over here. FRIDAY’s going to make sure the blackout is on the windows and no one can come in without us knowing first so your little dancing secret is safe,’ Tony walks over to an area he’s cleared earlier and Steve follows a little hesitantly. ‘So you’ve never done any dancing before at all?’

Steve shakes his head, rubbing the back of his neck. ‘Not unless my Nanna getting me to stand on her feet when I was four counts.’

Tony laughs. ‘I would love to have had some photo evidence of that!’

Steve frowns. ‘Not even Bucky knows that so you’ll be hard pressed to find any. Thank God.’

‘Alright well how about we have a couple of goes where I lead you so you get the idea, then we’ll see how you do leading on a dancefloor rather than a battlefield.’

‘Kind of feel like I’d rather be on the battlefield,’ the soldier grumbles.

‘Starting to feel a bit offended here, Steve,’ Tony mock-pouts. ‘You saying you’d rather spend time with Hydra than with me?’

Steve rolls his eyes. ‘I’m not going to bother answering that.’
Tony just laughs and pulls Steve closer, making sure the man’s hands mirrored his own. ‘A woman will usually put her hand on your shoulder,’ he explains, ‘but as we’ll be swapping who is leading it’ll be easier to have both of us have another hand on the waist.’

‘Right,’ Steve says, obviously flustered already.

‘Alright FRIDAY give us some music,’ Tony says and the AI dutifully begins playing some of the slower Andrews Sisters’ melodies. At Steve’s surprised look he shrugs. ‘I thought it might be easier for you to learn to some songs you’d be used to.’

The soldier gives him a small smile. ‘Thanks Tony.’

‘Ah don’t mention it. Right let’s see if we can make you a Fred Astaire.’

After half an hour of both men ending up in laughing fits and a couple of squashed toes on Tony’s side he’s pretty sure the Captain will never be compared to Fred Astaire. He is however, getting the general gist of slow dancing; though Tony is not going to volunteer to teach him anything more energetic. ‘Alright Capsicle how about you have a go at leading me now?’

‘Wait what? Really?’ Steve goes from looking fairly comfortable to terrified in the space of a few seconds.

‘I hate to break it to you, Steve, but the man does have to lead when it comes to dancing, and I imagine it’ll be a woman who you end up dancing with at the gala.’ The blond still looks unsure so he adds, ‘Come on just give it a go. You’ll probably be better at it than you think.’

Steve takes a breath and nods, so Tony lets the soldier lead. He has to admit it’s a strange feeling not being in control of a dance, but Steve isn’t actually that bad.

‘You’re doing alright, Cap,’ he says after a couple of minutes, and he sees the soldier visibly relax a little. ‘You’re just thinking too hard about it.’

‘Well I’m concentrating on not standing on your toes any more than I have already,’ he huffs.

Tony chuckles. ‘You need to be a little more natural, just relax and enjoy it.’

‘I think I’d still rather be on a battlefield if I’m honest,’ Steve replies. ‘How do you propose I manage to relax enough to enjoy it?’

‘Well just through this little exchange you’ve relaxed a little more,’ he points out with a small smirk. ‘Just find something to talk about.’

‘Seriously?’

‘Well its working isn’t it?’

Steve chuckles, and Tony is startled to find a couple of butterflies making their home in his stomach at the sound. Before he has chance to think too much about it the blond has a smirk on his face and lets go long enough to spin him around before bringing him back into his arms. And if Tony is a little closer to the soldier than he was before then he isn’t going to say anything.

‘What was that for?’ he asks, hoping his voice doesn’t sound as breathless as he thinks it does.

‘Just seeing if I could keep you on your toes,’ Steve shrugs. ‘It definitely had the effect of
making me enjoy this more.’

Tony can’t help but join in with the other man’s infectious chuckle. ‘Alright I’ll admit you surprised me.’

‘Have the Council said anything more about what happened with Ross?’

Tony shakes his head as Steve continues to lead them around the cleared area. ‘They said they would be making their displeasure at his actions clear, but I doubt they’ll actually do much.’

Steve frowns. ‘So he’s going to get away with it?’

He sighs. ‘Honestly? I’m not sure how much they support his actions. In a way I can understand them wanting to test that all our claims are true, but I don’t agree with their method.’

‘You’ve become quite the diplomat, Tony,’ Steve comments.

‘I’ve had to,’ is his short reply. ‘I’m not sure how much pride I’ve got left.’

Steve’s face says he’s trying to find a safer topic to steer the conversation towards. ‘Peter seems to be getting on well with the team.’

Tony can’t stop the small smile that spreads across his face. He’s proud of the kid and how much he’s come through. ‘It’s difficult not to like to him,’ he points out. ‘Plus he’s so eager to help everyone and make them happy I’d find it hard to believe he wouldn’t fit in somewhere.’

‘He’s certainly hanging on your every word,’ Steve comments. ‘What kind of training has he been doing with you?’

‘I’ve mainly been taking him through different features on the suit and we’ve been working together on making it fit his needs. He’s still convincing me to let him have a go at one of the old Iron Man suits, but I want to save it for a special occasion.’

‘What about without the suit?’

Tony stiffens, and eyes Steve cautiously. ‘What do you mean? You want me to take the suit from him?’

‘What?’ Steve frowns as Tony pulls away obviously confused. ‘No. I was asking what training he’s been doing without the suit. He needs something to fall back on if he doesn’t have it.’

‘No one is taking the suit from him again,’ Tony says firmly, signalling for FRIDAY to stop the music.

‘What? Tony what are you talking about?’

Tony sighs as he leans over his workstation, his eye automatically drawn to the small piece of rubble that sits in the centre of it. A reminder of how he betrayed someone, like the ghostly ache of a shield in his chest reminds him of someone’s betrayal. ‘I took the suit from him once,’ he admits quietly, eyes fixed on the stone. ‘And he nearly got himself killed still trying to do the right thing, even when I’d told him to stop. The Vulture dropped a building on him. If he’d had the suit he would have had some warning of what was happening, instead the only protection he had was a hoodie. I went to the site afterwards, Steve. I don’t know how he survived. But I swore to myself he’d always have the suit to protect him from then on.’
‘Tony he can’t always have the suit on him. He can’t always be wearing it. Just like you
can’t always be wearing yours. He needs to learn how to defend himself without it as well.’

Tony nods but doesn’t say anything.

‘Maybe we could do a session where we take the suit from him and see how he does?’

Tony’s brain knows that Steve means well. But his gut reacts to the words and he turns on
the soldier. ‘Did you not just listen to a word I said? The suit stays with Peter.’

‘Are you trying to get him to rely on the suit as much as you rely on yours?’ Steve demands.

‘Maybe I’m just trying to make sure he doesn’t have to suffer with nightmares of a shield in
his chest!’ he spits back. It takes a couple of seconds for the pained and shocked look on Steve’s face
to pierce the fog in his brain and register what he’s just said.

‘Tony-’

‘Look just forget I said anything,’ he says, turning away from the pain filled blue eyes.

‘What? I can’t just forget about something like that!’

‘Just forget it Steve. It’s not something you needed to know. I shouldn’t have said it. I’m-’

‘Shouldn’t have said it? I think I need to know if one of my team mates doesn’t trust me,
Tony.’

Something in that sentence stung. ‘Didn’t seem to be doing any harm before you knew, did
it?’

‘You were the one who wanted me to be the leader in the field. How can I be expected to
lead someone who doesn’t trust me?’

Tony let’s out a bark of harsh laughter, and can’t hold back his next words. ‘You didn’t seem
to care about whether or not I could trust you after Siberia, why the sudden crisis Cap?’

‘What-?’

‘You left me Steve!’ he shouts, rounding on the soldier. ‘You left me with no power source
to my suit, courtesy of the shield you’d left in my chest. Did you even think for one second about
how the fuck I got home? When no one knew where I’d gone?’ The guilty look on the soldier’s face
is all the answer he needs. ‘Yeah I didn’t think you did.’

‘Tony I-’

‘Get out Steve.’

‘No! Tony how much else have you been keeping secret from us? First the hydrophobia,
now this?’

‘In what world do you think you can start lecturing me on keeping things from you
considering the discussion we’ve just been having?’ he snarls.

‘How can we work as a team if we don’t trust each other?’ Steve counters.

‘We wouldn’t be a team if I hadn’t got you all back!’ Tony screams at him. ‘We were the
ones to tear the team apart in the first place, Steve. But I was the only one of the two of us who actively tried to get us all back together. So don’t you dare talk to me about not working as a team.’

‘Considering out of the two of us I’m the one who doesn’t have a long history of going off by myself and doing whatever the hell I want regardless of what others say I think I’m probably in the best position of the two of us. Or do we need another Ultron incident?’

Tony honestly feels like the other man punched him in the gut with those words.

Steve’s face falls as he realises what he’s said. ‘Oh god, Tony I didn’t—’

‘It’s the first time we’ve been alone for any amount of time since you got back,’ Tony says, he’s not sure how his voice is staying so calm, ‘so I suppose I shouldn’t really be surprised we ended up having another argument should I?’

‘Tony—’

‘Just get out, Steve,’ his voice cracks on the soldier’s name as he turns back to his work station, willing the tears not to fall. Steve doesn’t move for a couple of minutes, and Tony’s wondering if he’s going to have to find a way to throw the man bodily from his workshop when he hears him move. The door slams shut behind him and Tony winces at the noise.

‘Boss?’

‘Bring up Bucky’s arm schematics, FRIDAY,’ Tony chokes out in response to his AI’s question. ‘It’s time I actually did some work on it.’

It’s coming up to dinner time, but he’s not ready to leave his workshop yet. He’s definitely not ready to face Steve.

Rhodes came down about ten minutes after Steve left but he refused to let FRIDAY open the door. Natasha had tried an hour later, and Sam about thirty minutes after her, but they’d all got the same response.

He hears the elevator doors go. ‘Boss—’

‘I’ve heard the doors FRIDAY,’ he cuts her off. ‘Don’t let them in. I don’t care who it is. If it’s the kid tell him to come back after dinner.’

‘It’s not Peter boss, it’s—’

‘Then tell them to piss off.’

‘Boss override is being entered.’

Tony freezes. There’s only one person left with an override code, and he’s not sure he’s ready to face him either. The door opens and Bucky steps in, closing the door quickly behind him.

‘I’m not in the mood to be entertaining guests, Barnes,’ he says, turning back to the schematics floating in front of him. Bucky doesn’t reply and Tony dares to hope the man might leave him alone. He continues to work on the arm, trying to block out the thoughts that are threatening to
Bucky comes to stand next to him, watching him work in silence. In spite of everything he finds the other’s quiet presence comforting. When he reaches for something to the side, a strong grip holds his wrist and spins him round; before he can protest he’s pulled into an embrace.

‘I may have known Steve since we were kids, Tony,’ Bucky mumbles into his hair, ‘but if I have to protect you from him I will.’

Tony can’t hold it back any longer. His hands grip the front of the man’s hoodie and his breath hitches as he tries to keep his emotions back. As Bucky’s arms tighten around him and he presses his lips briefly to the top of his head, Tony feels everything come out.

‘Tony, what happened?’ he asks when the inventor finally calms down. And Tony tells him everything about their argument, only keeping back the reason they’d been down there in the first place.

‘Why are you doing this?’ he mumbles at the end into the dark haired man’s chest.

‘I hope you’d know the answer to that,’ Bucky answers quietly. ‘I care about you, Tony. Why would I not come and make sure you were alright?’

‘Thank you,’ he says. ‘I’m sorry.’

‘Just because we won’t be anything more than friends doesn’t mean I’m going to stop trying to look after you. Not after everything you’ve done for me.’

Tony just closes his eyes and let’s himself relax against the super soldier. ‘Don’t leave me,’ he whispers.

The tightening of the arms around him is all the answer he needs.

Steve looks up as Bucky enters the common area, most of the team are there waiting to find out what to do about dinner. He frowns at the angry expression on his friend’s face.

_I wonder what Tony eventually said to get him angry as well_, he thinks bitterly. So he’s more than a little surprised at the metal fist connecting with his face and sending him sprawling from where he’s been sitting at the breakfast bar.

‘What the hell Buck?’ he demands, glowering at his friend from the floor.

‘Bucky what are you doing?’ Sam shouts as he and Peter leap to their feet from where they’ve been sitting on the couches.

‘You and me,’ Bucky growls down at Steve, ‘outside. Now.’

‘Bucky, what–’ Natasha starts as Steve scrambles to his feet.

‘Don’t worry, Nat. Me and Stevie just need a little heart to heart,’ he tells the spy, metal hand gripping Steve’s shoulder painfully tight as he steers him towards the balcony area outside the double doors.
'Erm, should we do something?' he hears Peter ask as his friend shoves him outside.

‘No, kid. Trust me that is one fight you do not want to get in the middle of,’ Sam answers.

Personally, Steve disagrees.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! So here's the second part of this week's December double update. I hope you enjoyed it! We've got a bit of Stony coming up, even if it does end with an argument. And a bit of the WinterIron I had requested when I first started posting this story.

Let me know what you all think. I hope you're all getting ready for Christmas!

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

'Sharon?' Steve's surprised at the woman's visit; they haven't been in contact since the Accords. The former SHIELD agent is dressed in jeans and a shirt and, despite best intentions, Steve finds himself searching her features for any reminder of Peggy.

'Hey Steve,' she smiles at him.

'Not that it isn't nice to see you,' Sam interrupts. 'But what brings you to our neck of the woods?'

Sharon's smile of greeting turned into a frown. 'Unfortunately not a general social call. I'm here to see him,' she gestures at Tony.

'Me?' the inventor asks, stepping forwards. 'How can I help?'

Her frown deepens. 'You can explain a few things to me,' her tone turns hostile, and Tony blinks in surprise.
Aunt Peggy

Chapter Summary

Sharon Carter arrives at the facility and there's a revelation in the relationship between Tony and Peggy Carter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘Are you going to hit me again?’ Steve asks as the door closes behind them.

‘That depends on how much of a punk you insist on being,’ Bucky replies, crossing his arms over his chest.

‘Why did you do it in the first place?’ he demands, rubbing his jaw. The dark look his friend gives him reminds Steve that the other soldier was recently one of HYDRA’s best assassins.

‘You seriously going to ask me that and expect an answer?’

‘I’m guessing this is over something Tony told you,’ Steve spits, going to lean against the railing looking out over the complex.

‘Strangely enough, yeah. It has everything to do with the fight you two just had. Now normally I’d be all for staying out of it and letting you two sort it out yourselves-’

‘I think my jaw would disagree with you.’

‘-but I’ve just spent the best part of an hour consoling a man who I have never seen cry before in my life. And he watched me kill me his parents.’

‘Wait, Tony was crying? Why?’

Bucky looks as if he wants to punch him again. ‘I’m going to pretend you aren’t actually that stupid and that my punch just dislodged a few brain cells.’

‘Buck just give me a straight answer.’

‘What happened the last time you two had an argument Steve? Like a proper one?’

Steve opens and closes his mouth a couple of times, then frowns and looks down at the ground. When did we last have a proper argument? He wonders. Then it hits him. ‘The Accords.’

‘Bingo. And you remember what happened after that?’

‘He can’t seriously think I’m going to run off with half the team again,’ Steve’s incredulous.

‘Considering you’ve been sat in those same sessions I have with him for the past few weeks, are you honestly that surprised?’ Bucky’s tone is softer now as he comes to rest on the railing next to him.
Instead of answering, Steve poses a question of his own. ‘Did he tell you about the nightmares? With the- with my shield?’

Bucky nods. ‘Yeah,’ his voice is hoarse as he replies. ‘Yeah he did. He probably didn’t tell you he still has nightmares of when I nearly shot him after Zemo got to me did he?’

‘He does?’ Steve looks at his friend.

‘I imagine it hurt to hear just as much as the shield did for you.’ After a pause he adds. ‘He also has dreams of Peter being crushed under piles of rubble and he can’t do anything to save him.’

Suddenly Tony’s reaction makes a little more sense. ‘So when I said about taking the suit away for practise-’

‘His brain didn’t make the logical jumps it usually does, and he lashed out. And you lashed back instead of being calm like you are with everyone else.’ Bucky puts a hand on his shoulder as Steve hangs his head in defeat. ‘Steve you’re like a brother to me, but I care about Tony. If you hurt him I am going to beat some sense into you. You got that?’

Steve’s head shoots up at those words. ‘Wait, what? You care about him as in… what more than a friend?’

Bucky sighs, his hand falling from Steve’s shoulder as he looks up at the stars peeking through the clouds. He nods. ‘Yeah. Yeah I do.’

‘Does Tony know?’ Steve asks through the strange bitter taste in his mouth.

Bucky nods again. ‘Yeah. It came up before you all came back. But he doesn’t feel the same way about me.’

‘He told you that?’

The dark haired man nods again. ‘I’m pretty sure I know why.’

Steve frowns. ‘Why what? Why he doesn’t like you the same way you like him?’ Bucky nods again. ‘Why is that?’

The look his friend gives him Steve can’t quite place before the other soldier gives a quiet laugh. ‘Oh Stevie, you’re even more oblivious than you were before the war.’

‘What’s that supposed to mean?’

Bucky laughs again. ‘Never mind, you’ll work it out eventually. Now I suggest you give Tony a day or so to let his logical brain kick in and then you go and apologise. Hopefully he’ll apologise too.’ The former assassin turns and heads back towards the doors.

‘Wait! Bucky what do you mean? I’ll work what out eventually?’

His only response is his friend’s laughter as he opens the door and tells Peter to take some food down to the workshop for Tony.
Steve doesn’t see Tony until lunchtime the next day. He and Sam have got back from a morning training session outside, the other man is still grumbling about how many times he’s been lapped, and they enter the common area to grab some lunch. They’re greeted by screams of frustration and triumph as soon as they walk through the door and look over to the sofas to see Tony, Peter, Wanda, Rhodes and Natasha all playing some kind of racing game on one of the consoles.

Steve frowns as he sees one of the cartoon characters on the screen throw something that looks like a turtle shell at one of the others, which seems to cause another character to fall off the race track. As Rhodes tries to shove Tony, he assumes it was the latter who had sent the former off the track.

‘What is that?’ he asks Sam.

The dark skinned man looks at him as if he’s grown an extra head. ‘Dude I appreciate you’re sometimes a little behind the times, but how do you not know MarioKart?’

‘Wait, what?!’ Peter’s head swivels to look at them both, obviously his sensitive hearing as picked up their conversation. ‘You’re not serious, you don’t know- Wanda! Why would you do that?’

The girl simply cackles as her character apparently send’s Peter’s off the track, putting her in first place.

‘Have they finished yet?’ Vision asks as he rises through the floor behind the two soldiers.

Sam jumps, putting a hand to his chest. ‘Vis you really need to stop doing that.’

‘Apologies,’ the humanoid says. ‘I thought it safer seeing as last time I was in here there were objects being thrown. Wanda and Peter now apparently have a sibling rivalry in games to go with their sibling-like relationship.’

‘Boss you might want to pause the game,’ FRIDAY’s voice interrupts as they start the final lap. ‘Sergeant Barnes is bringing a visitor up.’ Tony sighs and pauses the game, causing a series of protests to emanate from the other players. They’re still grumbling when Bucky enters followed by Sharon Carter.

‘Sharon?’ Steve’s surprised at the woman’s visit; they haven’t been in contact since the Accords. The former SHIELD agent is dressed in jeans and a shirt and, despite best intentions, Steve finds himself searching her features for any reminder of Peggy.

‘Hey Steve,’ she smiles at him.

‘Not that it isn’t nice to see you,’ Sam interrupts. ‘But what brings you to our neck of the woods?’

Sharon’s smile of greeting turned into a frown. ‘Unfortunately not a general social call. I’m here to see him,’ she gestures at Tony.

‘Me?’ the inventor asks, stepping forwards. ‘How can I help?’

Her frown deepens. ‘You can explain a few things to me,’ her tone turns hostile, and Tony blinks in surprise.

‘Err… ok?’
'You can explain why my cousin contacts me to say he’d had a call from our aunt’s old nursing home to say they’d found some of her things whilst clearing out a storage space, and there was a box in there with your name on it.’ She pulls the large shoe-box sized box from under her arm and holds it out to him one handed.

‘Wait,’ Sam says, ‘you’re aunt as in-’

‘Peggy Carter,’ she finished for him. Steve looks to Tony and sees the inventor’s face has turned white.

‘Peggy?’ Rhodes says, looking at Tony in surprise. ‘Tony not-’

‘Shut it Rhodey,’ he says, walking towards Sharon and taking the box from her, looking down at the lid where Steve recognises Peggy’s elegant handwriting spelling out the name ‘Anthony Edward Stark’.

‘I’m waiting, Stark,’ Sharon hisses at him.

Tony places the box on a table and sits down, running a hand along his face. If Steve was a betting man he’d say the inventor looks as if he’s about to cry.

‘Stark,’ Sharon presses him.

‘Give the guy a minute Sharon,’ Sam frowns at her. The woman crosses her arms over her chest but mercifully remains quiet.

‘She used to come visit a lot when I was younger,’ Tony replies, apparently talking to the table rather than any of the room’s occupants. ‘But we didn’t talk much after my parents died. The last time I saw her was at their funeral.’

‘Why didn’t you tell us you knew her?’ Steve asks softly.

Tony’s reply is a shrug as he takes the lid off the box. He puts a fist to his mouth, Steve assumes to keep back any noise he was about to make, and, reaching in, takes out a small handgun.

‘She gave you that?’ Sharon shrieks when she spots the weapon in Tony’s hand.

‘What is it?’ Steve asks.

‘It’s Aunt Peggy’s handgun,’ she explains, looking at him and trying very obviously to bring her temper under control. ‘She took it with her everywhere she went, she was never without it. All of us cousins would sit around and listen to her stories and we’d all ask if we could have it one day. She’d never promise it to anyone, only saying “I’ll send it to the right person when I think the time is right”.’ She swings round to look at Tony. ‘Please, Stark, explain to me why you would be the one she would send that to. Aunt Peggy said that gun saved her life more times than she could count. It should have stayed in the family.’

‘You mean you wanted it,’ Sam mutters, and Steve shoots him a look to keep quiet.

‘I made it for her,’ is Tony’s quiet reply.

‘I’m sorry?’ Sharon’s voice is dangerous.

‘When I was little,’ he continues, eyes never leaving the gun, ‘just after I’d started making things I got hold of one of Dad’s guns. I took it into my room and modified it, then gave it to her
when she next visited. Dad was livid,’ he gives a weak chuckle, ‘it was one of his favourite guns. Mom wouldn’t let him take it back though.’

‘Why would you make her a gun?’ Natasha asks, voice soft as she goes to sit at the table near him.

‘She was Aunt Peggy wasn’t she?’ Rhodes asks, coming over to sit next to his friend. ‘She’s the one who used to send you all those food packages during college.’

Tony simply nods, still looking down at the gun in his hands.

‘Tell me this, Stark,’ Sharon’s voice is laced with venom. ‘If she meant so much to you why did you not come to her funeral?’

‘I hadn’t seen her in so long,’ is the hoarse reply, ‘I didn’t think she would have wanted me there. Plus,’ Steve notices the quick glance in his direction, ‘there were other people that had more of a place there than me and I didn’t want to take away from their grief.’

Steve feels his heart sink. Tony hadn’t gone to Peggy’s funeral because he didn’t think Steve would have wanted him there.

‘So she was so important to you as a child, but as soon as you became an adult you decided you didn’t need her anymore and just forgot about her, huh? You don’t deserve that gun, Stark,’ Sharon spits at him, ‘that gun was her most precious possession. It should be with someone who actually gave a damn about her-’

Sharon’s voice is suddenly cut off and Steve looks at her to see tendrils of red light around her. He spins to look at Wanda, and sees the girl looking furious. ‘Come with me,’ the young woman spits, ‘and don’t you dare say another word.’ She doesn’t give Sharon a chance to do anything as she drags the older woman behind her with her powers, heading towards a corridor at the other end of the area.

‘Wanda,’ Tony says, but Rhodes places a hand on his shoulder to stop him.

Sharon sends Steve a terrified look and the soldier makes a move to intervene but Vision stops him. ‘Wanda will not harm her, Captain.’

‘I know,’ Steve says, and can’t find any reason to justify following so stays where he is as Wanda disappears with the floating woman.

‘Tony,’ Rhodes’ gentle voice pierces the quiet, ‘there’s some other things in the box.’

Tony dazedly looks in and pulls out a piece of paper, an envelope, and a small, very battered looking teddy bear. He’s just opening the envelope when Wanda and Sharon return. The former agent looks pale.

‘What-’

Vision cuts across Steve’s question. ‘I suggest you look at the records for payment for the nursing home your aunt was in Miss Carter.’

‘Vis,’ Tony says in warning.

‘What are you talking about?’ Sharon’s voice is unsteady.
‘You will find the payments were made by an anonymous source,’ the humanoid replies. ‘Technically speaking, as I have JARVIS’ data memories as part of me I suppose you could say I made those payments. But Tony is the one who organised the nursing home and the payments for it. He was still looking after Peggy Carter even though they hadn’t spoken in years. I imagine her estate was fairly large, which you all got a share of. You can thank him for that.’

‘You paid for Peggy’s care?’ Steve asks him. Tony doesn’t reply.

Sharon gives a harsh laugh. ‘Of course. You just can’t admit when you actually care about people can you?’ she accuses him. ‘Isn’t that how all this mess started in the first place? You can’t admit you care and you can’t admit you were wrong, and that’s how all the mess with the Accords started. That’s how you tore apart the team in the first place!’

There’s a chorus of angry shouts aimed at her, as she turns to look at Steve. ‘You sure you want to hang around and wait for the next big blow up?’ she asks him. The room goes silent and everyone is looking between him, Sharon and Tony. Steve is completely thrown by the question, by the challenge in her eyes.

And at that moment, he looks at Tony. The inventor is looking at him with a defeated look on his face, as if he knows what Steve is going to choose. As if he knows that Steve is going to leave.

Just like last time.

‘Tony didn’t tear the team apart,’ he says, turning to face Sharon’s surprised face, ‘I did.’

‘Steve.’

‘I don’t know what you wanted to accomplish by coming here and doing this, Sharon,’ he cuts her off. ‘I don’t know whether finding Peggy’s possessions brought back the grief at her death and you wanted an outlet for it, or if you wanted to attack Tony for another reason. But if you were intending to break up the team again you were never going to succeed.’

‘Steve.’ she tries again.

He shakes his head. ‘No, Sharon. You’ve come into our home and attacked one of our own. Peggy wouldn’t have wanted this team split up, and she definitely would not have approved of the way you’ve acted. If you want to step foot on this facility again it will only be as part of a delegation that has been sent to meet with the team. Other than that you are not allowed here again have I made myself clear?’

‘Steve.’

‘FRIDAY is that clear?’ he ignores the woman and asks the AI.

‘Crystal clear, Captain,’ comes the AI’s reply, and if he didn’t know better he’d say it sounded proud of him.

‘But.’

‘Get out, Sharon,’ he says, face and voice hard. ‘Before I get Wanda to escort you out.’

Chapter End Notes
A/N: Hi everyone! Welcome to your Christmas present my wonderful readers: an extra double update! I shall post the second in a moment :)

L x
Peggy's Letter

Chapter Summary

Steve sees what Wanda showed Sharon Carter and Tony reads a letter from his Aunt Peggy

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In the end Wanda insisted on escorting Sharon from the premises. Bucky had given him a smile and nod before following them out; whether to give Sharon a piece of his mind, or ensure Wanda let the woman leave in one piece he wasn’t sure.

‘Vision?’ Steve asks quietly, as the conversation at the table starts up. ‘Where did Wanda take Sharon?’

The humanoid looks at him for a moment then gestures for him to follow. With a glance back at the rest of the team at the table he does. Vision leads him along a short corridor and pauses outside of a door that Steve has never been through.

‘What’s in here?’ he asks.

‘It’s better if you see for yourself,’ Vision replies, and pushes open the door, gesturing for Steve to go first.

What he sees is nothing he could have imagined in his wildest dreams. It’s a calmly lit room, and the soundproofing is obviously the best Tony has at his disposal as everything becomes muted. At the back of the room he sees a familiar young male’s face looking back at him, the picture taken when they’d known him, probably from some of the security footage taken at the time.

‘What?’ Steve isn’t even sure what he’s asking as he walks towards the picture of Piotr Maximoff, wearing the blue uniform he’d worn on their mission to Sokovia. Underneath is a plaque that states:

Piotr Maximoff

‘Quicksilver’

Beloved brother. The first Avenger to give his life in defence of this world.

As he turns back to ask Vision a question another portrait catches his eyes. Peggy’s portrait. It’s the same one he saw in the bunker when he and Natasha found Zola in his weird computer. He walks closer, swallowing past the lump in his throat to read the plaque.

Margaret ‘Peggy’ Carter
There wasn’t a more fitting phrase ever said about Peggy, Steve muses as he looks up at the woman’s face, with the small smile he knew so well.

‘He set it up not long after we all left,’ Wanda’s voice comes from behind him. He turns to look at her, standing next to Vision.

‘I didn’t even know it existed,’ he admits.

Wanda looks over at the picture of her brother, a sad smile on her face. ‘He brought me here a few days after I got back. He asked if I was happy with what was on the plaque, and that he could change it if I wanted him to.’ She laughs a little. ‘I thought the superhero name was fitting. He said he’d made it so we could remember all the important people. Piotr was the first one he put up, saying it seemed fitting the first Avenger to give his life was the first to be remembered here.’

Steve’s about to ask something else when he notices a group of small portraits on the opposite wall. He feels tears burning at his eyes as he walks past the other two and takes in the familiar faces of his first team. Each of them has their name underneath, then a larger plaque beneath them all:

_The Howling Commandos_

_The first team to protect the world, and to avenge the old one._

‘We should get back,’ Wanda says quietly, putting a hand on his arm. He looks down into her understanding expression and nods.

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_Tony,_

_I’m sorry I didn’t fight more to see you after Howard and Maria died; I should have known Stane had his reasons for keeping me away, but in my foolishness I believed him when he said you didn’t want to see me. I should have known my Tony better than that. I hope you can find it in you to forgive your old Aunt Peggy._

_It’s getting harder to remember things now, so I’m writing this before I forget everything I wanted to say. Though I imagine so much of it is pointless now._

_Watching you grow, even from afar, I’ve been so proud of you. Proud of everything you overcame and did; especially with the Iron Man suit. I tried to contact you when you returned but Stane turned me away, kept me away. In my old foolishness I didn’t try harder, and I should have done. I should have been there for you through it all, Tony, and it broke my heart that I couldn’t. But when the Avengers were founded I hoped you would find in them what I couldn’t give you._

_I never forgot you my little Teddy, always thought of you, especially when I held my gun. You_
have no idea how many times it saved my life, I always thought it fitting that it was you saving me all
those times. Sometimes I’d sit and remember making cookies together, and the number of times I
cought you stealing the dough. And the number of times I let you get away with it. You brought me
so many smiles as a child, I wish I could have brought you more as an adult.

You’ll have to forgive an old woman being sentimental Tony, I find I can’t help it – even
though I always swore I’d never be one of those annoying old ladies.

All my nieces and nephews would ask me to have the gun one day, and perhaps I was wrong
not to tell them that they’d never get it. It always had to go back to you, Teddy, because you were the
one to make it for me. I remember being so sacred you’d follow Howard’s example when you gave
me that gun and just go into weapons. But then you said those words that made me realise you were
going to go so much further than him. You told Maria you made it for me because “Aunt Peggy’s
the only person who knows how to use a weapon properly.” I thought it was just childish pride in a
beloved adult. And then there were times I didn’t fire the weapon when I could have done. When I
spared people instead of taking a life. That’s when I realised what you meant. So I’m returning it to
you, Tony. Find someone who knows how to use a weapon properly and give it to them if you don’t
want to keep it for yourself. I trust you to know the best person to inherit it.

There’s only two more gifts I can give you. And I’m sorry it’s not more. The first is my little
bear Edward, the one you’d always play with when you came to visit, who was named for my
grandfather. I hope you find as much love in him now as you did when you were little.

The last is the thing you always asked me for: the recipe for the cookies we made together. I
hope you find someone to make them with like we used to.

This is my goodbye to you, Anthony Edward Stark. I wish I would have said it to you in
person, and told you how proud I am of you.

All my love always,

Aunt Peggy

P.S. I hope you’ve forgiven me for the middle name Edward by now! Though to be fair without it
you never would have been my little Teddy.

Tony feels the tears in his eyes as he finishes reading the letter from Peggy Carter. He’s
allowed Rhodes to read it over his shoulder, and his oldest friend is gripping his shoulder in silent
support.

‘Stane kept her away from you so she couldn’t protect you from him,’ Rhodes says. Tony
just nods. ‘Tony, I’m so sorry.’

Tony shakes his head and folds the letter up, putting it back in the envelope and looks over at
the small bear sitting on the table a fond smile on his face. He remembers playing with Edward, and
being devastated every time he had to leave it behind, the fact that his Aunt Peggy remembered made
him happier than he could say.

He picks up the recipe and looks down it, frowning as he realised there was something
missing.
What’s wrong, Tony?’ Natasha asks, coming to look over his shoulder at the recipe.

‘It’s missing the secret ingredient,’ he explains. ‘She always said there was a secret ingredient she’d tell me about one day, but it’s just regular cookie ingredients on here.’

After a couple of seconds Natasha chuckles and points at the last step on the instructions. ‘Secret ingredient: make them with a loved one. They always taste better that way.’

Tony laughs and shakes his head. ‘Looks like she was already a sentimental woman when I knew her.’

‘I’d say it shows how much she cared about you, Tony,’ Natasha tells him.

‘In her letter she told me to find someone to make them with like the two of us used to,’ he admits.

‘Anybody in mind?’ she asks him.

Tony looks up as Steve, Vision and Wanda walk back into the room from wherever they’d disappeared to. ‘Yeah,’ he says, folding the recipe so the last step was hidden. ‘Hey Peter, Wanda? Fancy making some cookies?’

Peter’s excited shout and Wanda’s big smile are all the answer he needs. ‘I think you’re taking after her with your sentimental ways,’ Natasha teases him, and he just scowls at her. As he passes Steve to follow the two youngest members to the kitchenette he gives the soldier’s shoulder a squeeze. ‘Thanks, Cap.’

Steve stop him from walking past and says quietly, ‘I mean it, Tony. No one’s splitting us up again.’

Tony’s down in his workshop late that evening. They’ve all eaten dinner together, along with some of the cookies, and Sam has taken Peter home. The door to his workshop is open, so the person he’s called walks right on through.

‘You alright, Tony?’ Natasha asks, sitting opposite him at his work station.

He nods. ‘I want you to have this,’ he says, handing the weapon over to her.

Natasha looks at him in shock. ‘Isn’t this the gun that Sharon was talking about?’

‘More like screaming, but yes it is,’ he replies. ‘I’ve made a few more modifications to it this afternoon, just to improve accuracy and stuff. But it’s still the same gun.’

‘Why are you giving it to me?’ she asks, looking down at the weapon that fits perfectly into her smaller hands.

‘In her letter Aunt Peggy said she gave it to me because I’d know who was best to inherit it,’ he explains. ‘When I first gave it to her I apparently told Mom I was giving it to her because, and I quote, “Aunt Peggy knows how to use a weapon properly”. She said she didn’t realise until much later what those words meant, and how it meant she knew I’d be different to Dad. So she said she left it to me to give to someone who knew how to use it.’
‘Tony, basically everyone in this facility knows how to use a gun,’ she says, ‘why me?’

‘Maybe,’ he replies with a small smile. ‘You’ll work out what I mean eventually Agent Romanoff.’

Natasha looks confused then her face slips in a smile and she comes round his side of the work station. ‘I have no idea what you’re talking about, Tony Stark,’ she says, ‘but then I’m used to that by now. I trust you,’ she presses a kiss to his cheek. ‘Thank you. I don’t think I deserve to have this, but it means a lot that you think I do.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Merry Christmas everyone! Hope you enjoyed your extra two chapters.

Thank you so much everyone for reading, for leaving kudos and for leaving comments. It's been a tough month as my Dad's gone into hospital for surgery, so I've just about been keeping up with doing some writing. Reading the reviews has been absolutely amazing as I've been having them come through at tough times and they've put a smile on my face. He's out and doing well now, so I'm hoping to reply to all the comments between Christmas and New Year. Keep an eye out for your replies.

Let me know what you thought of these two chapters and Tony's relationship with Peggy. I thought it strange he didn't go to her funeral as he must have seen her quite a bit as a child.

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas, no matter which faith you belong to and where in the world you are. May your Christmases all be filled with joy, blessings and love.

L x

Don't worry I haven't forgotten the sneak peek:
They’re interrupted by a tall blonde woman, looking very apologetic. ‘I’m really sorry to interrupt,’ she says looking at Peter. ‘I was wondering if you could help my friend? He needs to go to the bathroom but will need help finding it. He’s blind.’

‘Of course,’ Peter puts on his best smile. ‘I’ll speak to you later, old sister.’

‘Oh just go,’ Wanda sticks her tongue out at him as he follows the woman.

‘I’m Karen by the way,’ she says, ‘Karen Paige. I work for Nelson and Murdoch. The law firm in Hell’s Kitchen?’
Chapter Summary

Steve confronts his greatest enemy: dancing. Peter runs into an acquaintance and gets a little more than he bargained for.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Steve fidgets in his tux, feeling like this is possibly the worst night of his life. He’s already stood and greeted more people than he’s possibly ever met in his life, and now they’re waiting around for the speeches and the charity dance.

He’s tried to bribe Natasha into faking an emergency call out, but she refused. He even tried speaking to FRIDAY, but the AI hadn’t granted his wish. He’s avoiding Bucky like the plague as his friend has been doing nothing but winding him up about the dance all day, Sam isn’t much better, Vision tried to be helpful and give him tips but it just brought him to the edge of a panic attack. The only person who had been sympathetic was Peter, but the kid was on crowd duty and so Steve couldn’t grab him until after the speeches. By which time it was going to be too late. He’d thought about speaking to Rhodes, but the man was giving the speech from the Avengers and was nervous himself, and Wanda was feeling paranoid about being around so many people.

Oh and Tony’s been avoiding him tonight like he has been the majority of the week, so no emotional support there.

So that’s why Captain America is currently standing next to wall, holding a glass of champagne and really wishing he could get drunk whilst trying desperately to hold off a panic attack. Because in about ten minutes he was going to have to dance. In front of people.

‘So you all ready to give us your big performance, Stevie?’ Bucky grins as he joins him at the wall.

‘Don’t make this any worse for me, Buck,’ he pleads with his friend. Bucky just raises his hands in a placating gesture and grabs a glass from a passing waiter.

‘You seen Pete around anywhere?’

‘No, and even if I did I wouldn’t tell you because I imagine you’d send him off on some stupid task just to annoy him,’ Steve replies.

Bucky puts a hand to his chest, feigning hurt. ‘Steve it’s like you don’t trust me.’

‘More like I know you too well. When did Tony get you measured up for a tux then?’

‘Same time he did everyone else. I hoped whining enough would get him to leave me alone, unfortunately it didn’t work.’

‘I’m surprised he didn’t put you in a bright green one or something,’ Steve laughs. Then groans as he sees the announcer for the evening take to the stage. His friend nudges his shoulder.
‘You’ll be fine, Steve. Don’t forget dances today are nothing like what we used to do. Just move side to side and don’t step on her toes.’

‘Thanks for the vote of confidence,’ he grumbles as the crowd quietens down.

‘Thank you all for coming this evening,’ the announcer says, voice carrying through the speakers and around the room. Steve notices Peter on the other side of the crowd, pulling at the collar of his shirt and looking extremely uncomfortable. He would feel sorry for the kid if he wasn’t feeling exactly the same way. ‘As you know this bi-annual charity gala is funded by Stark Industries, as a way to say thank you to different groups of people around this country for the work they do for others. This year is no different. And as the theme this year is ‘Unsung Heroes’ we thought there was no better group to host this evening than the Avengers. Now I’d like to welcome to the stage Lieutenant Colonel James Rhodes, known to all of us as ‘War Machine’, to say a few words on behalf of the Avengers.’

There’s some polite applause as Rhodes takes to the stage. Steve admires how calm the soldier looks. ‘Thank you. Good evening everyone. I must admit when I was asked to give this speech tonight I did initially think Tony had finally lost it,’ there’s a murmur of polite laughter. ‘I mean we all know he’s much better in front of the press than I am. And then I looked at who had been invited to attend tonight and I felt extremely privileged. The guest list includes members of the police, fire and ambulance service here in New York, as well as staff members from the emergency departments. We’ve got veterans and serving soldiers. And we’ve also got members of faith communities, volunteer organisations, and local companies who have done something to give back to the community.

‘I feel the title “Unsung Heroes” is apt for this group of guests, as well as the many people you work with. I know when I had my accident that left me unable to walk without the help of these mechanical braces, the real heroes that day were the medical staff who took me from the field and then cared for me in hospital, and the countless staff that then aided in my recovery in the months and years that have followed.

‘You are the people who clean up after us when we’ve made the mess, you’re the ones who look after the casualties who are caught in the middle of our battles, and you’re the ones who continue to help the people who lost loved ones after we’ve left. And yet it seems to be us that get the thanks.

‘So tonight I want to say thank you. Thank you to all of you who are there when we aren’t. The ones that come along and clean up our messes and make sure there is still a world that needs saving.’ Rhodes finishes with a salute which Steve notices all of the soldiers return, before walking off to a much more genuine applause than any that had come before.

The announcer walks back up to the microphone and takes it from the stand as the applause starts to die down, walking down to the floor. ‘Thank you Colonel. Now to start the Gala we have the charity dance! So can we please clear a space on the floor for the three couples? Thank you. Now as you know you were all given the opportunity to place a silent bid to have the first dance with one of our three Avengers.’ Steve ignores the elbow Bucky digs into his side. ‘So first let me welcome the three dancers to the floor. First is our very own Iron Man: Tony Stark!’ There’s a ripple of applause, and a few cat calls, as Tony makes his way towards the announcer in the centre of the cleared area, a big smile for the crowd and a small wave.

‘Next our only female Avenger to be starting off the dancing tonight, the Black Widow: Natasha Romanoff.’ Steve watches Natasha all but glide across the floor, her long black dress dragging slightly behind her. ‘And last but not least, our country’s finest, Captain America himself:
Captain Steve Rogers.

Steve tries to hold back his grimace at the announcer’s choice of words, digs an elbow into a chuckling Bucky, and then makes his way to the announcer, trying very hard not to throw up in fear. He still can’t believe he’s having to do this.

‘And now for our top three bidders,’ the man says as Steve stands next to Natasha, ignoring her small smirk.

‘Still time for an emergency,’ he mutters in her ear. Natasha just chuckles and shakes her head. *Damn it.*

‘Our top bidder is Stark Industries CEO, Miss Pepper Potts. Come up here Miss Potts,’ Pepper glides through the crowd, with a smile wearing a beautiful yellow dress. ‘Mind if I take a guess Miss Potts and say you might be choosing your boss to dance with?’

Pepper laughs. ‘I put up with Mr Stark enough as it is, thank you,’ she replies, ‘if you don’t mind I’d rather dance with Captain Rogers.’

Steve is surprised to say the least as Pepper links an arm with him and pulls him to one side. Tony makes a joke about being hurt and finding a nicer CEO which makes the crowd laugh. ‘You sure you don’t want to dance with Tony, Pepper? I dare say he’s a much better dancer than I am’.

Pepper chuckles. ‘As I said I spend more than enough time with Tony as it is. Besides he organised the SI donation and made it clear that if I didn’t choose to dance with you he’d fire me.’

‘He what?’ Steve looks over at Tony as he is claimed by an older lady; he obviously says something amusing to her as she gives a loud laugh as he leads her to one side.

Pepper looks at him with amusement. ‘Oh don’t worry Steve he wouldn’t actually fire me. He knows the company would fall apart if he did, not to mention he’d never know where he’s supposed to be.’

Natasha is claimed by a young looking CEO from some company Steve doesn’t catch the name of and the three couples make their way to the dancefloor. He looks up in surprise again as the band that’s been hired to play starts playing a familiar tune.

‘Surprised at the song?’ Pepper laughs as he attempts to lead her in a dance.

‘Who chose an Andrews Sisters’ song?’

‘Tony,’ she replies, ‘he said it might make you feel less uncomfortable at having to dance in the first place. Though I must admit I don’t know what he was so worried about, you’re a pretty good dancer.’

‘Thanks,’ he tries to fight back the blush he can feel rising. Tony’s been organising all this to make sure he felt more comfortable about this whole thing when they’ve barely been talking to each other. He looks over again at the dark haired man, who is expertly guiding his partner through the dance.

Pepper chuckles again. ‘Nat looks ready to murder her partner,’ she says.

Steve looks over and sees the smile that is plastered on Natasha’s face is most certainly her ‘if-you-don’t-shut-up-I’ll-stick-something-sharp-in-you’ smile. ‘Who is he?’
‘Alex Williams,’ she responds so quickly Steve wonders if she’s memorised the names and faces of every person on the guest list. ‘His company is into pharmaceuticals but is making progress to bring the costs of manufacturing down so more can be sent out to less developed countries. They donate a lot of medical supplies to relief organisations, hence his invitation.’

‘I take it his personality isn’t as shining as his charitable donations.’

‘Oh no. He’s an arrogant arsehole. But you didn’t hear that from me.’

Peter looks around the guests, his Stark Industries badge attached to the pocket of his jacket letting people know he can be approached for help. So far he’s only had to show people where the bathroom is and hunt down some drinks for a particularly obnoxious guy that Natasha had been dancing with earlier.

Oh and he’s managed to avoid Bucky so far, which is a feat in itself as it’s been a close run thing a couple of times. Why they had to make these shirt collars so tight is beyond him, and the tie feels like it’s strangling him. He notices Wanda over in a corner and decides to go over.

‘I thought Mr Stark’s parties were notoriously outrageous and loads of fun? This is boring as hell,’ he says.

Wanda giggles. ‘Don’t let him hear you say that, Pete. You’ve got your ear piece turned off right?’

‘Oh crap,’ he hisses, checking at his ear that the dial was turned off for voice. Thankfully it was and he heaves a sigh of relief. ‘How’s your night going?’

‘Oh not too bad,’ she says, ‘so far everyone I’ve spoken to has been polite. Though I’ve been sticking to Vision’s side like the plague. Apparently I’m not allowed to follow him to get drinks though.’

‘To be fair the bar is a bit crowded,’ he replies, gesturing at the area which is about three people deep. ‘I suppose a half-price bar is a good thing?’

Wanda laughs. ‘Apparently so. How has your night been?’

‘Well I’ve managed to avoid Sergeant Barnes so it’s been pretty good. You look really nice by the way.’

It’s true, the dark blue dress she has on makes her look stunning. ‘Thank you,’ she says, smiling widely. ‘You don’t scrub up too bad yourself, little brother. Should I be coming to your school dance to keep all the girls off?’

‘None of you,’ he says, terror sitting in his stomach, ‘are coming to my school dance. It’s going to be bad enough without the possibility of eternal humiliation being on the cards. And will you stop calling me little brother? It makes me sound like I’m eight.’

‘Would you prefer baby brother?’ she grins.

He frowns at her. ‘Now you’re just being mean.’
They’re interrupted by a tall blonde woman, looking very apologetic. ‘I’m really sorry to interrupt,’ she says looking at Peter. ‘I was wondering if you could help my friend? He needs to go to the bathroom but will need help finding it. He’s blind.’

‘Of course,’ Peter puts on his best smile. ‘I’ll speak to you later, old sister.’

‘Oh just go,’ Wanda sticks her tongue out at him as he follows the woman.

‘I’m Karen by the way,’ she says, ‘Karen Paige. I work for Nelson and Murdock. The law firm in Hell’s Kitchen?’

‘Peter,’ he says, shaking her hand. ‘I’m an intern with Stark Industries. But sometimes I go up to help at the facility, hence why I know Wanda so well.’

‘You mean you two aren’t related?’ she asks, looking back at the girl and back at him.

He laughs and shakes his head. ‘No we’re just good friends. She’s kind of adopted me as her brother.’

‘You must spend a lot of time up there then,’ she says, eyeing him with interest.

_Oh crap, way to go Peter._

‘Well I’m up there to help every other weekend, so often enough to get to know them.’

‘You’re pretty lucky,’ Karen comments as they approach two men. ‘Oh hey Foggy, I didn’t realise you’d come back. Matt this is Peter, one of Stark Industries’ interns, he says he’ll show you where the bathroom is.’

‘Oh I can take you if you want, Matt,’ the man called Foggy says to the blind one next to him.

‘It’s alright, sir,’ Peter says, ‘I don’t mind at all. It’s what I’m here for: being helpful.’

_Seriously?_ He asks his brain.

The blind man cocks his head strangely in his direction, Peter assumes it’s him picking up a new voice. Then Foggy interrupts. ‘Seriously I don’t mind—’

‘You stay with Karen, Foggy,’ the man named Matt says, ‘I think we’ve abandoned her enough tonight. Peter, was it? Peter can take me. I’m sure he’s not going to lead me off a cliff or anything.’

Peter tries to unfreeze his muscles. He knows that voice, but he can’t quite place it. ‘Uh sure thing. Do you want to take my arm?’

‘Well I’m not going to be able to see where you’re going,’ Matt says with a slight smile. Peter feels himself blushing but takes the man’s arm and starts to lead him through the crowd. All the time his brain is working in overdrive trying to place that voice.

It’s only when they enter the bathroom and the man spins him around and pins him against the wall with his walking cane that he places it. ‘No way. You can’t be Daredevil. You’re blind!’ he says.

‘That’s the best you can come up with? Care to explain why Spider-Man is walking around as an intern?’ the man growls. ‘You trying to sell me out to the Avengers? Was our invite just some
elaborate plan to track me down? Because I told you before I’ve no interest in joining the superhero squad.’

‘Are you insane? They don’t have a clue who you are. Miss Potts invited your firm because of the work you do. I haven’t even told them I met you!’ Peter pushes back with some of his enhanced strength, throwing the man off him. ‘Dude you’re paranoid as hell!’

The man is standing in a fighter’s stance, ready to fight back should Peter get closer. ‘Why didn’t you tell them?’ he asks.

‘Wait you believe me?’

Matt shrugs. ‘Your heart rate didn’t increase, which tells me you aren’t lying. Now why didn’t you tell them you’d met me?’

‘You can hear my heartbeat? That’s like equal parts creepy and awesome!’

‘Kid, focus!’

‘Why should I tell you why I do anything?’ he says, arms crossed over his chest.

Matt pauses for a second then a small smile breaks across his face. ‘They don’t know about Deadpool do they?’

Peter forces himself to stay calm and, remembering the man’s comments about hearing if he was lying, chooses his words carefully. ‘They do. They know he’s in New York, and they know I see him.’

‘But they don’t know how often you see him do they?’ Matt counters.

‘Miss Natasha does.’

‘Hey guys anyone seen Pete?’ Bucky’s voice comes over the ear piece.

‘Why? You want him to wait in the queue at the bar instead of you?’ Sam asks.

‘No,’ comes the unconvincing reply.

‘You do know he’ll get you back for it at a later date, Buck. Stop winding him up,’ Steve sighs.

‘He went off with a blonde woman earlier,’ Wanda says, and Peter winces at her choice of words. ‘She was asking for his help.’

‘I bet she was,’ Bucky sniggers. ‘Does this mean our little Pete’s all grown up?’

Peter really wishes someone could get the man to shut up for once. Matt’s smirk is telling him he can hear every single word, and he’s pretty sure the man wants to punch him hard enough to knock him out.

‘Barnes you imply that ever again and I’m locking you in the freezer,’ Tony growls.

‘Papa Stark rears his ugly head,’ Bucky sniggers.

‘I’m giving you a hand Tony,’ Natasha adds. ‘Wanda how long ago did he leave?’
‘About twenty minutes or so? I think she said something about helping someone find the toilet.’

‘Kid you there?’ Tony asks.

Peter glances up at Matt, who just frowns at him. Taking a gamble he reaches up to touch his ear piece, turning on the speech ability. ‘I’m here Mr Stark, sorry I was helping one of the lawyers to the bathroom,’ Matt pauses in his rush towards him. ‘Which one’s the blind one again?’

‘You mean Murdock of Nelson and Murdock?’ Tony asks.

‘That’s the one! Anyway I better go, he’ll be coming out soon and it’ll probably seem weird if I’m talking to myself.’ He ignores the brief chatter that starts up, mainly from Bucky, and looks over at Matt.

‘Why didn’t you tell them?’ he asks, head cocked in confusion.

Peter shrugs, then remembers the man can’t see the gesture. ‘Well I guess I can’t expect you to keep my identity secret if I won’t do the same for you.’

Matt seems to study him for a few moments, and Peter is beginning to wonder if the man actually can see, when the tension releases from his shoulders and he nods, gripping his cane in both hands. ‘Alright, Peter. And thank you.’

‘Parker,’ he adds, holding out his hand.

‘Excuse me?’

‘My name. It’s Peter Parker.’

‘Why would you tell me?’

‘Seems only fair. I know the Daredevil is Matt Murdock. You know Spider-Man is Peter Parker. Just swing by Queens if you ever need a hand in Hell’s Kitchen.’

Matt takes his hand with what he thinks is a genuine smile. ‘Thank you Peter Parker.’

‘So can you actually see? Because how do you move around if you can’t?’

Matt chuckles as he goes towards a toilet stall. ‘I am blind. I just use my other senses,’ then he proceeds to briefly explain how he can ‘see’ whilst still being blind. As they leave the bathroom and Peter returns him to his friends Matt leans closer and says in his ear. ‘Maybe you should think about the real reason you’re protecting Deadpool,’ he suggests.

‘What are you talking about?’

‘Let’s just say I can hear more than someone lying.’ Matt rejoins his two friends, leaving Peter with a racing mind.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. This is the last week of the December double updates I’m afraid, so
head on over to see the next chapter. Hope you're still enjoying the story!

L x
Chapter Summary

Steve and Tony have a heart to heart, and the team enjoy the after party.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

No one is surprised when Tony gets up on stage as the gala draws to a close and announces the start of the ‘after-party’, immediately the music picks up in pace. Around half the guests have already left at this point, so there is now more space on the floor for the guests who apparently still have plenty of energy to head to the middle of the room and start dancing to the more upbeat music.

Steve decided to take pity on Peter earlier and took it upon himself to monitor his childhood friend. They’d gone to stand near the bar, even though neither of them could get drunk it was entertaining seeing the reactions to the amount they were managing to drink between them from the bar staff.

Out of the corner of his eye, Steve notices Tony leaving the party through one of the sets of French doors that lead out onto terraces. Then he sees Bucky’s shit-eating grin. ‘What?’ he asks.

Bucky shakes his head, the grin still on his face. ‘You going or what?’

‘I don’t know what you mean,’ Steve huffs, trying to fight off a blush he can feel rising.

‘Course not,’ Bucky says, downing his whiskey. ‘Now go speak to Tony while I find Peter and see how long it takes for him to snap.’

Steve frowns at him. ‘Bucky’ he says in warning, but his friend ignores him and walks off. With a quick glance around the room Steve shrugs and downs the last of his drink, vaguely wondering why he’s nervous and wishing he could actually get drunk, and as no one seems to be paying particular attention to him he follows Tony out of the door.

He finds the billionaire leaning against the railing, looking along the streets of New York. ‘I thought you always preferred the after parties to the main event?’

Tony turns slightly to watch his approach and huffs a laugh. ‘Just needed a break from people.’

‘Oh,’ Steve pauses, suddenly feeling awkward. ‘Um… do you want me to go?’

‘Do what you want, Rogers.’

Steve is about to turn on his heel and walk back into the party when he makes himself stop. ‘Tony I… thank you.’

‘What for?’ the genius sounds genuinely confused.

‘For making sure that Pepper was going to have the dance with me,’ he clarifies. ‘And I’m
Tony’s quiet for so long that Steve sighs and turns to walk back inside. ‘Why do we keep doing this to each other, Steve?’ the inventor’s quiet question stops him. ‘Ever since the Accords we just seem to find an argument in everything.’

Steve sighs, feeling himself deflate slightly, and goes to join the other man at the railing. ‘I don’t know, Tony; and I get the feeling you like it about as much as I do.’

‘Well you’re not wrong, Spangles.’

‘You know what I think?’ he muses after a couple of moments. ‘They say the people closest to you are the ones that hurt you most, because they know how to. You’re one of my best friends, Tony, and I’d like to think I know you pretty well too. But that means we also know how to push each other’s buttons, so when we start having a small disagreement it just spirals.’

‘You know, Cap,’ Tony says, pushing back against the railing, ‘I think you might be on to something there.’

Steve hears the tempo of the music changing from inside the venue and pushes away from the railing. Before he can give himself time to consider he extends a hand towards Tony. The billionaire raises an eyebrow. ‘I thought it seemed a shame for you not to get to appreciate some of the fruits of your labour,’ he answers with a shrug. ‘I promise not to step on your toes. Well as much as before.’

Tony laughs and shakes his head, looking between Steve’s outstretched hand and the door to the venue. Steve begins to lower his hand, thinking the billionaire is going to refuse the dance, when he hears a soft ‘oh screw it’ and there’s a warm, callused hand in his own. He doesn’t give the other man time to reconsider and pulls him closer, moving them in time to the music.

‘Letting me lead this time, Iron Man?’ he teases softly.

‘Just this once, Captain America. I need to make sure you were paying attention during my lesson.’

They don’t say anything else as they continue to move around the outside area, and thankfully no one comes out to disturb them. As the song continues, Steve notices they draw slowly closer together until Tony’s head is resting on his chest, and Steve’s arm is wrapped around his waist. When the song changes they stop moving, but neither moves away. Tony doesn’t move his head from where it’s resting against his chest, looking to one side.

‘Tony?’ Steve’s voice is soft. ‘You alright?’

Tony pulls away slightly so he can look up at him; his face is more relaxed than Steve has seen it in a while. ‘Yeah,’ he replies, voice just as soft and sounding a little surprised. ‘Yeah, I’m…’

Tony doesn’t finish his sentence, and his face is getting closer to Steve’s; the soldier can feel his heart hammering in his chest, and his breath catches slightly as Tony’s eyes start to close. Just as Steve begins to close his own he feels Tony tense in his arms and pull away.

‘We should- we should get back before they send out a search party,’ Tony says, clearing his throat as he takes a few steps back.

‘Yeah- yeah we should,’ Steve’s brain is still trying to catch up with what just happened. As Tony heads towards the door he calls out to him. ‘Tony? You know we’re probably going to fight
again but… I just want you to know I’m not going to be afraid to say sorry anymore.’

The dark haired man turns and there’s a soft smile on his face. ‘Me neither, Cap.’

Left alone Steve’s brain finally catches up with him. Oh god I nearly kissed Tony, he thinks, leaning heavily back against the railing. ‘I’m so screwed,’ he groans and runs his hands over his face.

The after party has wound down enough now that there’s only really the team, the staff and some really dedicated drinkers and dancers left hanging around; even they are starting to trickle out. Steve notices Peter saying goodbye to a group of three adults, one of them holding onto a stick so he assumes it’s the blind lawyer he’d helped earlier. The man hangs back a little longer to speak to the teenager and they seem to part on good terms.

‘You make a new friend?’ he asks the youngster as he joins him where he’s leaning against the bar.

‘Yeah he’s cool,’ Peter says, taking off his tie and undoing his top button. ‘Man that feels so much better! Did they make these things to be torture devices or something?’

Steve, who has already taken off his tie and suit jacket, and undone his top two buttons just laughs at the teen. ‘ Wouldn’t surprise me kid.’

‘Peter! Come here!’ Wanda runs up, having discarded her shoes earlier in the evening, and drags the boy over to join her, Vision and Natasha on the dance floor. Steve can’t help the chuckle as the boy’s wide eyed expression slowly morphs into a relaxed smile as the four team mates goof around on the emptying dance floor.

‘Not joining them, Cap?’ Rhodes asks, leaning up against the bar next to Steve, his tie hanging loose around his neck and his suit jacket open.

‘Not much of a dancer I’m afraid,’ he replies, asking the bar man for a top up on his and Rhodes’ drinks. ‘Besides I doubt there’ll be many more songs left to go.’

‘Yeah Pepper’s starting to get the last of the guests into taxis,’ the soldier says, ‘then it’ll just be us. I think I heard Tony bribing the DJ to play a couple more songs after everyone else has gone for the team. Knowing Tony we could still be going by the time the sun rises.’ Steve simply chuckles in agreement, which rapidly turns into a full blown laugh as they watch Peter attempting to teach Vision a dance move Steve is certain is called ‘the robot’.

‘Please tell me you have a way to record this,’ Steve smirks at Rhodes, who he now notices has his phone out.

‘Already on it, Cap.’

‘You two ladies not joining us for the last few songs?’ Bucky asks, throwing his jacket on top of Steve’s where it’s resting on the bar and unbuttoning his cuffs.

‘Sorry, Buck, but you know you’re just not the right partner,’ Steve grins at his friend.

‘Yeah, yeah, whatever, Rogers. Come on Rhodey don’t be a boring bastard like this one.’
‘No man, my dance routines are limited to the robot from now on,’ Rhodes laughs, putting his phone away.

‘Suit yourself losers,’ he shrugs as he goes to join the others, pulling Natasha into a fast paced dance that has the red head laughing; Sam joins them a few second later and the two men keep stealing the assassin from each other.

‘He always been like that?’ Rhodes asks.

‘I haven’t known him this carefree since we were kids,’ Steve admits. ‘It’s nice to see his smile back.’

‘I know what you mean,’ the other man says as they watch Tony join the group, wrapping his arms around Wanda’s waist from behind and spinning her round, making the young girl laugh and kick out her feet.

‘Maybe we should have a few more team parties,’ Steve muses, seeing how happy they all look. ‘Add a couple of our closer circle to it next time rather than half of New York.’

Rhodes chuckles. ‘Just as long as I can DJ so I don’t get pulled onto the dancefloor I’d say I agree with that suggestion.’

All too soon for the group on the dancefloor, Pepper calls an end to the music.

‘Aww come on Pep!’ Tony whines. ‘We’re having fun!’

‘Yes and the staff need to clean up your mess, Tony,’ Pepper rolls her eyes. ‘Besides everyone’s about ready to drop, we can’t all keep up with the party-boy extraordinaire you know.’

‘Fine,’ the inventor huffs. ‘One more song?’

Pepper looks over at Steve and Rhodes with pleading eyes, ‘Please take your team home.’

Rhodes laughs. ‘Come on, Tones, time to break it up. Unless you want me to run off with another suit of course?’

‘You’re such a party killer,’ Tony mock-glares at his friend. ‘Fine! Let’s go get in the car. Make sure you’ve got all your stuff, kiddies.’

Rhodes leads the way down to where Happy is waiting to take them all back to the facility, Steve decides to bring up the rear and hurry along any stragglers. And by ‘hurry along’ he promises Pepper to bodily carry them out of the building if necessary. He and Tony are the last ones down, staying behind just long enough to get reassurances from Pepper that they are fine to leave and she’ll be leaving ten minutes after them once she’s made sure everything is taken care of. When they enter the car most of the team is already half-asleep.

‘Let’s get home, Happy,’ Tony says, as he and Steve take a seat either side of Peter at the back.

Barely ten minutes into the drive and most everyone has dozed off. Wanda is curled up against Vision, his arm around her as he watches the streets of New York go by, seemingly not needing any sleep; Sam and Rhodes have found their own windows to lean up against, and Steve is sure he can hear faint snores coming from the Colonel. Natasha is sleeping up against Bucky, the soldier’s normal arm over her shoulders as he dozes off himself.
Glancing to his left Steve can’t help but smile. Peter is out for the count, curled up against Tony’s side, the genius has one arm around him, hand reaching up to trace absent-mindedly through the boy’s unruly hair. The inventor looks up and rolls his eyes. ‘Not a word, Rogers.’

‘Wouldn’t dream of it,’ is his soft reply, and he stretches out his arm along the back of the seat, his fingers just brushing the hair at the top of Tony’s neck. The other man says nothing, simply leans his head back and closes his eyes.

_You got it bad, Rogers_, Steve sighs, unable to get the smile to leave his face.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! Well I hope you’ve enjoyed the last of the double updates, and the start of the proper Stony action. Everything will really start picking up now so be prepared for a couple of ups and downs coming your way!

Thank you so much to everyone who has left reviews and who is still sticking with this story. And special thanks to those of you who are only just starting to read it! It's a bit of a beast to take on from the start so I feel very special that you are actually taking the time to catch up with all of these chapters. Let me know what you think of these last two - a little bit lighter than the previous ones. And I'd be interested to hear what you all think of Peter meeting Daredevil again.

Hope you all enjoyed these chapters and thank you so much for your continued support. I honestly can't say it enough.

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

'I don't know,' he admits, eyes scanning every car he can see; he reaches into his pocket for his phone to give Sam a call. He knows what's coming before it happens, but he can't stop it without being too fast for a normal kid. As the boys come closer he nudges Ned out the way and takes the full force of the shove from both of the boys; he doesn't catch himself, falling to the floor and wincing at the pain in his knees and hands.

'Pete!' Ned says, trying to reach his friend to help him up.

'Not got your buddies Captain America or the Winter Soldier to help you this time?' one of the boys scoffs.
**Bully**

Chapter Summary

Peter and Ned get saved from bullies by Bucky and Sam, and the two are not happy that their youngest team member has been trying to cope alone. They make Peter tell Tony, which the young Spider is not too happy about.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Peter yawns as their Chemistry teacher drones on and on about something he’s given up listening to about half an hour ago. He taps his pencil on the table in an attempt to hold off death from boredom, but after the fifth nudge from Ned in his ribs he takes pity on his friend and stops.

He’s just got too much energy left. Patrols have been quiet, and even spending time with Deadpool at the end of the majority of them has done nothing to get rid of some of his excess energy. He can’t get any relief from any of the sports at school, due to having to hold back. What he really wants to do is have a sparring session with one of the Avengers, but he’s not sure he’s allowed to do team training yet; he hasn’t been invited yet anyway and he’s a little scared to ask. Maybe Natasha would give him a training session on hand-to-hand if he asked, he’s sure Tony wouldn’t mind.

He hasn’t heard much from the team in the two weeks since the gala; Tony had let him know that there’d been an increase in attacks from alien enhanced technology so the team had been asked to investigate. Wanda had been his biggest source of information, messaging every other day or so; he says it’s because she misses him, she says it’s because she’s making sure he’s not been an idiot and got himself killed.

The bell sounds and Peter nearly jumps out of his seat.

‘Dude, seriously, you need to chill,’ Ned huffs, closing his books and shoving them into his bag.

‘Sorry,’ he murmurs. ‘I’m just… I’ve got too much energy and no outlet.’

Ned casts a look around the room to make sure no one is close enough to hear and then lowers his voice and asks. ‘Patrols been quiet?’ Peter just nods in reply as they head down the corridor towards the lockers. ‘You going over to the facility this weekend?’

‘Yeah, Sam text earlier to say he’s going to be waiting down the road with Sergeant Barnes so he doesn’t cause another scene.’

‘Hey who do you think would make the biggest scene? Tony Stark or the Winter Soldier?’

Peter groans. ‘I don’t want to think about it. What are you doing this weekend?’

Ned shrugs. ‘Not much, just going to kick back and play a few games I guess.’

‘I wish you could come with me,’ he says more to himself as they open their lockers. He looks over to see his friend’s eyes bugging out of his head, his mouth open.
'Seriously? Do you think I’d be allowed?'

Peter shrugs. ‘I'll ask Mr Stark this weekend and see what he says.’

‘Dude that would be awesome!’ Ned practically shouts.

‘Dude!’ he hisses, ducking his head to avoid the questioning stares from other students.

‘Sorry. But seriously, please try and get me an invite to the facility. I will worship the ground you walk on.’

‘Ok that’s a bit creepy,’ Peter laughs as they head towards the exit.

Whatever Ned is about to say in response is cut off by the obnoxious voice of another male.

‘Yo! Penis Parker! No ride for you today? You finally get fired or what?’

‘At least he now believes the Stark Internship story,’ Ned mutters.

‘Just ignore him,’ Peter replies, ‘Sam said he’d be just down the street, let’s get a move on. Maybe he’ll get bored or we can give you a lift back.’

‘Flash never gets bored when it comes to you,’ his friend responds. Unfortunately he’s right.

They make it to the bottom of the stairs before Flash catches up to them, and he’s got some friends from the year above with him. ‘You gone deaf, Parker?’

‘Get a life, Flash,’ Peter grumbles, pushing Ned past the boys and heading down the street. ‘Come on, Ned.’

‘Yeah hurry up Leeds, don’t want to keep Penis Parker away from his important job,’ one of the other boys sneers.

‘Where are they Pete?’ Ned mumbles as they carry on along the street, walking quicker than normal.

‘I don’t know,’ he admits, eyes scanning every car he can see; he reaches into his pocket for his phone to give Sam a call. He knows what’s coming before it happens but he can’t stop it without being too fast for a normal kid. As the boys come closer he nudges Ned out the way and takes the full force of the shove from both of the boys; he doesn’t catch himself, falling to the floor and wincing at the pain in his knees and hands.

‘Pete!’ Ned says, trying to reach his friend to help him up.

‘Not got your buddies Captain America or the Winter Soldier to help you this time?’ one of the boys scoffs.

‘Want to bet?’ comes a furious tone from just in front of him, and Peter has never been so happy to see Bucky Barnes in his life. Though the look on his face is murderous and has him shuffling to the side of the sidewalk next to Ned, who’s knelt down next to his friend.

‘Shit it’s the Winter Soldier!’ the boys scatter as Bucky reaches where Peter’s still on the floor, he looks about ready to chase after them.

‘Bucky leave it!’ Sam’s voice stops the former assassin, the Falcon kneels down next to Peter. ‘You alright Pete?’
‘Yeah, nothing that won’t be healed within the hour,’ he says, voice small as he holds up his hands for the man to inspect.

‘Hmm,’ Sam doesn’t look overly convinced, then turns to Ned. ‘You alright kid?’

‘Yes Mr Wilson, sir,’ Ned squeaks. ‘Peter managed to push me out of the way.’

‘I thought you were going to tell us if it got worse,’ Bucky demands, looking down at Peter, his voice still deadly, as was the look in his eyes.

‘Bucky stop scaring the kids!’ Sam scolds him.

‘It’s never been physical before,’ Ned tries to defend him. ‘This was the first time it’s happened,’ he shrinks back as Bucky turns his dark look to him. ‘Well that I’ve seen anyway.’

‘It’s true, Sergeant Barnes,’ Peter pipes up, voice cracking a little as he looks down at his hands, not able to bring himself to look at the man.

‘Come on let’s get you guys to the car,’ Sam says, putting an arm around Peter’s shoulders and pulling the boy to his feet. ‘You want a ride home?’ he asks Ned.

The boy looks like all of his Christmases have come at once. ‘Yes please Mr Falcon sir.’

‘It’s just Sam,’ the man chuckles, ‘I assume you’re the infamous Ned that Peter keeps talking about?’

‘Wow you know who I am?’

Peter can’t help the small smile at his friend’s awe. ‘Yeah course we do, now come on. Bucky stop looking like you want to kill someone and grab Peter’s bag before I tie you to the back of the car and drag you home.’

Bucky just grunts but does as the other man says. When they reach the car, he shoves the bags into the trunk and then pushes Ned to the passenger’s door. ‘You ride shotgun, kid. You got to direct Sam.’

‘Really?’ Peter is pretty sure Ned’s eyes are going to pop from his head. ‘Oh my god this is the best day of my life!’

Peter would disagree as Bucky slides into the back next to him. The back of the car is tense as Ned keeps up a steady stream of chatter in the front as he directs Sam to his home. When they finally arrive Peter is about ready to jump out of the window and see if he can track down Deadpool; he’s pretty sure the merc is the only one who’d be able to save him at this particular moment in time.

‘Wow thank you so much!’ Ned’s still excitable tone pierces Peter’s thoughts as the boy opens the door and waves to the two Avengers. ‘Thank you, really. And Pete?’ Peter looks round at the sound of his name. ‘Thanks for pushing me out the way. You didn’t have to you know?’

Peter gives him a tight smile. ‘Sure I did. Got to protect my guy in the chair.’

‘See you on Monday!’ Ned waves, a big smile on his face. No one says anything until the front door closes behind him and he disappears out of sight up the stairs to his flat.

‘I’m sorry,’ Peter mutters, hating the tense silence. ‘I’m sorry I shouldn’t have let-’

‘Stop, kid,’ Bucky sighs, and he’s surprised at the man’s tone. It almost sounds like he’s holding
back tears. ‘Please don’t start apologising.’

‘I’m sor-’

‘What did I just say?’

‘Right yeah, no apologising,’ Peter mumbles, looking down at his scraped hands that are already beginning to heal.

‘Pete you know you’ve got nothing to apologise for in that situation right?’ Bucky asks him.

‘But I shouldn’t have let them do that! How can I protect people as Spider-Man if I can barely protect my best friend from bullies?’ he demands, gritting his teeth against the tears that are threatening to spill over. ‘I just- I feel so useless at school. I’ve got all these powers, these abilities, and I just let those things happen to my friend when I should be protecting him.’

‘Peter,’ Sam’s soft voice, ‘you did protect him. And the fact that you hold back from using your abilities against people that you could end up seriously hurting, even with all the reasons they give you for doing it? That speaks volumes about you, kid, it really does.’

Peter doesn’t feel like it does, but he doesn’t argue.

‘Pete? You know why I freaked out back there?’ Bucky continues, voice a little steadier than before. Peter shakes his head. ‘It’s because I felt like I’d gone full circle back to before the war and I’m watching Steve getting taken out to the back alley to get beaten up; and I hated feeling that. So I lost my cool. I’m sorry.’

‘But why would you-’

‘If you’re about to ask why I would care about you getting shoved to the floor I’m going to question Tony’s assessment of your intellect,’ Bucky warns.

‘Kid you may not have realised it yet, but we all care about you in our different ways,’ Sam tells him, ‘and we don’t want to see you hurt.’

‘I’m fine really,’ Peter tries to reassure them, feeling his cheeks burning in embarrassment. ‘I could do that all day.’

Bucky groans and gives a small laugh. ‘You’ve been spending way too much time around, Steve. That’s what he used to say.’

‘Right let’s get going,’ Sam says. ‘Bucky get in the front. We are not in Driving Miss Daisy.’

‘Yeah yeah, whatever,’ he replies, rolling his eyes at Peter, giving the boy’s hair a ruffle as he climbs out. ‘Oh and Pete?’ he says as he gets into the front and closes the door. ‘We’re telling Tony when we get back. I’m not keeping this from him anymore if you’re getting physically bullied now.’

‘What? How long has this been going on for?’ Sam demands as he pulls away.

‘Longer than I think Peter will admit to,’ Bucky replies, looking at the teenager in the back.

‘Fine, but I don’t want it to be the first thing we say to him when we get back,’ Peter sulks.

‘Deal. But you tell him before dinner, or I’m bringing it up at dinner and you can have both Papa Stark and Mommy Spider hearing it. Not to mention I’d love to know what Wanda would do if she knew her adopted little brother was-’
‘Alright! I get it,’ Peter cuts him off.

‘Bucky,’ Sam’s tone is warning, ‘leave off.’

The rest of the car ride is quiet, not through any lack of effort on the two men. Peter just wasn’t in the mood to talk. The three of them make their way up to the common area, Bucky carrying Peter’s bags and waving the boy’s hands away when he tries to take them from him. He feels his stomach sink when there’s no sign of Tony in the room, and both Natasha and Wanda are sat on the sofa chatting when they walk in.

‘Hey Pete!’ Wanda says, smiling at him over the back of the sofa.

‘Hey,’ he replies, giving her a small wave and trying for a smile.

‘You alright?’ she asks, immediately concerned.

‘Yeah fine, just a tiring day at school you know? Teachers just droning on and on and-’

‘Kid you’re rambling,’ Natasha cuts him off. ‘What’s happened?’

‘Nothing,’ he winces at his defensive tone.

‘What did you do?’ Wanda glares at Bucky.

‘I didn’t do anything!’ the metal armed man defends himself, dropping Peter’s bags at the door.

‘For once he didn’t,’ Sam defends him as he heads to the fridge.

‘So something has happened,’ Natasha deduces.

‘No it didn’t,’ Peter says, ‘I’m going to put my bags in my room.’

‘Pete-’ Wanda starts, but is cut off as he spins around and marches to the door. ‘What’s happened?’

‘Nothing!’ he shouts and ends up colliding with a body just coming through the door.

‘Woah! Slow down there, champ,’ Tony says.

‘Sorry, Mr Stark,’ he mumbles, trying to dodge around his mentor.

‘Peter?’ Tony places a gentle hand on his arm. ‘What’s up?’

‘Nothing, I just want to drop my bags-’

‘Then why are your jeans ripped?’ he asks softly. ‘And why do you feel like you’re about to bounce off the walls?’

Peter realises he’s shaking and his breath catches in his throat as he tries to swallow back the tears. Then there’s a pair of warm arms holding him and he’s holding on to the front of Tony’s shirt, desperately holding back tears as he tells him everything. The name calling, the constant harassment
from Flash, the older boys he’s now got involved, all the way up to the incident that Bucky and Sam had seen earlier and his feelings about not being able to help his best friend.

‘I’m *Spider-Man,*’ he spits out, ‘I should be able to keep bullies away from my friend.’

Through all of it Tony hasn’t said a word, no one in the room has. Peter suddenly realises that at some point in his tirade they’ve ended up sitting on one of the sofas, and the tears have been falling down his face and soaking Tony’s shirt. The man runs a soothing hand up and down his back and Peter suddenly feels like the sixteen year old boy he is. Not a super-hero, not an honorary Avenger, not someone whose best friends with a mercenary with stupid healing abilities, not a kid who’s lucky enough to have an internship with Stark Industries: he’s just a teenager from Queen’s who’s reached his limit with people at school and letting himself be comforted by his father figure.

And that scares him. *Since when did I start thinking of Mr Stark as a father figure?* he wonders as his breathing evens out.

‘Please don’t do anything,’ he mumbles as Tony’s hold on him begins to relax. He’s still too embarrassed to look up at anyone in the room.

‘Pete, after everything you’ve just said how do you expect me *not* to do something?’ Tony asks quietly.

‘I don’t want it to get worse, not for Ned anyway. I mean, if Spider-Man can’t take a couple of scraped knees then what-’

‘Alright I’m stopping you right there,’ Tony gives him a small shake, to prove his point. ‘Peter why do you think I insist you finish school when you could just work at Stark Industries if you wanted to earn some money?’

Peter shrugs. ‘Because you want me to keep my identity secret?’

‘Because I want you to have a normal life before giving it over entirely to being an Avenger, or any kind of superhero,’ he explains. ‘Because once you start doing this shit full time you can’t just give it up and go back to a normal life, especially if everyone knows who you are. Pete you’re only sixteen, that’s too young to give up everything to help other people all the time; too young to put your life on the line for them. I know,’ he raises a hand for Peter to stay quiet as he pulls away, frowning and opening his mouth to protest. ‘I know you can’t sit back and do nothing, which is why I gave you back the suit, why you come up here every other weekend. Why I don’t stop you from being Spider-Man. But you still need to be Peter Parker as well. You need to have the chance to go through school, get drunk under-age at parties-’

‘Tony, really?’ Natasha pipes up.

‘Or not if you feel like following Mommy Spider’s advice. Go on dates, preferably with girls whose fathers don’t end up trying to steal my stuff and kill you if I’m honest. All the stuff you’re supposed to do as a teenager. And yeah maybe you won’t do all the crazy stuff I did at your age-’

‘Please god *don’t,*’ she butts in again. ‘I don’t think we’d cope if you did half the stuff Tony did at your age.’

‘Not going to lie I agree with Nat on this one,’ Tony chuckles. ‘What I’m trying to say is: you don’t have to be Spider-Man at school. Just be Peter. Which means letting me speak to the Principal about why he’s allowing my intern to get bullied.’

Peter looks down, not able to keep Tony’s worried gaze. ‘Alright.’
‘And if it doesn’t change you’ll let one of us know?’ he asks.

Peter nods. ‘On one condition.’

Tony raises an eyebrow. ‘And that is?’

‘You don’t let Sergeant Barnes near my school for a month or so, I think he was going to kill high schoolers.’

Natasha snorts. ‘I wasn’t going to kill them,’ Bucky says. ‘Just maybe maim them a little bit,’ he mutters just loud enough for Peter’s enhanced hearing to pick up.

‘Deal,’ Tony says with a small smile. ‘You alright?’

Peter nods. ‘Thanks, Mr Stark.’

‘Hey kid?’ Natasha says. ‘Why don’t you bring Ned up one weekend?’

‘Really?’ he asks, looking between her and Tony. Tony just laughs and nods, ruffling his hair.

‘Go put your stuff in your room, Underoos. Come join me in the lab, we’ll have a tinker before dinner.’

Peter smiles and nods, Wanda gets up and joins him, grabbing one of his bags before he can take them both. ‘You’re an idiot you know that?’ she says fondly as they head down towards his room.

‘What did I do this time?’

She wraps an arm around his waist. ‘Not letting us look out for you, little brother. And not thinking you’re good enough.’

Peter would be lying if he said he wasn’t completely drained by the time they sat down to dinner that evening. He’s pretty sure the rest of the team haven’t been told about his little breakdown that afternoon as no one mentions anything, and no one seems to treat him differently. Well except Wanda being a bit more ‘big sister’ with him; he’s not even sure he minds it that much.

‘Hey Peter?’ the teen looks up from his plate at Steve’s question.

‘Sorry Captain, did you ask me something?’

Steve smiles. ‘Not yet I haven’t. I was wondering if you wanted to start joining in on team training? We seem to be slacking on the weekends, and I didn’t want you to get left alone with only the mad scientist for company,’ he grins as he jerks a thumb at Tony.

‘I’m not a mad scientist, I’m a mad inventor,’ Tony corrects him. ‘And Peter loves spending time with me!’

‘I can join in training?’ he asks, eyes going wide. ‘Really?’
‘Hey! Feeling offended here!’ Tony calls from the other end of the table.

‘Sorry Mr Stark! I didn’t mean I didn’t want spend with you. It’s just, wow you really want me to join in training? I mean are you sure that-’

‘I’d just take that as a yes, Spangles,’ Tony laughs, ‘I’m sure we’ll find some time to hang out in the lab around training.’

‘You do realise this is just going to create more arguments right?’ Sam points out. ‘Everyone’s going to want to be the one to train the kid.’

‘Shotgun!’ a series of voices call out at once, making Peter turn bright red.

‘Get in line boys,’ Natasha says. ‘No one’s training Baby Spider till I’ve taught him how to kick your sorry asses.’ No one even tries to argue with her.

When they’re settling down for the movie later Peter finds himself taking the seat next to Natasha instead of his usual spot on the floor next to Tony. Bucky just settles down on the floor next to Sam without a word and Peter can’t help but curl up against the red-haired assassin. After his outburst earlier he kind of misses when he and May would curl up to watch films, usually when he was missing his parents when they were on one of their business trips and Uncle Ben was out working. But, he muses as he struggles to keep his eyes open, Natasha’s nails gently brushing through his hair, *Mommy Spider is just as comfy to curl up with.*

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! Happy New Year!

First off I am so sorry to everyone who has commented and I haven't yet responded to, I'm making it my top priority this weekend so should hopefully get round to at least some of you by then. I really do appreciate you all taking the time to leave a comment about the story and feel terrible that I haven't yet got round to responding to you all.

I hope you all enjoy this chapter, I thought a little more bonding time would be needed as things are really going to start kicking off in the next chapter. I have written up to Chapter 45, and there's about six more to write so I'm nearly done with writing the story. I'll be keeping updates to single chapters until it is finished though, just in case I get a period of time where I don't get chance to write and I lose all my backlog - meaning you'd have to wait longer than a week to get an update! Once I have finished it, though, I may start back with the double updates. So watch this space!

Thank you so much for keeping up with this story and leaving reviews and kudos. I hope you're still enjoying it. Let me know if there is anything in particular you'd like to see at some stage. I got a whole background story for this out of one request so please do send in some suggestions.

Also: as the Christmas Special was so well received and I actually really enjoyed writing it, do let me know if there are any other specials you'd like to see in the future. I've already got an idea for Peter's school going on a field trip to the facility (but needs to be posted when this story is a bit further on I'm afraid). So if there are any particular situations you'd like to see the characters in do let me know and, if I can't put it in the
main story, I might just make a special out of it.

Thank you again for sticking with this.

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

'Boss there's an incoming video call for you, would you like me to put it through?'' FRIDAY says.

'Only one person would be stupid enough to try and speak to me this early in the morning,' Tony grumbles, face covered by one hand. 'Put it through, FRIDAY,' he gives the call enough time to be patched through and then continues. 'Ross what do you want this early? I've not even had my first mug of coffee so it better be life or death.'

'Aww Anthony that's no way to speak to an old friend now is it?' the oily voice that comes over the speakers is definitely not Ross'.
Old Enemy

Chapter Summary

The team gets a warning from a friend, and Tony gets a call from someone from his past.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tony just sits back, watching the teenager happily move around his work station reaching for the various different chemicals he’d asked them to get in. He’s experimenting on his web fluid, the lab coat they’d ordered for him is sitting around his shoulders, goggles on his face and he’s still chatting away about the training session he had with Natasha that morning. He’s been talking about it for two hours non-stop.

Watching him throw the chemicals together, talking away animatedly, Tony thinks Steve’s description of ‘mad scientist’ is better applied to the kid. There’s a smile on his face he couldn’t get rid of, even if he tried, and he’s given up any pretence of doing his own work.

‘Boss?’ FRIDAY’s voice interrupts his little piece of tranquillity.

‘What’s up FRIDAY?’ he sighs.

‘Scott Lang’s just turned up in a cab, boss. Captain Rogers and Mr Wilson have already gone to meet him.’

‘Scott’s here?’ Tony frowns. ‘Alright tell them we’ll be up in a minute. Come on, kid, let’s get you out your mad scientist gear. Try not to eat him.’

‘Mr Stark!’ Peter rolls his eyes. ‘I’m not an actual spider you know. And why won’t you say that to Natasha?’

‘Hang on, when did she become Natasha instead of Miss Natasha?’

Peter looks sheepish. ‘Since she put me on my backside like every time I called her that. I think my bruises have bruises.’

‘I thought you had Spidey-senses?’

‘I do, but she still managed to catch me off guard. Plus I wasn’t really paying attention to them, since we were in, you know, training.’

Tony just laughs and shakes his head. ‘Come on, kid, let’s not keep our guest waiting.’

‘What the hell happened to you?’ Tony asks when they finally get out of the elevator, Peter still chattering away like a noisy satellite.
Scott looks up at him through one black eye, the other covered by an ice pack, and heaves a sigh of relief. ‘Thank God.’

‘Tony we had to put the cab fare on Stark Industries,’ Steve says a little sheepishly. ‘Is that alright?’

‘I’ll pay you back,’ Scott promises. ‘I just had to get here and Ralph couldn’t fly me the whole way.’

Tony waves him off. ‘Forget the money, Lang. And who the hell is Ralph?’ Scott holds up a finger where Tony can see an ant crawling. ‘That’s slightly disturbing.’

‘Tony they’re coming after you,’ Scott says. ‘I don’t know why they thought coming to me would help their case, but when I said I couldn’t get hold of you they… well they didn’t like the way I said it I guess.’

‘Wait, who came after you? What do you mean they want me?’

Scott slumps in his chair, and Tony goes to pour him a glass of scotch. ‘Start from the beginning,’ he says, handing the man the glass. ‘What happened?’

Scott sighs, downing the scotch in one, which raises an eyebrow from Steve, and sets the glass down. ‘So I was coming back from seeing Hank and these guys jump me and drag me down an alley. Now I’m thinking they just want money or something seeing as I’ve just come from the rich guy’s house, but they start demanding I call you. When I tell them I don’t have a way of getting hold of you they start asking with their fists. This carries on for I’m not sure how long, but I manage to get some of the fire ants involved and get them off me. Eventually this guy in a suit turns up and tells them to stop.’

‘A guy in a suit? What did he look like?’ Sam asks.

Scott shakes his head, wincing as the motion pulls at some of his injuries. ‘Couldn’t see. Everything was getting a little blurry anyway, and the guy was backlit from some headlights so I couldn’t make out much. He asks me to pass on a message to you though,’ he says looking up at Tony. ‘He says: “Tell Anthony, that Justin wants to get back in business with him again.” Then he takes the other guys and walks off leaving me in the alley.’


‘No, they put me in a cab and told him to take me wherever I needed, I told him a random address, then managed to slip into the suit and got Ralph to carry me somewhere else. I did that in a couple of cabs before getting into the one that brought me here. Hope I threw them off.’

‘Good thinking,’ Sam tells him. ‘You want some pain killers?’

‘Yeah, that’d be good,’ Scott groans, moving the ice pack to the other side of his face.

‘Tony?’ Steve frowns at him in concern.

He’s frozen. He should have known, even when he had the report from the prison to say they’d identified all the bodies. He should have known. Nothing was ever that easy in his life.

‘Tony,’ Tony blinks and looks up into Steve’s worried blue eyes. ‘When had the soldier moved?’
‘It’s Hammer,’ he finally gets his voice to work. ‘Hammer got out of the prison.’

‘I thought they identified his body?’ Steve asks.

‘They said they did,’ he growls. ‘Scott do you want to stay here till we find him?’

Scott shakes his head. ‘I need to look after Cassie; they might go after her and I can’t risk that.’

‘You can’t do much in the state you’re in now,’ Tony reasons with him. ‘At least stay here until you’ve healed a bit, then you can go protect your girl. In the meantime I’ll get a team to watch them on the down-low. How does that sound?’

Scott looks torn, but at an encouraging nod from Sam he agrees. ‘Thanks, Tony.’

‘Hey you made sure to get over here and warn us, it’s the least we can do. Especially since you’ve got hurt because of me.’ Tony turns to look at Peter who’s been strangely quiet throughout the whole exchange. ‘Pete can you take Scott down to the room next to yours? I’ll get FRIDAY to sort out the rest in the meantime.’

‘Sure thing, Mr Stark. Err… Mr Stark?’

‘Yeah, Pete?’

‘Who is Scott?’

Tony blinks a couple of times then bursts out laughing. ‘Sorry I completely forgot you two didn’t actually get formally introduced. Scott meet Peter Parker, aka Spider-Man. Peter, meet Scott Lang, aka Ant-Man.’

‘Wait you’re the guy who went giant on us in Berlin?’ Peter’s eyes go wide. ‘Dude that was awesome. How did you do it? Do you grow or does just the suit? Wait is it the suit that makes you grow or is it your powers? Can you actually talk to ants?’

‘Does he ever stop?’ Scott asks Tony, getting a laugh from the three men as Peter goes bright red and mumbles an apology.

‘Just go easy on him, Pete,’ Tony says, clapping a hand on the boy’s shoulder. ‘One question at a time and give him chance to answer. Don’t worry Scott, he’s a good kid. One of the best.’

‘Mr Stark…’ Peter turns an even brighter shade of red and toes the carpet with his shoe. ‘Umm… right let me show you where your room is.’

‘Thanks again, Tony,’ he says as he passes the inventor to follow the teen.

‘Don’t mention it, Scott. I owe you big time.’ Once they’d gone into the elevator, Steve puts a hand on his shoulder. ‘We need to get the team together and let them know what’s happened. No one leaves the facility alone, not until we’ve got Hammer in a jail cell I’ve made.’

‘I’ll get everyone together,’ Sam says.
Tony doesn’t get a lot of sleep so he gets to breakfast a lot earlier than normal; he says a brief hello to Steve, Bucky and Natasha who are all sat finishing off their own meals.

‘You’re up early,’ Bucky comments. ‘Trouble sleeping?’

‘Maybe a little,’ he admits, heading to the coffee machine.

‘Do you want me to make you something, Tony?’ Natasha offers, he gives her a grateful smile and she slips from her stool to the fridge. ‘Bacon and eggs alright?’

‘I love you, Nat,’ he replies. She just laughs softly and points to the stool she’s just vacated. He takes the hint and sits down.

‘Morning, Scott,’ Steve says as the man walks in. ‘You feeling any better?’

‘Yeah thanks,’ he responds, the bruises are darker than yesterday, but he definitely looks more alert. ‘And thanks for letting me speak with Cassie last night Tony, really set my mind at ease.’ Tony just waves him off as Natasha offers to make the new arrival some breakfast as well.

‘Boss there’s an incoming video call for you, would you like me to put it through?’ FRIDAY says.

‘Only one person would be stupid enough to try and speak to me this early in the morning,’ Tony grumbles, face covered by one hand. ‘Put it through, FRIDAY,’ he gives the call enough time to be patched through and then continues. ‘Ross what do you want this early? I’ve not even had my first mug of coffee so it better be life or death.’

‘Aww Anthony that’s no way to speak to an old friend now is it?’ the oily voice that comes over the speakers is definitely not Ross’. Tony’s eyes fly open and he sits up, spinning round to face the smirking face of Justin Hammer.

‘You’re looking pretty spry for a dead guy, Hammer,’ his voice is even, but his heart is racing. ‘To what do I owe this unfortunate turn of events? I don’t owe you any money do I? Please don’t tell me you want a job. I’m afraid there’s no vacancies at Stark Industries right now.’

‘Always the joker, Anthony,’ Hammer responds, smirk not leaving his face. ‘Ah I see that woman you had working for you before is still around. Though I must say I think you’re wasted as a PA my dear, perhaps I could find a better use for your skills?’

‘Unless it’s offering your backside as a place to store my shoes you can forget it,’ Natasha spits at him.

‘Ah yes, the infamous Black Widow. I’ve learned all about you since I last saw you Miss Romanov, very interesting.’ As Hammer continues to talk Tony taps some commands into his watch to get FRIDAY on to locating him. ‘And I see you’ve met my new friend Scott as well. How’s the face Scotty?’

‘Feeling worse for having to see what you actually look like,’ Scott responds.

‘I’m so glad you made it to see Anthony before I called. I was hoping he’d have a bit of warning. You’ve done exactly what I needed you to do’. Scott growls, and Tony puts a comforting hand on his arm. ‘Now who else is still sticking around you? I’m surprised you haven’t managed to drive them away yet. That’s your usual trick isn’t it?’

‘You got a point to any of this Hammer?’
‘Well well well, Captain America. I must say it’s an honour to finally meet you.’

‘The feeling is not mutual,’ Steve growls.

‘And here I was told you were polite,’ Tony looks down as Hammer continues, FRIDAY is about sixty percent done. They just need him to continue talking a little longer. ‘I’m guessing the other gentleman is the Winter Soldier? Well now I do know some people who would just love to meet you.’

‘I’m sure you do,’ Bucky growls, standing up and glaring at the hologram.

‘Hey Mr Stark I didn’t realise you were up already, do you want-’

‘Get out!’ Tony’s eyes go wide as he spins to see Peter walking through the door. The boy pauses in shock. Bucky reacts the quickest out of everyone and leaps in front of the boy, bringing him close to his chest so he’s hidden from Hammer’s view.

‘Stay still, kid,’ Bucky tells him. ‘Don’t move and don’t speak. Nod if you understand.’

Hammer’s gleeful laugh behind Tony has the blood in his veins turning to ice. ‘Ah the precious intern. You know I am just dying to meet this kid, I hear he’s pretty smart. Well he must be if you put up with him, Anthony. Didn’t quite catch his name though?’

‘I swear to God, Hammer, I’m going to rip you five new ones if you don’t get to the point,’ Tony growls at him, turning back to face the hologram.

Hammer tsks at him. ‘Now, now, Anthony where are your manners? I’m sure I’ll speak to you very soon. In the meantime I have to run before you finish tracking my system. My new friends are very good at helping me keep one step ahead of you. Until the next time we meet, Anthony. Hail Hydra!’

And with those words he’s gone. Tony looks down at his watch and screams a string of curse words at the ninety nine percent that flashes up at him. Not even Steve says anything about his use of language until he’s done.

‘Mr Stark?’ Peter’s voice is still muffled where Bucky hasn’t let go of him yet.

Without thinking Tony rushes over to the boy and drags him out of Bucky’s grip, holding him in his own punishing hold and desperately trying to keep himself under control. ‘You’ll be fine, Pete,’ he says into the teen’s hair. ‘I swear to you he’s not going to touch so much as a hair on your head.’

‘He’s not hurting anyone,’ Steve says from behind him. ‘He’s already hurt Scott and that’s one person too many. We’ll track him down, we’ll track down Hydra and we’ll shut them down once and for all.’

Tony really wishes he could believe Steve. But he can hear the crack of Vanko’s whips in his ears, and Hammer’s gleeful laugh when Peter had walked into the room.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! I hope you enjoyed this chapter, now things are going to start
picking up from the enemy side of things, sorry I know it's taken a while. It looks like
there's going to be around fifty two chapters in total for this story, and I've nearly
finished writing them all. I've also been getting some really good suggestions for
specials or things to include in the story which I shall hopefully be getting started on
soon.

Thank you to everyone who is still reading this story, to everyone who has left kudos or
bookmarked this story, and especially to those of you who take the time to leave
comments. I hope you are continuing to enjoy it. As always let me know if there is
anything you would like to see.

L x

As always here's your sneak peek at the next chapter:

Friday during his last class, which is just as boring as every other week, he gets a
message from Tony. He passes it to Ned who looks at him with huge eyes.

'Dude, seriously? That's awesome!' he says, nearly loud enough to get them caught.

Peter, though, is now a bundle of nervous energy.

'Hey Pete, we need your help with a mission. Suit up and meet us at this address when
class is over.' There's an address after it a couple of blocks from his school.

The Avengers wanted his help. With a mission.
Peter confides his worries to Deadpool, and then gets called in for a mission later in the week.

Peter hangs up after his latest check in. He’s gone from doing one update per patrol to one every two hours as per Tony’s request, and he knows the man is monitoring the GPS on his suit every time he’s on patrol. He would be getting annoyed, but he remembers how scared Tony had been after the call with the guy named Hammer, and it makes him smile to know the man does actually care about him.

‘Oh Spideykins!’

‘No, that one is not staying,’ he doesn’t even turn around as he puts his phone back in its pouch.

‘Awww,’ the merc whines. ‘Why not?’

‘Is: I’ll web you upside down half up the side of the Empire State Building, a good enough reason?’

‘What’s got your panties in a twist? Not enough bad guys to web up?’ When Peter doesn’t respond he can tell the merc gets worried. ‘What’s going on Spider-Man?’

‘Deadpool? You know you offered me your number before?’

‘Yeah, course I do.’

‘Can I have it? Just in case?’

‘Alright Spidey what the fuck is going on? You’re scaring me now.’

He caves. He tells him all about the phone call and Tony’s reaction and the new safety measures he’s put in place during patrols. He even confides his own fears about what Hammer could do to the inventor and why he wants him, how he’s now linked to HYDRA, how he’d been interested in Bucky. Everything.

‘Shit and I thought my life was fucked up,’ Deadpool says when Peter’s finished his verbal diarrhoea.

He laughs. ‘That’s all you can say?’

The man shrugs. ‘I thought it was a fitting summary. Hand me your phone, Spider-Man, ain’t no one going to get hold of my web slinger.’

Peter opens a new contact and hands his phone to the merc, careful to make sure he can’t see any of
his background pictures, one of which is of him and May. ‘It’s not me I’m worried about, Deadpool,’ he admits as the man types away. ‘It’s Mr Stark and the others. It’s the people in my life when I’m not being Spider-Man. What if I can’t protect them and Hammer tries to get at them?’

‘Well now you know there’s another person you can call to come help,’ he responds, passing Peter’s phone back to him. ‘Doesn’t matter when or where, Spidey. I’ll come help if you need me to.’

‘He might come after you too,’ he says quietly, staring down at the new contact in his phone. ‘If he finds out I’m Spider-Man, he could come after you.’

‘Why’s that an issue?’

‘Oh come on, Pool,’ he says, ‘of course I’m going to be worried about you getting hurt! I know you can regenerate, and I know you come back from basically everything. But that’s not the point. I don’t want you getting hurt because of me.’ Deadpool doesn’t say anything, but puts a comforting arm around his waist and pulls him against his side. ‘Not everyone in my life has the same kind of abilities I do,’ he continues, voice still soft. ‘It’s so easy for them to get hurt, for something bad to happen. The Avengers have each other and all their tech and everything; I’m worried about them but I know they have each other. But they’re also so far away. Sometimes it feels like you’re the only one that’s at my back when I’m here, like you’re the only one who can keep up with me. You accept everything without even knowing everything about me. I don’t want to lose you.’

‘You’re not going to lose me, Baby Boy,’ Deadpool says, voice just as quiet. ‘You know me, I’m like a bad rash that just won’t go away. The only way I’m going anywhere is if you ask me to.’

‘You mean it?’

‘Well I’ll probably still kick up a fuss with the last one and you may have to web me to a couple of buildings before I get the memo.’

Peter laughs, and pulls the merc into a tight hug. ‘Thanks, Pool.’ They’ve hugged before, many times when they’ve been fooling about after patrol, but this one feels different. It feels like, in the course of this conversation, they’ve crossed a bridge, and Peter’s not entirely sure which one it was.

‘You know, Spidey,’ the normally mouthy merc says after a few moments of silence. ‘It feels like you’re the only one who gets me a lot of the time as well. If that Hammer guy comes within twenty feet of you, let me know. I may have to ask for a pass on the no killing rule though.’

Peter chuckles and pulls away. ‘No promises. Mr Stark will probably want to talk to him.’

‘Fuck.’

‘I better head home before Mr Stark gets paranoid I’ve been drugged or something. I’ll speak to you soon, Deadpool.’

As he gets up and ready to leave he hears the merc say, very quietly. ‘Wade.’

‘What?’

‘My name’s Wade, Baby Boy.’

Peter grins. ‘You’ll have to wait till next time to learn my name.’ He swings away to the sound of the merc’s laughter.
The rest of his week goes fairly smoothly. It’s his birthday so he, May and Ned go to have Thai at his and May’s favourite restaurant then catch a film. Tony sends him a message saying happy birthday and that they’ll do something when he’s next up at the facility; Wanda sends him a message saying he’s getting less her ‘baby’ brother, to which he replies with something snarky.

Friday during his last class, which is just as boring as every other week, he gets a message from Tony. He passes it to Ned who looks at him with huge eyes.

‘Dude, seriously? That’s awesome!’ he says, nearly loud enough to get them caught.

Peter, though, is now a bundle of nervous energy.

‘Hey Pete, we need your help with a mission. Suit up and meet us at this address when class is over.’ There’s an address after it a couple of blocks from his school.

The Avengers wanted his help. With a mission.

He barely manages to stay still for the rest of class and says a quick goodbye and see you tomorrow to Ned as he runs out of the classroom. They’ve got plans to spend a day in the city. Ned just smiles and waves him off.

Finding a spot to change, he does so in record time before he’s more flying than swinging through the air to the place Tony had texted.

‘Hey Karen can you let Mr Stark know I’m on my way?’

‘They’ve just arrived themselves, Peter, I’m sure you’ll be there before I get chance to send anything,’ Karen says, sounding amused. He realises she’s right as he lands on the rooftop; the force of his momentum sends him skidding on his backside and coming to a stop right in front of Tony just as he’s stepping out of his suit.

‘Sorry, Mr Stark, but you said you needed help and I didn’t want to keep you waiting.’

Tony chuckles and gestures for him to enter the Quinjet that’s resting on the rooftop just behind him. ‘Let’s go Spider-Man.’

Peter all but jumps through the door. Natasha’s at the controls and Sam is checking his jet pack at one of the seats. ‘Wow, hi guys. What’s the mission?’

‘We’ll explain on the way,’ Tony says. ‘Alright, Nat, you know where we’re going.’

‘On it,’ she replies, and the jet takes off.
They fly for around an hour, and Tony and Sam take him through the mission. Its simple reconnaissance but they figured his enhanced senses and wall crawling abilities would be useful, especially since they were hoping there’d be clues to what was enhancing the weaponry and his hearing had picked up the difference before. Finally they reach their destination.

‘Alright I’m going to go scan the building first, then Pete I’m going to give you a spot to enter in and I need you to check the coast is clear ready for Nat to follow you. Sam and I will keep checking the outside and I’ll follow you in after.’

‘Whatever you say Mr Stark.’

Tony flies out the jet, and Peter doesn’t get much chance to see where they are before Natasha’s closed the door again.

‘Just in case there’s any nasty surprises,’ she explains at his questioning glance.

‘Alright kid I got a window for you. Nat? Line him up,’ Tony’s voice comes over the speakers.

‘On it,’ she says, manoeuvring the jet.

‘Right kid the window right in front of you? I’ve got it open. I want you to jump in and do a quick scan of the immediate area. Got it?’

‘Yes sir, Mr Stark,’ he says. Alright, simple so far. Don’t screw this up Parker. As the doors open he spots the window and takes a running leap, landing gracefully inside and looking up.

‘Hey, Mr Stark? This room is really familiar,’ he says, standing up.

‘Surprise!’ a chorus of voices shout as the lights come on.

‘Gah!’ he stumbles backwards, and would have fallen back out of the window had a laughing Tony not come up behind him and caught him.

‘Happy birthday, Pete,’ the man says, lifting up the faceplate of his suit.

Peter turns back around, ripping his mask off and taking in the sight before him. The rest of the team are in the common area, which is decorated with banners and balloons, including one big banner that says ‘Happy Birthday Peter’ along the back. Then he catches sight of the other occupants.

‘May? Ned?’

‘Hey Pete,’ Ned grins. ‘How awesome is this?’

‘But you can’t lie to save your life, how did you not spill?’ Peter demands.

‘I told Tony to only tell him this morning,’ May laughs at the shock on her nephew’s face.

‘Wait, that was the call you took earlier that had you hiding in the bathroom for the whole of first period?’

‘Umm…. Yeah?’ Ned answers.

‘And that’s why you wouldn’t make plans for tomorrow when I asked?’
‘Yeah?’

‘Wow I’m an idiot,’ Peter mutters, earning him a chorus of laughter from the team.

‘I’m still annoyed we had to miss your face,’ Natasha says as Sam flies her in through the open window.

‘Oh don’t worry I’m pretty sure Mr Stark had FRIDAY record it,’ Peter grumbles, earning himself a hair ruffle from his mentor.

‘Must admit I’m impressed with your instincts, Pete,’ Steve says. ‘You recognised the room straight away despite everything we did to throw you off the scent.’

‘Ok we are not talking shop tonight,’ Tony says, making the Captain pout. ‘Someone give the poor kid some clothes to change out of his suit and let’s get this party started.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. I hope you’ve all stopped panicking now after last week’s sneak peek that I think had people convinced Peter was going to end up dead. Sorry I know that was mean of me to choose that bit as the peek. I've got a double update this week, so head on over to the next chapter for Peter's birthday party.

Thank you so much to everyone who has left comments and kudos! A big thank you as well to everyone who is sticking with this story, I really appreciate it and the responses I've got from this story are incredible. I hope you continue to enjoy it.

L x
Birthday Party

Chapter Summary

Peter celebrates his birthday with the Avengers, but the time also comes to admit a secret he's kept from May

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Peter gets changed in record time and is back in the common area as the rest of the team are finishing bringing out all of the food.

‘He’s back! Can we give him presents yet?’ Wanda asks excitedly.

Peter laughs. ‘Are you six again or something?’ Her response is just to stick her tongue out at him.

‘Alright kids break it up,’ Natasha laughs. ‘Pete can do whatever he wants. It’s his party.’

‘Whatever I want?’ he asks, already feeling the grin spreading on his face.

‘Uh oh, I know that look,’ May says. ‘Whatever you’re thinking stop it right now.’

‘But May,’ he puts on the puppy dog eyes he knows she has trouble resisting. And Tony definitely can’t. ‘I’ve just been told I can do whatever I want.’

‘Oh for-‘ Tony throws his hands in the air. ‘What is it kid? Put us out of our misery.’

Peter grins. ‘I want to try out some of my training on Sergeant Barnes.’ Out of the corner of his eye he sees Natasha turn to hide a smile.

‘Right,’ Bucky looks nervously around, ‘am I the only one who’s slightly worried?’

‘I’m not worried at all,’ Natasha says.

‘Yeah you wouldn’t be,’ he mutters. ‘Alright kid, give it your best shot.’

He hears Natasha mumble to Tony about getting FRIDAY to record, and the inventor gives her a quizzical look before punching some commands into his watch.

‘But I’m warning you,’ he continues as he walks towards Peter, ‘I’m not going easy on you just because it’s your-‘

Peter drops, throwing out a leg and spinning round, knocking the ex-assassin’s feet from under him and sending him sprawling; then he flips over the top of the prone man, webbing both of his arms to the floor before landing perfectly and grinning at him.. ‘That’s for the coffee comment when you first came to pick me up from school.’

Steve bursts out laughing. ‘I told you he’d get you back for it eventually.’
‘I didn’t expect him to wait this long!’

‘Why wouldn’t I wait to get training from Natasha on how to kick your ass?’ Peter says, then after a look from May goes to unweb the man from the floor.

‘When did she stop being Miss Natasha?’ Bucky demands.

‘When she pulled that trick on me every time I called her that,’ Peter admits, then leaps to the ceiling to avoid the swipe from the metal arm.

‘Oh come on Buck you know you deserved that,’ Steve laughs, ‘you’re just sore because you know FRIDAY’s going to have recorded it.’

‘Ugh, fine,’ Bucky grins up at the ceiling where Peter’s still crouching. ‘Call it even now?’

‘Sure thing Sergeant Barnes,’ Peter says, letting his webs lower him down until he’s on the same eye level as Bucky. ‘Until the next time you try and wind me up.’

‘That’s fair,’ the man laughs and Peter flips so he’s back on his feet. ‘Now: food or presents?’

‘Both?’

‘Oh god he’s learning way too much from you Tony!’ Natasha laughs.

As everyone heads to get plates of food Ned runs up to Peter, his eyes wide. ‘Dude you just totally took out the Winter Soldier!’

Peter grins. ‘I know. I’ve been waiting to do that since Nat first took me for a training session.’

Ned’s eyes, if possible, get even wider. ‘You just called the Black Widow by her first name dude. Again.’

‘Ned if you’d been in one of her training sessions so would you. Have you met everyone?’

‘Errm, kind of? I mean I said ‘hi’, but not much else. I’m a bit terrified to be honest.’

‘Come on, Guy in the Chair. Let me introduce you properly.’

The next hour or so is spent introducing Ned properly to each of the team members, Natasha is taking care of May and Peter doesn’t dare interrupt those two, they’re scary enough alone, together is just terrifying. The team had clubbed together and got him a range of limited edition Lego sets which he and Ned had geeked over and decided they were going to spend all tomorrow making. And no Peter wasn’t giving Tony the choice about sending his friend home this weekend.

‘Peter?’ Wanda comes over with a small smile on her face. ‘I just got you a little something extra.’ She looks a little nervous as she hands him a small box.

‘You didn’t have to,’ he says, opening the small box and finding a handmade woven brand, there’s a flatter part of the rope-like material that has his name engraved on it.

‘I used to make them when I was little,’ she explains, looking a little sheepish. ‘I just thought.’ He cuts her off by bringing her into a tight hug. He doesn’t need her to say she used to make them with her brother, he can work that out by himself. It might have been one of the simplest gifts he’d received this year, but it definitely meant the most.
‘I love it,’ he says, ‘thank you.’ She squeezes him back and when he pulls away he can see unshed tears in her eyes. Wanda gives him another smile and then leaves him in the hands of Aunt May.

‘I got you a little something extra as well,’ she says, helping him slip the band Wanda had made him over his wrist.

‘May you already got me so much,’ he protests.

‘I know,’ she says, ‘but this was something I thought you’d want up here.’ They sit down on one of the sofas and she hands him a square box. ‘Tony showed me your room and there’s pictures of us, and of you and Ned in there, a couple of the team as well. And I know you didn’t want to bring yours up from home so I thought I’d give you one to keep up here. Peter? What’s wrong honey?’

Peter’s looking down at a framed picture of himself with his Uncle Ben, it was taken a couple of years ago, not long before he’d died. He can’t help the tears that are streaming down his cheeks.

‘Peter? Honey come on talk to me,’ May pleads, he can sense the rest of the occupants have started to notice something wrong, but it doesn’t fully pierce the fog in his brain.

‘It was my fault,’ he eventually whispers as a tear drop falls onto the glass front.

May puts an arm over his shoulders. ‘Oh, Peter honey it wasn’t your fault at all. You know as well as I do it was a mugging gone wrong.’

‘It was May,’ he struggles to stop his breath from catching. ‘I was at the mugging. He stepped in to save me.’

‘What? Peter you were at Decathlon practise, the mugging victim said Ben came and helped after someone had tried to…’

Peter knows the exact moment May realises the truth. ‘It was just after I got my powers,’ he knows he has to tell her anyway. ‘I wasn’t at Decathlon, I was trying out my new abilities. I heard the mugging happening and just… I had to do something. So I jumped down without looking at what was happening.’

‘Peter-’

‘I didn’t realise the mugger had a gun. I didn’t have my web shooters then and didn’t have any way to get rid of it. Uncle Ben must have been passing by, he came in the alley and the mugger shot him instead. I couldn’t- I didn’t-’

‘Shh, honey,’ May pulls him into a tight hug.

‘I should have checked,’ he whimpers. ‘I should have looked. If I had, Uncle Ben could have just picked up the victim and taken him back to his station. Instead he got shot. It should have been me-’

‘Peter Benjamin Parker,’ May’s voice is stern, and Peter squeezes his eyes shut. ‘Don’t you dare finish that sentence,’ she pauses for a moment before continuing. ‘Ben went out how he would have wanted to: doing the job he loved and helping people. Even more so if he’d known it was you he saved.’

‘He did,’ Peter told her. ‘I was there when he died. I tried to stop the blood but I couldn’t.’
‘Honey why didn’t you tell me?’

‘He told me not to,’ he admits. ‘He said not to worry you and… and he told me to be more careful in the future.’

‘Peter,’ May sighs, and seems to have an internal struggle for a minute. ‘Peter I need you to look at me.’ When he pulls back he can see unshed tears in his aunt’s eyes, and what seems to be guilt swimming in them. ‘We didn’t tell you at the time, we were going to when you broke up for summer because we didn’t want it to affect your school but… Peter, Ben was about to retire from the Force on grounds of ill health.’

‘What?’ the shock at that statement evens out his breathing.

‘He’d been to the doctor not long before,’ May admits, pushing a strand of hair from his eyes. ‘He’d just been diagnosed with terminal cancer. He didn’t have long left anyway, Peter. If anything he’d have been glad to go whilst still on the job, rather than wasting away in a bed.’

‘But… why didn’t you tell me?’

‘I guess… since we hadn’t got round to it when he was alive, I didn’t see the point once he was gone. It just seemed pointless giving you that knowledge when it wasn’t going to change anything.’ When he’s quiet for a moment, May speaks again. ‘Hey. Peter? It wasn’t your fault, alright? You were doing something that would have made him so proud of you, you still are. God knows I’d rather you just stayed in building Lego with Ned, but you spent too much time with Ben to do that when you’ve got these abilities. There is nothing you could have done to save him, Peter. I’m just glad he had you there so he wasn’t alone.’

Peter pulls his aunt into a tight hug, trying to hold back some of his tears before he started sobbing. ‘Thank you. I love you May.’

‘I love you too, Pete.’

Peter manages to calm down by taking the photo to his room and placing it on the shelf where his other pictures stand. He looks at his uncle’s smiling face and finds it easier to smile back at the memories than before.

‘You alright, kid?’ he turns to see Bucky standing in the doorway.

He wipes away a couple of stray tears and nods. ‘Yeah, yeah I’m fine.’

‘Bullshit, but I understand if you don’t want to talk about it,’ the man says, walking over to him and putting his arm around his shoulders. ‘You know we’re all here if you ever do though, right?’

Peter smiles up at him and nods. ‘Yeah, thanks Sergeant Barnes.’

‘Do me a favour kid.’

‘Yeah?’

‘Please drop all these titles and just call us all by our first names. You do know it’d make
Tony’s life if you did right?’

Peter laughs. ‘Alright, I’ll try.’

‘Alright let’s go. I think they want to cut the cake. Plus there’s at least one more present waiting for you.’

‘There’s more? But you guys already spoiled me with all those sets,’ Peter starts to protest.

‘Trust me, Pete, this is one present you are not going to want to miss,’ Bucky laughs and the two of them head back to the common area.

‘Ah Peter, glad to see you back,’ Vision greets him just as they step out of the elevator. ‘I believe we are waiting for you to cut your cake.’

‘Sorry, Vis,’ he says.

‘No need to apologise. Here, follow me, the others want you to wait over here.’

‘Do I want to know?’ he asks, then cuts himself off with a laugh as Wanda levitates over his cake, seventeen candles burning on the top. The whole thing is decorated like his Spider-Man suit. The team start singing and he can’t help the huge grin on his face.

‘Make a wish, Pete,’ Sam says. He does as he’s told, closing his eyes and blowing out all of his candles. There’s a chorus of cheers and Sam hands him a knife to cut the cake with. ‘Though I’m not sure I should trust you with this if Nat’s been training you.’

‘I’m the sensible one who teaches him some rules before teaching him the practical aspects,’ Natasha laughs as he cuts into the soft sponge.

Once everyone has a slice and the rest of the cake has been levitated to the table with the rest of the food Tony comes over with a box in his hands.

‘Last present of the night, Peter,’ he says, handing it over with a small smile.

‘You guys have done too much,’ he says, putting his plate down to take the box. He opens the top and his eyes nearly pop out of his head. ‘No way!’

‘Did he just open his last present?’ Rhodes laughs.

‘Oh come on you were worse than him,’ Tony defends him.

‘You’ve got to be kidding me! Is this- have you- oh wow this is amazing!’

‘Pete what is it?’ Ned all but shouts at him, running over from where he’s been talking to Sam and Rhodes. Peter reaches into the box and pulls out an old Iron Man gauntlet. ‘No way!’

‘The old Mark II is downstairs, kid,’ Tony says, ‘ready for you to have a tinker whenever you want.’

‘Can I fly in it?’

‘Definitely not.’ At the pout on his face, Tony sighs. ‘But you might be able to one day in one of the new suits I’m working on for you.’

‘Awesome!’ he and Ned chorus, earning them some fond laughs from the team.
Peter isn’t sure how to properly thank his mentor, then he catches Bucky’s eye and knows exactly how to do it. He throws his arms around the inventor. ‘Thanks Tony,’ he says, then lets Ned drag him away to properly study the gauntlet.

‘You look like he just gave you a birthday present,’ he hears Steve tease.

‘Oh shut it, Rogers,’ Tony’s voice is fond, at complete opposition to his words.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. I hope you enjoyed this double update. I know I changed Uncle Ben's dying slightly, but I didn't want to do the same story and I hope you can forgive me from deviating from comics and films a little to have it fit in with where I've been taking Peter.

Do let me know what you think about these chapters, I hope you're enjoying the story. Do let me know if there's anything you'd like to see from any of the characters in the future and I shall see what I can come up with.

Thank you so much to all my readers, and to those of you who leave reviews - I do love some of the discussions I've been having in response to some of these reviews. Honestly? The reaction to this story has completely blown me away: 154 comments, 248 kudos and 58 bookmarks! I honestly cannot thank you all enough, you are so wonderful!

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

He frowns when he sees it's an unknown number and turns, taking a few steps back from the soldier to give himself some space. When he opens it his blood runs cold. There's a picture of Peter, taken through a school window, sat at his desk looking up at the teacher, a pencil in his hand as he takes notes. Underneath is a short message: In the market for a new intern, can you recommend Anthony?

P.S. NOW you can panic! :P
Finding Hammer

Chapter Summary

Tony gets a message sent through, and the team find themselves having to hurry to save their youngest member.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The middle of the week finds Tony sitting in his workshop looking through everything he has on Justin Hammer. They're still no closer to finding out where his former business rival is hiding and it’s driving him insane.

‘Since when was he actually good at doing stuff?’ he grumbles to himself.

‘Boss, Captain Rogers is requesting entry, should I let him in?’

‘Yeah let in the Star Spangled Banner,’ he says absently, still scrawling through the screens in front of him.

‘Any luck?’ Steve asks as he walks in, saying a quick thank you to the AI.

‘None,’ he replies shortly. ‘It’s never been this hard to track Hammer down before.’

‘He’s working with HYDRA Tony,’ Steve reminds him. ‘It’s them we’re tracking not him.’

‘I know that, Steve,’ Tony snaps, ‘I’m just hoping there’s something in this stuff about Hammer that can give us a clue seeing as everyone else is focussing on HYDRA.’

He hears the soldier sigh. ‘Tony when was the last time you took a break?’

‘Busy, Cap, I’m not in the mood for your mothering.’

‘Tony when you get tired you get even more blinkered than normal. Just take a quick ten minute break to grab something other than coffee. I imagine your eyes are starting to sting.’

‘I said I’m fine, Cap, and I’m busy.’

‘Tony, stop, this is getting ridiculous. At this rate you aren’t going to be in any shape to take on HYDRA or Hammer when we find them.’

Tony looks away from his screens to glare at him. ‘I’m fine, Cap. And if you think I’m not going to be there when we hunt down the prick who threatened Peter you have another thing coming.’

Steve scowls. ‘I never said you wouldn’t be coming, Tony you’re not listening!’

‘Says the man who’s still stood here nagging me when I already said I was busy.’

Steve throws his hands into the air. ‘Do you know what? I give up! This is exactly what you
were like before: you’re so focussed on one thing you can’t listen to anyone.’

‘What the hell is that supposed to mean?’ Tony growls, finally getting up from his stool to confront the Captain.

‘You get so focussed on something when you think you’re right you don’t listen when someone tries to tell you to deviate even a little,’ Steve retorts.

‘And we’re back to the Accords. Of course we are.’

‘Dammit Tony this isn’t just about the Accords. But now you mention it, yeah this is what you were like. You wouldn’t listen when I tried to tell you Bucky was innocent, when I tried to get you to give me time to find out what was happening.’

‘I followed you to Siberia to help you!’

‘And tried to kill him! Before that you would have been happy to leave him to rot in a cell in a government facility somewhere. You didn’t even give a damn if he was innocent or not.’

‘We would have got him out once the truth came to light,’ Tony spits back, anger clouding his mind.

‘Oh really?’ Steve’s tone is sarcastic. ‘Yeah because we all know how happy Ross is to admit when he’s wrong. I needed you to help me protect my childhood best friend, and you wouldn’t listen. Just like now!’

‘I would have got him out somehow. And this is different, this is the whole team being targeted.’

‘You’ve only got this focussed because Peter was threatened,’ Steve growls. ‘As soon as someone mentions Peter you forget everything else.’

Tony opens his mouth to respond when his pocket vibrates with an incoming message. He growls in frustration as he reaches for his phone, suddenly realising how close they’d gotten. They’re barely two inches apart, chests nearly meeting every time they take a deep breath.

He frowns when he sees it’s an unknown number and turns, taking a few steps back from the soldier to give himself some space. When he opens it his blood runs cold. There’s a picture of Peter, taken through a school window, sat at his desk looking up at the teacher, a pencil in his hand as he takes notes. Underneath is a short message: *In the market for a new intern, can you recommend Anthony?*

‘We need to get to Peter’s school,’ he says, already heading to his suit.

‘For God’s sake Tony, this is exactly-’

‘Shut the *fuck* up Steve!’ Tony screams, flinging the message onto a screen as his suit forms around him. ‘Hammer’s going for Peter. Get the team, get to Peter’s school. I’ll meet you there.’

The shock clears from Steve’s face and Captain America slips into place. ‘Do not engage until we get there, this is obviously a trap. We’ll be five minutes behind you tops.’ He watches the soldier heading out of the door calling for FRIDAY to assemble the team as his faceplate comes down. He knows his AI already has his emergency exit open for him and he powers up the suit and heads off.
‘I’m coming, Pete,’ he mumbles, pushing the suit to full speed and knowing he can get there in time to meet Peter just as his class finishes.

‘Alright class, let’s finish up there today,’ the teacher says. ‘I know we’re ten minutes early but I think you all deserve it.’

There’s a few cheers from the class as they pack away their books. Peter smiles at Ned as his friend comes over, he’s still not able to stop talking about how awesome the weekend was, and Peter can’t find it in him to disagree. It has to have been his best birthday ever.

‘You out tonight or can I come over to build some more?’ Ned asks.

‘Got some intern stuff tonight, sorry Ned. We could do tomorrow?’

‘Yo losers,’ MJ joins them as they head to their lockers. ‘You guys up to much tomorrow? There’s a new film out I want to go and see.’

‘Let me guess you want someone to pick it apart with afterwards?’ Ned says with a smile.

‘What’s the other reason for going to see a film?’ MJ replies.

‘Sounds like a plan,’ Peter says. ‘Shall we have pizza before or after?’

‘After, it’s an earlier showing I want to go to,’ MJ says. They stop off at each of their lockers and grab what they need for the evening. ‘So how are your history projects coming on?’ she asks as they head out of the front doors just as the rest of the school gets let out of class.

‘I’m trying not to think about it,’ Ned replies, ‘which isn’t helping with getting it done.’

‘I’m doing alright,’ Peter replies with a grin, ‘helps when you can talk to people who know the subject of your project.’

‘I still say it’s unfair you can do that,’ MJ grumbles.

‘Yeah but then people wouldn’t be able to do Captain America or-’ Peter stops listening to Ned when his spidey-senses go haywire. Something was wrong, something was very wrong.

He slows down trying to give himself more time to work out what they were picking up on. ‘Pete you alright?’ Ned asks him.

‘Something’s not right,’ he tells him. MJ raises an eyebrow as if he’s gone insane.

‘Like you need to make a phone call not alright?’ Ned asks, eyes wide and looking around.

‘I don’t know,’ he trails off as he notices a man in a white suit with glasses stood at the entrance to their school. The man seems to spot him at the same time and comes over to them, a smile on his face that sends shivers down Peter’s spine. His senses are screaming danger, but he can’t leave his friends alone.

‘Peter Parker?’ the man asks, and Peter tries not to react as he places the voice.
‘Who are you?’ he demands, hoping his voice doesn’t sound shaky. He puts a hand into his pocket reaching for his phone.

‘I’ll take that as a yes. My name is Justin Hammer,’ he holds out his hand, ‘I’m here to offer you a job.’

‘I’ve already got one thanks,’ he says, pulling his phone out of his pocket. ‘And I’m running late.’ He grabs MJ’s arm and steers her and Ned around Hammer.

‘I think you want to listen to my proposition first,’ Hammer says, grabbing Peter’s elbow. ‘And didn’t your parents teach you it’s rude to be on your phone while talking to someone?’

‘Hands off my kid, Hammer,’ a metallic voice says from above them, and Peter feels himself relax slightly. Everyone has stopped around them to watch what’s happening.

‘Ah Anthony how nice of you to join us. I was just about to give young Peter here a job interview.’

‘I already told you I have a job,’ Peter says, pulling his arm from Hammer’s grip and trying to nudge his two friends back.

‘And I told you,’ Tony says, landing between Hammer and Peter, ‘that if you even touched one hair on his head I’d rip you five new ones.’

‘I’m afraid, Anthony,’ Hammer says, voice growing more oily as a satisfied smirk crosses his face. ‘That you’ll be a little too busy to worry about little old me.’

Peter’s senses ramp the danger level from five to eleven. ‘Mr Stark!’ Just as he tries to warn him soldiers start to storm the school grounds, soldiers dressed all in black with what seems like a familiar sigil on their uniforms.

‘Get out of here!’ Tony shouts at him. ‘Get under cover. I’ll deal with this lot.’

‘But-’ Ned cuts him off by dragging him back towards the school. Soldiers are heading their way from the street. Growling in frustration Peter grabs his two friends’ arms and drags them back inside, shouting for everyone else to run.

‘What the hell is going on?’ MJ shouts as they run through the corridors.

‘Empty room, now!’ Peter says, unfortunately nowhere is empty enough.

‘You can’t suit up!’ Ned protests, and Peter’s too worried to care about his secret identity any more.

‘Like hell I can’t!’ he shoots back. ‘Mr Stark needs help!’ Then he looks down at the phone in his hand. There is someone else he can call.

‘Peter? What are you doing? Who are you calling?’ Ned asks as they continue to run. Peter can see more soldiers surrounding the school and urges his friends towards a staircase as the phone rings.

‘Come on, come on,’ he mutters, ‘pick up goddamn you!’

‘Yo you reached the merc with the mouth,’ a familiar voice says.

‘Pool! I need your help,’ he says.
‘You called Deadpool?’ Ned huffs from behind him. Peter shoves his friends into the first classroom they find and he opens his backpack for his web shooters.

‘Spidey? What’s going on?’

‘Hammer came to Midtown High,’ he explains, cursing when his hands fumble in his bag and only come out with one shooter. ‘Iron Man turned up to help but he’s on his own until I get suited up. There’s soldiers everywhere, I think they want one or both of us. People are going to get hurt. Please Wade.’

‘I’ll be there in a few minutes, Baby Boy,’ he says, voice serious. ‘Just hang on and don’t do anything stupid.’

‘You’re the stupid one, Wade,’ he reminds him. ‘I’m getting your arse out of trouble more often than not.’ Then he curses as there’s a crash in the classroom next door. ‘Pool hurry.’ He hangs up and shoves his phone into his pocket, puts the second web-shooter on his wrist and drags his friends back out the classroom and down the hallway.

‘What the hell?’ MJ demands. ‘You’re not seriously telling me you’re a superhero are you?’

‘He’s Spider-Man,’ Ned pants.

‘What?!?’ she shrieks. ‘How did I not notice this?’

‘Guys!’ Peter snaps, cursing as soldiers appear in front of them, he pushes them towards another flight of stairs and urges them up. ‘Not the time! I need to find somewhere to suit up and help Mr Stark.’

As they get to the top they freeze. The soldier raises his gun and aims it at them. ‘Now why don’t you stop running around kids? We haven’t got time to play tag.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. Thank you so much to everyone who is sticking with this story, and especially those of you who have left kudos and comments. I hope you're all still enjoying it.

I have actually finished writing the story now, so there may be the occasional double update in the future. I'll take a short break from writing fanfiction as I want to do a bit of work on my original work, before coming back to this; so I'm hoping the fact that I've got a couple of month's of updates all ready for going up here means that there won't be a gap as such between finishing this story and posting the next one for you guys.

As always do let me know if there's anything you'd like to see from these characters in the future. I hope you all continue to enjoy this story, I am still looking for ideas for specials so please let me know if there's any you'd like to see.

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:
Peter doesn’t even think before kneeling down next to the merc and throwing his arms around him.

‘Woah! Hey kid no worries it’s all in a day’s-’

‘Thank you, Pool,’ he says, cutting off the merc.

‘Shit, no way,’ the man pushes him back and looks at him and Peter remembers he doesn’t have his mask. Deadpool is seeing him for the first time. ‘You- you’re-’ he’s cut off by the sound of more men coming closer on the floor below them. ‘Shit. Get out of here and get your fucking mask on, Spidey. I’ll hold them up as long as I can. Old Tin Can’s holding his own for now.’
HYDRA continues their attack on the school to try and capture Peter.

“What do we do?” MJ whispers.

Peter swallows back his fear, hearing the sounds of shouting downstairs. He raises his hands and steps forwards.

“What are you doing?” Ned hisses at him.

“It’s me Mr Hammer wants right?” he says, ignoring his friend. “Then take me to him and don’t hurt anyone else here, alright?”

The soldier gives a laugh. ‘Smart kid. A few more steps this way and we’ll go see Mr Hammer and your little friends are free to go back to class.’

‘Class is out fuckwit!’ A shot rings out behind Peter and the man in front of him crumples to the ground, crying out in pain. Reacting on instinct he kicks the gun away as the man reaches for it, then turns to see a red-suited man bounding up the stairs.

‘Alright kids I need you to get out of here. Find a classroom, barricade the door and hide under some desks until the situation is under control, alright?’ Deadpool says, coming up and kneeling down to check on the man. ‘He’ll be fine, he’s just injured.’

Peter doesn’t even think before kneeling down next to the merc and throwing his arms around him.

‘Woah! Hey kid no worries it’s all in a day’s-’

‘Thank you, Pool,’ he says, cutting off the merc.

‘Shit, no way,’ the man pushes him back and looks at him and Peter remembers he doesn’t have his mask. Deadpool is seeing him for the first time. ‘You- you’re-’ he’s cut off by the sound of more men coming closer on the floor below them. ‘Shit. Get out of here and get your fucking mask on, Spidey. I’ll hold them up as long as I can. Old Tin Can’s holding his own for now.’

‘Come on,’ Ned’s pulling at his arm but Peter can’t look away from the merc, wishing he could take the other’s mask off.

‘Your friend’s right you need to go,’ he says, obviously still trying to catch up with what’s happening. ‘Then we need a discussion on just how appropriate your nickname is Spidey.’

Peter can’t help a small smile and a roll of his eyes. ‘I’m not that young, Pool.’
‘Oh shit you really are Spider-Man!’

‘Peter,’ he says quietly as he lets Ned pull him to his feet.

‘What-’

‘I promised I’d tell you another time,’ he says, still keeping eye contact, well mask contact. The merc stands up and lifts his hand. For a heart-stopping moment Peter thinks the merc is going to put it on his face, then he drops it onto his shoulder.

‘You need to get out of here, get your friends safe and get your suit on, Baby Boy. I’ll handle this lot. Now go!’ Peter nods and pushes his friends along the corridor, looking back over his shoulder as the merc takes out his katanas, giving them an experimental swing.

When they turn the corner MJ starts opening a classroom door for them to hide in and Ned turns to him, a frown on his face. ‘Just friends, huh? Since when do you have his number? Also that looked a hell of a lot like more than friends to me! And you told him your name!’

‘Not now, Ned,’ Peter hisses, and pulls MJ back as a soldier comes crashing through the classroom window. As they turn another comes round the corner from where the sound of a fight, and Deadpool’s commentary, is coming from and grabs onto her, pulling her against him and pressing a gun to her head.

‘Don’t move, kids,’ he threatens, backing up to the window. MJ looks at him, scared but determined.

‘Don’t hurt her,’ he pleads.

‘Come quietly and we won’t have to. Put your hands up where I can see them,’ he says.

Peter does as he says, raising his arms up. As the gun lowers a fraction he sets off the shooters, pulling himself up and swinging forwards, sending both the soldier and MJ through the window as it shatters. Releasing one of his webs he fires another that manages to catch her hand, stopping her fall and leaving the soldier to hit the concrete below.

‘Peter! Never do that again!’ MJ screams at him.

‘Sorry,’ he says, latching himself onto the side of the building. It’s then he notices a familiar form flying towards them and grins. ‘Hey Sam! Can you take her somewhere safe for me?’

‘I’ll take her to the jet, kid,’ the man says, grabbing MJ and flying up past him. ‘You stay there and we’ll come get you.’

‘Ned’s with me!’ he calls after them as Sam disappears with his friend. He crawls back up the wall and into the corridor.

‘That was awesome!’ Ned says. ‘And terrifying. Please don’t do that again.’

‘Come on,’ he says, tugging his friend along. ‘Sam’s going to come back and get us. We just need to keep out of-’ He stops with a grunt of pain as something sharp catches him in the neck. He puts a hand to his neck and pulls out a dart.

‘Peter!’ Ned shouts as Peter’s knees go from under him.

‘Over here!’ he hears someone shout, the sound going fuzzy.
Got to stay awake, he tries to get thoughts to pierce the fog. Got to look after Ned. Got to stay awake. Where’s Sam? Where’s Wade? Mr Stark needs help. Got to get to Tony… He hears Ned being pulled away and tries to move to help his friend, but his limbs don’t want to work. There’s a pair of hands gripping him roughly at the shoulders and starting to drag him along. His body is still sluggish but it’s getting easier to move his limbs.

Then there’s a roar of fury and the hands are gone. He hits the floor and groans, trying to crawl somewhere. His vision is starting to clear, and his hearing is getting more focussed. There’s a horrible, sickening crunch, followed by the sound of someone throwing up; then the sound of a body hitting the floor.

Hands, much more gentle this time help him to sit up.

‘Bucky?’

‘Shit you scared me, Pete,’ the dark haired man says. ‘What happened?’

‘Hit me with a sedative,’ he says, feeling the strength returning to his limbs already. ‘I don’t think they know I’m Spider-Man so they only gave me enough for a normal person. Already starting to wear off.’ He looks around and notices one man out cold on the floor, another is lying not far from him, his face is turned away but there’s a suspicious looking red patch starting to grow underneath the body. ‘What did you do?’

‘He punched the guy’s face in,’ Ned’s voice is shaky, and the acrid smell of vomit reaches Peter’s nose. ‘Dude that’s messed up.’

‘I lost my temper,’ Bucky admits. ‘I’m sorry you had to see that, kid.’ He curses as the sound of footsteps getting closer reach them. ‘Ned can you get Peter to safety? I’ve got a spare comms, put it on,’ he hands it to Peter. ‘Let us know where you are and someone will pick you up.’

‘Alright,’ Peter lets the Winter Soldier pull him to his feet and then, he and Ned supporting each other, they start to head off down the corridor. ‘Be careful, Bucky.’

‘It’s them that’s got to worry, Pete,’ he says with a smile that doesn’t quite reach his eyes. ‘They’ve tried to hurt you. Every single one of the Avengers is out for blood. Wanda took out twenty on her own when we opened the doors.’

They turn a corner and Peter feels guilty leaving Bucky to face the soldiers alone. He needs to get Ned safe and get his suit on first. They find a storage closet and hide in there, Peter pulls his phone out and hands it to Ned. ‘Call Wade,’ he says, ‘tell him where we are. He can get you to the Quinjet while this sedative wears off. Then I can go help.’

‘You can’t be serious.’

‘Just do it, Ned!’ he says, pulling off his shirt and toeing off his shoes as he searches for his suit. He hears Ned talking to the merc and hanging up just as he finds it and, taking off his jeans, pulls it on up to his waist and shoves his clothes in his backpack.

‘Pete just come with me,’ Ned pleads.

‘I can’t,’ he says, zipping his bag back up and handing it to his friend. ‘I need to help the Avengers keep everyone safe. It’s my fault they came here, I need to help fix it.’

The door opens and Deadpool looks in, his eyes widen as he takes in Peter, still half in his suit. ‘Oh man you got to give a guy some warning!’
‘You’re the one who just pulled it open!’ he argues back. ‘You’re lucky I didn’t web you on sight.’

‘Can you please just finish getting dressed? Fuck, you’re going to get a guy arrested.’

‘I need you to take Ned up onto the roof,’ he says, slipping the rest of the suit over his arms and letting it lock into place. He reaches up to his ear and takes out the comms link, throwing it to the merc. ‘Put this on and link up to the rest of the team, tell them to come pick Ned up then come back and give me a hand. Karen can patch me into the comms once I got my mask on.’

‘Or I could take both of you up there and you could both get on the jet and get to safety,’ Deadpool growls, but reaches under his mask to put the link in his own ear.

‘Since when do I run from a fight?’

‘Since now. You want me to just cover you in bright neon fucking paint while we’re at it? Get out of here and there’s no one for them to look for.’

‘Not happening, Pool,’ he says, crossing his arms; his mask is still in his hand so the mercenary can see how serious he is. They stare at each other in a stand-off for a couple of moments.

‘Fine,’ the merc growls, ‘but you’re going to learn to fucking listen to me in future.’

‘Yeah right,’ he replies, a small smirk on his face. ‘And you’ll stop with all the mouthy comments.’

‘You’re one to talk,’ Deadpool sighs, then puts his hands on Peter’s shoulders. ‘I’m trying to keep you safe, Spidey,’ he says quietly.

‘And I’m trying to help keep everyone else safe,’ he says, voice equally quiet. ‘Just like every patrol we do.’

Deadpool sighs again and nods. ‘Ugh. We’re so having a talk about how you’ve kept being a baby model away from me for this long.’

‘I’m not that young! I’m seventeen!’

‘Still not legal,’ he counters, and gestures for Ned to follow him. ‘Fuck you could have told me you weren’t even legal I’d have stopped with all the ass comments!’

Peter laughs and pulls on his mask. ‘No you wouldn’t.’

‘No I wouldn’t,’ Deadpool agrees. ‘Go get them, Spider-Man. Save some bad guys for me.’

‘Pool? You let anyone hurt Ned I’m stringing you up on the Empire State Building.’

‘Alright, alright. Give me some credit!’

Peter watches as the merc leads his best friend to the nearest stair well and up to safety.

‘Karen? Patch me in to comms.’

‘Already done, Peter. And might I say I’m glad to hear you’re alright?’

‘Thanks, Karen. It’s good to hear your voice. Guys? I’m suited up. Deadpool’s got a comms link and is taking Ned to the roof. Can someone take him to the jet?’
‘We are having a very long discussion on why he turned up,’ Tony says. ‘And just what do you think you’re doing?’

‘Helping,’ he says, running along the corridor and heading back towards where he left Bucky.

‘The hell you are!’ Tony roars. ‘You get to that jet with Ned!’

‘Already had this conversation, Mr Stark,’ Peter says, finding a broken window and seeing some soldiers have cornered some students below him. ‘Not happening.’

‘Peter, for once do what Tony says,’ Bucky growls at him.

‘Sorry I’m taking the elevator down,’ he says, flipping backwards out of the window and sending a web up to catch himself as he swings in to send one of the men flying, and knocks the gun out of the other man’s hand. ‘Come on, move it!’ he says to the students, ushering them forwards. ‘I’ll cover you, but you need to get off the school grounds.’

‘Peter where are you?’ Natasha asks, he can hear worry in her voice.

‘I got him,’ Tony says, and lands next to Peter.

He tries to ignore the man as he pulls down part of the fence so it’s low enough for the students to climb over and get away. Helping one or two of the less acrobatic ones over.

‘We’re leaving,’ Tony tells him once the students are out of the way.

‘I can help get everyone out,’ he argues.

‘No! You let the team get everyone out,’ the man tells him. ‘I am getting you out of here. Then the two potential targets are out of the way.’

‘But-’ he’s cut off as more soldiers come running towards them.

‘Shit,’ Tony curses and the two turn to face their attackers. Soon they’re completely surrounded.

‘Stand down,’ one of the soldiers shout.

‘Yeah, not happening,’ Tony says. ‘You’re not getting me, and you’re definitely not getting him.’

‘Suit yourself, Iron Man,’ the soldier says, pointing the gun at Peter. ‘We’ve only got orders to take one of you alive. The other is dispensable.’

The sound of a gunshot rings out and Peter looks down, expecting to see some sign of a bullet. When he looks back up the man has crumpled to the floor. ‘Pool!’ he spots the mercenary behind the men. They turn around and the merc sends off a few more rounds, felling a soldier with each shot.

‘Anyone else want to try pulling that shit?’ he says as he empties his gun and takes out his katanas. He looks over at Tony. ‘Get him out of here, Tin Can.’

‘For once I’m not going to argue,’ Tony says, grabbing hold of Peter and taking off. ‘Good luck.’
‘Wait! Mr Stark we can’t just-’

‘Kid? Shut it.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! Sorry the update is a little late this week but I hope you enjoy it. Thank you to everyone who has left comments (I will reply soon I promise!), kudos and to everyone who is still sticking with this story. Let me know what you think. L x

As always here's your sneak peek (and sorry in advance!):

Tony throws his hands in the air. ‘Peter do you realise what you got yourself into? Hammer was trying to kidnap you, he brings soldiers to your school, and when we’re trying to come and help you, you take it upon yourself to bring a mercenary with a frankly sketchy history of mental stability into the middle of said firefight.’
‘You don’t know what he’s like because you’ve never taken the time to actually meet him!’
‘Don’t raise your voice at me! I’ve just-’
‘Don’t try and talk to me like you’re my dad!’ Peter shouts back, not even sure why he’s angry anymore. ‘You’re not my dad and you’re nothing like Uncle Ben so you don’t get to tell me what to do!’
Chapter Summary

Tony and Peter arrive back at the facility, but their talk is cut short by an attack.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

They land on the rooftop after a silent flight and Peter stumbles away from Tony, pulling his mask off.

‘Mr Stark we shouldn’t have left everyone there! What if-’

‘First off,’ Tony says, lifting his faceplate, ‘you were told to get out of the situation right at the start, but you decided to put yourself back into the middle of it. Not only that you called in a mercenary. Into a fire fight in a school. Your school. What the hell were you thinking?’

‘I was thinking we needed help!’ he snaps back. ‘And Deadpool was the one to get both of us out of that situation at the end, and before that he saved me a couple of times. Not to mention he took my friend up to the jet.’

‘You didn’t think the team would be on their way?’

‘He got to us quicker!’

‘Why the sudden need to have the mercenary close?’ Tony demands. ‘Just how close are you two exactly?’

‘He has a name you know,’ Peter says, folding his arms over his chest.

‘Yeah a name we told you.’

‘He told me too,’ he says, voice getting sulky.

Tony throws his hands in the air. ‘Peter do you realise what you got yourself into? Hammer was trying to kidnap you, he brings soldiers to your school, and when we’re trying to come and help you, you take it upon yourself to bring a mercenary with a frankly sketchy history of mental stability into the middle of said firefight.’

‘You don’t know what he’s like because you’ve never taken the time to actually meet him!’

‘Don’t raise your voice at me! I’ve just-’

‘Don’t try and talk to me like you’re my dad!’ Peter shouts back, not even sure why he’s angry anymore. ‘You’re not my dad and you’re nothing like Uncle Ben so you don’t get to tell me what to do!’

They look at each other in silence for an agonisingly long time, both breathing heavily. Peter is struggling to get his breathing under control and there’s tears falling down his face. Tony is
obviously struggling to keep his expression neutral, but there’s pain in his eyes. Peter’s chest hurts knowing he’s put it there. He opens his mouth to say something when a noise catches his attention.

Tony seems to notice it at the same moment, or FRIDAY tells him, because he looks over the top of the trees and spots some black dots heading their way. ‘We’ve got incoming,’ he says, ‘so how about we park this discussion for now and keep these guys busy until the others get back?’ He doesn’t give Peter time to answer and takes off to intercept some of the aircraft.

Peter waits until one or two get past Iron Man and he starts webbing up the helicopter’s rotor blades, effectively grounding the one. He’s about to pull the same stunt on the second when Tony comes flying past and takes care of it.

‘Make sure everyone in the grounded one is out of the fight,’ he tells him. ‘I’ve got this covered.’

‘Yes, sir,’ he says meekly, following the orders he’s been given and landing on the grass, sprinting towards the helicopter. Some of the wreckage is starting to burn and he leaps forwards to get the bodies out, when several men surge out and he finds himself busy just defending himself.

It’s unfortunate really. Not any lack of skill on his part, or any brilliant skill on theirs. He’s ducking under the rotor blades and webbing one guy up, and has to dodge backwards to avoid gunfire and manages to trip over some of the wreckage. As he goes down the blade catches him and sends him flying, disorientating him enough so when he lands it’s easy for one of the soldiers to grab him.

‘Settle down, kid,’ the man who has him says as he starts to struggle. The man manages to get his mask off and shoves the end of the gun into his face.

‘Let him go!’ Tony lands not far from them, holding up his hands and lifting his face plate. He looks at Peter and he can see the fear in his mentor’s eyes.

‘Stand down, Stark, or we put a bullet through the kid’s head.’ Around them the remnants of the force gather, guns pointing forwards. ‘We’re taking him back to the boss, it’s up to you if he’s alive or dead.’

‘Please,’ Peter’s shocked at the plea falling from the man’s mouth. Tony pauses, looking down at him and then, squaring his shoulders and setting his expression, looks back up at the soldier holding him. ‘Leave him here. I’ll come with you. No fight. Just leave the kid.’

‘Mr Stark-’ The gun being pushed harder into the side of his head stops whatever he’s going to say.

‘Quiet, Pete,’ Tony says. ‘Do we have a deal?’

The man nods and shoves Peter to the ground. ‘Take him.’

‘No! Mr Stark!’ Peter tries to get to his feet but someone hits the back of his head with something hard and he sees stars, trying to fight the darkness threatening to claim him. ‘Tony!’ he calls out.

‘Peter!’
‘What the hell?’ Natasha asks. Steve looks up from where he’s been tending to Ned and spots the burning wreckage.

‘They’ve been attacked,’ he says, his hands curling into fists at his side. ‘Get us landed as quick as you can, Nat. Rhodey? Go on down and scan for them.’

‘On it, Cap,’ the dark skinned man said, shutting his helmet and jumping out the back of the jet. He watches him fly past and out towards the burning spots.

‘Are they alright?’ Ned asks, voice shaking.

‘They’ll be fine,’ Sam reassures him. ‘Takes more than a couple of soldiers to bring down Tony and Peter.’

‘I can’t see Tony,’ Rhodes’ voice comes over the system. ‘Nor Pete… wait! He’s by the one helicopter! He’s not moving.’

‘I’m landing,’ Natasha growls, and the landing is definitely more bumpy than usual. There’s a race to get to the doors, and everyone stumbles out, only Sam staying behind with Peter’s friends.

‘Peter!’ Wanda screams, running towards the boy’s maskless, prone body. She reaches him first and pushes him onto his back, muttering in what Steve assumes is Sokovian as he finally catches up.

Vision pulls the tearful girl away as Natasha kneels next to the prone boy, checking his pulse. She looks up at Steve, relief clear in her face. ‘He’s alive, just unconscious. Any news on Tony?’

‘Rhodey? Where’s Tony?’ Steve asks into his earpiece.

‘I can’t see him, Cap, and he’s not answering his comms,’ Rhodes’ answer is filled with dread. ‘How’s Pete?’

There’s a groan from the boy and he blinks and rubs at his head. ‘He’s coming round now,’ Steve tells Rhodes and the War Machine heads back towards them.

‘Peter?’ Natasha’s voice is soft.

‘Tony?’ he mumbles, then his eyes fly open and he looks around them all. ‘Tony! Where is he? Where…’ he trails off with a sob and Natasha pulls him into her arms.

‘Pete what happened?’ she asks.

‘We got back and had an argument,’ he choke out between his sobs. ‘Then they turned up. He managed to deal with most of the helicopters, but I got one down to the ground and he said to check everyone was out the fight. Then I got hit by a rotor and one of them grabbed me and said they were taking me to their boss. Tony,’ he broke off with another sob, then took a deep breath. ‘He told them to leave me and he’d go with them.’ Steve feels like someone’s grabbing onto his lungs. ‘Nat? Please tell me he’s here. He didn’t go right? He’s still here? Nat, please. Please, he has to be.’ Natasha shushes him and pulls him back into a hug, rocking him backwards and forwards.

She looks up at Steve. ‘What do we do, Steve?’ she asks.

He looks around at the team. All of them in various stages of shock. Peter is still sobbing in
Natasha’s arms, the woman herself barely seems to be keeping her composure as reality sinks in; Wanda is crying, Vision holding her close as he looks to Steve for instruction. Rhodes is looking lost, but determined and waiting like a soldier for commands; Bucky looks like he’s one second away from ripping something in half, but is looking at Steve too. Everyone is waiting for him to make the decision.

Steve just wants to ask Tony what they should do.

‘How is he?’ Steve asks when Natasha walks into the common area.

‘Wanda’s with him now,’ she answers, ‘they’re in his room. We’ve put Ned and MJ in two rooms just down the corridor and informed their parents. They’re all sleeping, or at least trying to. What’s the situation here?’

‘Sam and Bucky are looking at everything we’ve got and seeing if we can pinpoint a place. Considering how many soldiers they had shown up in such a short space of time, they have to be fairly close. Vision’s seeing what he can get from surveillance with FRIDAY. But neither of them is able to track Tony.’

‘Have we contacted anyone else?’ she asks.

‘Rhodey’s on the phone to Pepper now,’ he nods. ‘I just got off the phone to T’Challa. He’s told us to let him know if we need help; he’s got Shuri heading over on standby to stay at the local outreach centre. He was going to come over with her to the facility, but I told him to hold fire for now. We don’t need Ross trying to get hold of him when we’re not sure where Tony is yet.’

Natasha nods. ‘Still wish we could have his tech. Should we call anyone else in?’

‘Who else can we call?’ Steve asks, rubbing his temples where a headache is beginning to form.

‘Scott?’ she suggests. ‘Clint?’ her voice is quieter now. ‘You know they’d be willing to help.’

‘The Accords…’

‘Fuck the Accords, Stevie,’ Bucky says, coming up to them with burning eyes. ‘Tony’s missing, we need all the help we can get to bring him back.’

‘Bucky-‘

‘HYDRA has him!’ Bucky roars. ‘I’m not going to sit back and stick to the Accords and let them do to him what they did to me.’

‘You think I don’t want him back just as much as you do?’ Steve counters, voice rising.

‘Boys!’ Natasha shouts, bringing them both back to the present. ‘Seriously? Now is not the time for you two to be arguing over who loves Tony more. We need to get him back.’ She turns to Steve. ‘I’ll deal with the Council and then I’m calling Scott and Clint.’
Steve nods, blinking as he tries to bring himself back under control. ‘Meet in the briefing room in fifteen minutes for an update. FRIDAY pass on the message.’

‘Yes, Captain.’

‘Buck? Let’s get some air before we meet the others,’ Steve suggests. Bucky just nods and follows him outside.

‘You going to tell me what’s going through your head?’ Steve asks his best friend.

Bucky sighs and leans against the railings, looking down over the wreckage of the helicopter that staff are starting to clear away, scouring it for any evidence that could help them.

‘Shall I tell you what I think then?’ Steve says, trying to find a way past the wall the dark haired man has insisted on putting up. ‘I think that there’s something more to you liking Tony than you first let me believe isn’t there? Was it actually reciprocated at one stage?’

‘No,’ Bucky answers quietly. ‘No I told you, he said there was someone else.’

‘You going to tell me the story?’

Bucky sighs again, but nods and, after a brief pause, starts talking.

He and Tony are down in the workshop having one of their late night chats. Neither of them can sleep, although both desperately need it. Too many nightmares between them to be able to rest easy.

‘Tony?’ his voice is soft as he looks at the man. It isn’t exactly difficult to admit the man is attractive, and his personality is so large it fills every room he’s in. Even when he’s subdued like he is now.

‘What’s eating you, Bucky?’ his voice is equally soft as he turns dark eyes to look at him. There’s a flicker in them and Bucky realises he probably knows what he’s about to do.

‘Has anyone ever told you how amazing you are?’

Tony laughs, a little bitterly and takes a swig of his drink. ‘Not recently. Oh they used to say it all the time, until I fucked up one too many times and everyone realised just how much of a screw up I am.’

‘You’re not a screw up,’ Bucky protests.

‘You’ve not been around me long enough. Even my dad thought I was a screw up most of the time.’

Bucky feels hot anger course through him at the thought that Howard could have let his son think he was less than he was. Maybe he’s slightly biased, but as far as Bucky is concerned, Tony is the better of the two men by a long stretch. Hoping to chase away a little of the frown that has settled on the inventor’s face he tells him that.
‘Yeah well Dad could only tell me that from beyond the grave, so I’m not sure how much I really believe it. Could never say it to my face. Only thing he could say to my face was to remind me I was a disappointment.’

Bucky gently takes hold of Tony’s chin and turns him so he’s looking into vulnerable dark eyes. ‘You’re about the furthest from a disappointment anyone could get,’ he says softly, before pressing his lips to the inventor’s.

For a couple of heart-stopping moments they stay like that, with Bucky’s lips pressed against Tony’s and neither of them moving. Then, ever so slightly, Tony presses into Bucky’s lips and returns the kiss.

Time loses its meaning for him as they exchange soft, easy kisses; he can taste the whiskey in their mouths when he opens his lips and presses his tongue gently against Tony’s. Then Tony tenses and pulls away, blinking in surprise.

‘Bucky I shouldn’t have done that,’ the inventor’s voice is quiet, eyes apologetic.

‘Why?’ his voice is a little raspy.

‘It’s-I-it’s not fair on you I…’

‘There’s someone else isn’t there?’ Bucky guesses, keeping his hand on the side of Tony’s face and letting his thumb stroke along the inventor’s cheekbone. ‘Is it Pepper?’

Tony chuckles darkly. ‘No, no that was over longer than either of us really admitted. We’re much better off as friends. She realised there was someone else even before I did, it’s one of the reasons, one of the many reasons we decided not to give it another go.’

‘I can’t imagine you being unfaithful,’ Bucky frowns.

‘I wasn’t. Unless apparently letting someone else sneak into your heart counts,’ he says sourly. At the guilty look in Tony’s eyes he pieces it all together.

‘You know that makes sense,’ Bucky laughs, despite the slight pain in his chest, ‘I was never going to have a chance really was I?’

‘Of course you did,’ the reply is quiet, and there’s nothing but honest pain in the dark eyes. ‘I think if anyone could have replaced him it’s you. But I… Bucky I can’t while there’s still a chance. It’s not fair on you, especially since it’s-’

‘I know,’ he reassures the genius, pressing a soft kiss to his lips. ‘I know.’

‘I’m sorry.’

‘Don’t be. You can’t help who steals your heart, Tony.’ He brushes fingers through the unruly dark curls. ‘Just remember: I’m happy to catch you if he screws up.’

Tony gives a watery laugh. ‘You know, Sergeant Barnes, if I’d met you both at the same time I’m not sure who would have wormed their way in further.’

Steve desperately tries to hold back the acrid, burning taste in his throat as Bucky finishes his story. ‘So you know who it is? The person Tony is interested in?’
‘Yeah I worked it out. Doesn’t take a genius,’ Bucky smiles sadly. ‘I’m not going to lie and say it didn’t hurt, but I get it. Was only a matter of time before someone chose you over me again,’ he laughs a little. ‘Just like with Peggy. Seems all the dark haired beauties with the mind of their own and a take-no-prisoners attitude prefer blonds. You’re a lucky man, Steve Rogers.’


Bucky looks at him with a small frown, then a look of comprehension dawns on his face and he bursts out laughing. ‘Seriously Stevie? How can you be that oblivious?’

‘He likes me?’

‘Steve,’ Bucky turns serious again and puts a hand on his shoulder, ‘Tony is absolutely crazy about you; anyone with eyes can see that. The tension between the two of you is ridiculous, I’m surprised you’ve just been releasing it through arguments. I’d have got to the ripping the clothes off stage ages ago, but that’s just me.’

‘What?’ he manages to choke out.

Bucky just sighs a laugh and shakes his head. ‘Come on, Stevie, we need to get your fella back. Then I’m actually going to teach you how to get past the staring stage of a relationship.’

Steve doesn’t reply, just follows his friend back inside and up to the briefing room. Despite everything he feels a little lighter, and much more determined. Just like Bucky says: he’s going to get his fella back, and anyone who gets in the way was going to get hurt.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! I hope you enjoyed this chapter and can forgive me for the bit of an emotional roller coaster. I'd be really interested to hear what you all think, especially about Tony and Peter's... erm... discussion? And the flashback to the scene with Bucky and Tony. I had a request to add in some WinterIron into this story a while ago, and this was part of the response to that.
Thank you so much to everyone who has left comments on this story, I am part way through catching up with all my replies so you should have one (if you haven't already) by the end of tomorrow. Thank you also to everyone who has left kudos, and to all of you who are still sticking with this story.
L x

As always here is your sneak peek:
As soon as he’s far enough away he takes out his phone.
‘Baby Boy? You alright? Do you need-‘
‘Don’t you start going paranoid on me, Pool, or I swear you won’t be able to talk for webbing for a year,’ he growls.
‘Alright, alright. Fucking hell you got your panties in a twist. Need some help getting the spandex out of that tight arse?’
‘Not in the mood,’ he says.
‘Still no lead on Tin Can?’ the merc’s voice is sympathetic.
‘No,’ Peter fights back tears as he continues along the street. ‘Can I ask a favour?‘
‘You know I’d do anything for you Baby Boy.’
Peter decides to speak to a couple of his own contacts as the search for Tony starts to slow.

Three days later and Peter is stuck at home doing the work they’d been assigned from school while the builders paid for by Stark Industries repair the damage enough so they can return to class. He’d had to come away from the facility. He felt too guilty, and Tony’s missing presence was like a black hole. Not to mention he couldn’t do much to help with the team’s efforts to find him.

Well, he muses, staring out of the window, not at the facility I couldn’t. But there’s a few things I might be able to do here. He’s promised to keep his suit on under his clothes so the team can track him if they need to, and he’s checking in through text or phone every couple of hours. They’ve also got surveillance through the apartment just to be on the safe side. It had all been part of the agreement Natasha had made with him in order for him to go home. She’d understood his not being able to stay there, for which he was eternally grateful.

Making his mind up he sends a text to Natasha to let her know he’s heading over to Ned’s to do some work; then packs some of his books into his backpack in case someone is watching and heads out the door. As soon as he’s far enough away he takes out his phone.

‘Baby Boy? You alright? Do you need-’

‘Don’t you start going paranoid on me, Pool, or I swear you won’t be able to talk for webbing for a year,’ he growls.

‘Alright, alright. Fucking hell you got your panties in a twist. Need some help getting the spandex out of that tight arse?’

‘Not in the mood,’ he says.

‘Still no lead on Tin Can?’ the merc’s voice is sympathetic.

‘No,’ Peter fights back tears as he continues along the street. ‘Can I ask a favour?’

‘You know I’d do anything for you Baby Boy.’

‘Is there anyone you can ask that might have some information on Hammer or HYDRA? Anyone who might know where they took him?’

There’s a pause on the end of the phone, then Wade sighs. ‘I’ll ask around Sister Margaret’s and see what I can dig up. Not sure what any of those fuckwits will be able to tell us, but it’ll be a start; and I’ll get Weasel on the case. Then I’ll start heading out from there and see what I can find.’

‘Thanks, Wade,’ he says, pausing at a crossing for the lights to change. ‘I’m not going to be
allowed on patrol until we find him so we may have to wait for tacos.’

There’s another pause. ‘How about we do tacos tomorrow? Say eight at our usual place? I can update you with anything then.’

‘Sounds good,’ Peter feels a smile creeping onto his face. ‘I’ll see you at eight tomorrow.’

‘You laying low at your place until then?’

‘No I’ve got something else I need to do before I see you,’ he says, heading towards the subway. ‘I might lose you, Wade, I’m going into the subway.’

‘What are you doing?’ the merc’s voice is dangerous.

‘Paying a visit to a new friend,’ he responds.

‘Where are you going? Which friend?’

‘I’m stopping by Hell’s Kitchen. See you later, Wade.’

‘What the fuck are you going to Hell’s Kitchen for? Peter? Don’t you dare hang up on me-’

Peter presses the end call button and heads towards the platform. ‘Sorry, Wade,’ he mutters, pulling up the map function on his phone, ‘but I can’t sit back and do nothing, and we’re going to need all the help we can get.’

* * * * * * * *

Peter cautiously opens the door of the law firm and steps inside, there’s quite a few people waiting on chairs, and he recognises the blond woman sitting behind the desk at the far end of the room.

‘Welcome to Nelson and Murdock,’ she says, catching sight of him and coming over, ‘just take a seat and we’ll be with you as soon as- oh wait I know you! You were at the gala.’

‘Peter,’ he offers his hand with a small smile. ‘I’m one of the Stark Interns. I was wondering if Mr Murdock is available? I really need to speak him.’

‘Well if you want to take a seat, either he or Mr Nelson with be with you-’

‘No it’s just Mr Murdock I need to see,’ he cuts her off. ‘It’s alright I can wait.’

She gives him a funny look but nods and goes to sit behind the desk again. He busies himself texting Natasha for his check in and doing some more of his school work as he waits; then he messages Ned to see if he’s available to meet up tonight. Something tells him he’s going to need his guy in the chair to help put everything together.

Matt Murdock doesn’t make an appearance, but he sees his partner coming out and taking new clients in. There’s a steady flow of people coming in through the door, and Peter’s leg starts twitching nervously. He hates being around too many people in a confined space.

The next time Mr Nelson comes out of the office and speaks to Karen he looks over at Peter. ‘Hey, you want to come through kid?’
'It’s alright I need to see Mr Murdock,’ he says. ‘No offence meant, Mr Nelson.’

‘Matt’s out at the moment and may not be back for an hour or so at least, he’s getting some stuff for a case. Sure I can’t help you?’ the fair haired man asks. Peter just shakes his head, and looks back at his textbook. ‘You’re from the gala right?’ Peter looks back up and nods at the question, he sees the frown on Mr Nelson’s face and then the man gestures for Peter to follow him. ‘Come here, kid.’

‘But-’

‘Just come here would ya?’

Peter decides it’d be more suspicious to argue so just does as he’s told, feeling slightly uneasy as Mr Nelson closes the door behind him.

‘So if you’re from Stark Industries I’ve got to ask: is it Matt you want to speak to or his horned friend?’

Peter’s eyes go wide. ‘I-uh-I don’t know what you’re-’

‘Oh save it, kid. Is it Matt you want to speak to or Daredevil?’

‘Both,’ he mutters, looking at the ground.

‘Do the Avengers know you’re here?’

‘They would probably have grounded me if they even knew I’d thought about coming here,’ he admits.

‘So why are you here?’

‘I need help.’

‘Help the Avengers can’t give you?’

‘They’re already doing all they can, but…’ Peter trails off unsure of what to say. They’ve been trying to keep Tony’s disappearance away from the media, but it was only a matter of time now, what with no leads and the trails going cold. ‘We need a different set of skills to help with this particular problem.’

‘Uh huh,’ Mr Nelson doesn’t look too happy, he’s about to add something when the door opens behind him.

‘Foggy? Karen said there was someone here who wanted to see me?’ Matt Murdock steps through the door, stick in hand looking every inch the blind man and not the vigilante Peter knew he was.

‘Mr Murdock I’m really sorry to bother you-’

‘Wait. Peter? What are you doing here?’ he asks, hurriedly closing the door behind him.

‘I need your help,’ he admits, voice small.

‘As a lawyer or as Daredevil?’ he asks, he assumes Matt hears his intake of breath as he chuckles. ‘Foggy knows, Peter. It’s only Karen who doesn’t, and I’d rather keep it that way.’
‘Wait, how does the kid know?’ Foggy demands.

‘That’s not my information to give,’ he replies to his friend. ‘Now what can I do for you, Peter? Not that I’m promising I will help of course; but I’ll hear you out at least.’

‘Tony Stark’s missing,’ he admits, fighting back the tears, ‘I need your help to find him. All the trails are turning cold the Avengers are trying to follow, and it’s my fault he was taken in the first place.’

Matt nods. ‘Follow me to my office, Peter. Foggy? Don’t breathe a word of this to anyone.’

‘Do I ever?’ Foggy grumbles as Peter follows Matt across the room to his office. Once there he tells him everything that happened.

‘So you want me to see what I can find out for you?’ Matt says. ‘Or do you want me to try and rescue Tony Stark myself?’

‘No,’ Peter shakes his head, forgetting the man can’t see. ‘No I wouldn’t expect you to do that Mr Murdock. I just… I remembered what you said about your abilities and thought perhaps you’d be able to find something out that the rest of us couldn’t. You’d be looking for things we wouldn’t think to look for- uh figuratively speaking of course – and you might have more luck than we will.’

‘And you’ve got Deadpool looking as well?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Why? Why not just leave it to the Avengers to handle?’

‘It’s my fault he was taken,’ Peter lets the tears fall now. ‘And we had an argument before he was taken and I said some things I really wish I didn’t. Besides what kind of superhero would I be if I didn’t do something to help one of the most important people in my life? Even if all I can do is eliminate some areas of New York from where we need to search I’ll feel like I’ve done something.’

Matt just sits in silence for a couple of moments, then he nods. ‘Alright I’ll see what I can find out when I go out tonight. Put your number in my phone and I’ll call you with anything I find out.’

‘Thank you! Thank you so much,’ he hurries to do as he’s told. ‘If you every need anything at all Mr Murdock just let me know.’

‘You’re a good kid, Peter,’ is all the reply he gets as Matt opens the door to his office. ‘I’ll let you know when I’ve got some information for you.’

* * * * * * * *

He convinced May to let Ned stay round the night before, the two of them were up late organising their own version of what Peter had seen at the facility. He’d told Ned the team had worked out that they must be in New York or the general vicinity, and all routes in and out of the city were being monitored so there was no way they’d managed to get him out without their knowing.
At least they hoped so.

Karen had helped as well. They’d got up a map of New York and started ruling out certain areas, labelling other potential areas of interest, and flagging the first points that Peter could try and scope out safely without drawing attention from the team. There were pieces of paper stuck up all around his room with any information on they thought important, and Ned’s laptop had a couple of documents where they recorded anything else. All of it came from Peter’s memory of discussions at the facility, and from what he remembered being mentioned during the fight and capture.

Blinking awake the next morning from where they’d both fallen asleep half on the bed and half-off, he has to admit he’s a little impressed at what they’ve achieved.

They continue throughout the day. Peter has Karen monitor the police radios to see if anything useful comes through; there isn’t any leads on where Tony might be, but at least they can cross some areas off as they hear the police have searched them for other reasons.

‘Though to be fair dude a big organisation like HYRDA isn’t going to be found by a random police search,’ Ned points out as they cross off an old warehouse the police searched for potential drug use.

‘True,’ he sighs, ‘alright Karen put all the police searches in a different colour. Maybe I can visit a few in the suit and rule them out at some point.’

‘All done for you, Peter,’ his AI replies as his aunt opens the door.

‘Really boys?’ her voice is laced with worry.

‘I’ve got to do something, May,’ he counters.

May just sighs. ‘No going out on patrol still.’ Peter shakes his head. ‘Alright, just be careful and make sure you pass anything on to Natasha alright?’

‘Of course, May,’ they chorus.

‘You boys want dinner?’ she asks.

‘Oh I’m meeting someone for dinner in a bit,’ Peter replies, looking at his watch and seeing it’s six thirty. ‘I should probably make a move soon.’

‘Who are you meeting?’

‘Just a friend May,’ Peter groans, ‘please don’t start the Spanish Inquisition.’

May puts up her hands and leaves, and Peter’s left with Ned’s calculating look. ‘This wouldn’t happen to be Deadpool would it?’

‘He’s just going to give me an update on any information he’s managed to find, Ned. Don’t make it weird,’ Peter sighs, stuffing his mask into his pocket and reaching for his phone, keys and wallet.

‘Right,’ Ned replies with an eye roll, ‘and this couldn’t be done over the phone because?’

He shrugs. ‘He just wants to make sure I’m alright. Besides I asked Daredevil for help as well.’

‘Excuse me?’ Ned’s eyes bug out of his head. ‘Since when do you know Daredevil?’
‘Long story. Now I’ve got to move, you coming?’

‘To meet Deadpool?’

‘Well…’ Peter waits until they’ve left the apartment before answering. ‘That may not be a good idea.’

‘Because he’s an insane mercenary?’

‘No because…’ he sighs and then continues. ‘I don’t know if he’ll be wearing his mask or not and he… well he has a lot of scars from the bit of skin I’ve seen when we’ve been eating and he’s really self-conscious about them. I don’t think he’d be comfortable if there was someone he doesn’t know there.’

‘Hang on,’ Ned’s mouth falls open, ‘are you going on a date with Deadpool?’

‘What? No!’

‘Dude you so should have dressed up.’

‘Ned it’s not a date. And what’s wrong with what I’m wearing?’

‘Whatever you say, Pete. Whatever you say.’

* * * * * * * *

Pain. That’s the first thing that registers through the fog in his mind. There’s sharp agony in his chest, but if he concentrates he can feel the dull ache in his limbs, and a throbbing behind his eyes.

He opens his eyes, blinking against the harsh lights and looks around. Some kind of lab. Well at least he’s still alive.

He tries to take in a breath, but it feels like there’s something pressing down on his lungs. It’s a horribly, hauntingly familiar feeling. Trying to move his arms he finds they’re tied to the bedrail, but he’s able to raise his head enough to look down at his chest.

Tony screams.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone, I hope you enjoyed this chapter because I have a surprise for you: double update this week! Mainly because the next chapter is called "Date With Deadpool" and I didn't think you'd want to wait a whole week for it.

L x
**Date With Deadpool**

Chapter Summary

Peter and Wade catch up on information, then have trouble deciding if they're on a date or not.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Peter enters the restaurant and looks around the few occupants. At the back he sees a very familiar looking profile, hunched over with a hood drawn up. Trying his best to ignore the butterflies currently taking residence in his stomach, Peter makes his way to the back and takes a seat opposite, smiling at the tacos on the table top.

Taking a deep breath he slowly looks up from the table top, taking in the casual clothes, until he reaches the mask and tries not to let the disappointment show on his face.

‘Care to tell me who you been visiting, Baby Boy?’

‘Thanks for the tacos,’ he replies, reaching for some sauce. ‘I’m pretty sure it was my turn to buy.’

‘Don’t avoid the fucking question.’

Peter scowls at him. ‘Who made you my babysitter? I’ve got enough of them already thank you very much.’

‘Yeah well I bet you failed to mention you went to the shit hole that is Hell’s Kitchen to your buddies,’ Deadpool counters.

Peter crosses his arms. ‘I was seeing a friend.’

‘You were seeing Daredevil. When did you find out who he was?’

‘The same time he found out who I was. I keep his identity, he keeps mine.’ The two have a staring match across the table. ‘If you’re going to try and stare me down at least have the decency to do it without the mask. Otherwise I can’t tell if you’re cheating.’

‘Mask stays on,’ Wade’s tone is final as he looks down, then picks up one of his own tacos and realises his issue. ‘Well, mostly on.’

‘Right, yeah,’ Peter looks down at his own food, forcing himself to eat it even though he doesn’t have much of an appetite any more.

‘Look, it’s not that I-’

‘Whatever, Pool,’ he says, taking a bite out of a taco. ‘I thought you wanted to catch up on information?’
‘Right, yeah.’ Peter doesn’t look up as the mercenary fills him in on what he’s found; there’s nothing that points directly to where Tony is being held, but he’s got information on weapon movements and a couple of drop offs. ‘I went to a couple last night, but no one was talking much, mainly because they don’t know shit. HYDRA’s not stupid, Baby Boy, they aren’t going to tell their secrets to the regular foot soldiers. But I did get the locations of a few destinations and origins of the weapon loads so I’ll check them out and get back to you.’

‘Thanks,’ he replies, making sure he gets all of the information written down. ‘I’ll let you know if I hear anything else.’ He makes to stand up and leave.

‘Spi- Peter wait,’ Deadpool reaches out and grabs hold of his wrist. ‘I’m sorry, I just- fuck I’m shit at this. Will you just sit down and hear me out?’ Peter looks at him for a moment, then nods and sits back down, pulling his hand back and sitting with arms crossed over his chest. ‘Right,’ the merc nods and looks down at the table. ‘Ok I deserve that. Look, I didn’t mean to be all, you know, “you can’t do what you want” when you got here I just- I freaked the fuck out yesterday. I mean you call me a couple of days ago saying you’re being attacked by the guy that’s threatened to kidnap you, and we barely get you out of that shit show. The next thing I hear is Tin Can has been taken, and you nearly got taken with him, and then you’re running off to Hell’s Kitchen to go see a vigilante that, last time we spoke, also threatened you. In the meantime I’m running around like a fucking moron trying to work out where they’re holding Tin Can, all the while wondering, if I do stumble across him, are you going to be there with him? I guess… I was just so fucking relieved to see you sit down I just let it all out.’

‘I-’

Deadpool holds up a hand. ‘I know you can look after yourself, Baby Boy. I know you can, I’ve seen you in action. Hell I’ve stared at your spandex-clad arse when you’re in action. Doesn’t mean I’m not going to worry about you. I’m sorry I flipped out.’

‘I’m sorry, too,’ Peter says, looking back up at the older man.

‘We good?’ Peter nods and gives him a small smile. ‘Want some more tacos?’

‘I could murder a couple of chimichangas.’ He can see the answering grin through the mask as the man stands up to go and order. Just as he’s settling back against the chair his phone rings. It’s a number he doesn’t recognise. ‘Hello?’

‘I’ve not got much for you, Peter,’ Matt’s voice comes over the phone, ‘but I may have something.’

Peter sits bolt upright. ‘Really?’

‘Where are you now?’

‘Catching up on information with another friend.’

‘Deadpool?’ he can hear the amusement in the man’s voice, and tries to keep his face from going bright red.

‘Maybe.’

‘Am I interrupting a date?’

‘Why is everyone calling it that?’ he mutters. ‘Can we move on please?’
'Alright I’m sorry. But seriously, it’s obvious you like him I can hear your heart beat over the phone.'

‘Can we please not talk about this?’

‘Sorry.’

‘No you’re not,’ Peter mutters, not caring the man will hear.

‘No I’m not,’ he agrees with a laugh. ‘But anyway this isn’t a call about your love life. There’s been a lot of weapons being moved around the city.’

‘Yeah Pool said the same thing,’ Peter says as the man sits back down. He mouths the vigilante’s name at him and sees the scowl through the mask but ignores him. ‘He’s going to check out a couple of the sites when we’ve finished here.’

‘Tell him to concentrate around the old Expo site, and at warehouses at these addresses,’ as Matt gives him the addresses Peter takes out his notebook to write them down. ‘That’s where I’ve picked up the most activity, makes me think it’s some of their bases.’

‘Thanks Daredevil,’ he says, sliding the paper over to Deadpool who reads it carefully. ‘I owe you big time.’

‘Yeah well if you need anything else checking out then give me a call, now you’ve got my number. I’ll let you know if I pick anything else up; if HYDRA start taking up residence in New York it’s only a matter of time before they try taking over the city and that means Hell’s Kitchen is on that list too. Let me know if you need help.’

‘I’ll let you know when the team plans to move against them. If you want to take off one of the heads, feel free.’

‘Speak to you soon, kid.’

Peter puts his phone away and looks over at Deadpool. ‘They on your list already?’

‘All except the old Expo site,’ he nods, ‘I’ll go to the others first and then head over there. Now how about we stop talking shop and actually chill a bit? You look ready to drop, Baby Boy.’

‘I feel it,’ he admits, taking a bite of his chimichanga. ‘Thanks for this, Pool.’

The man shrugs. ‘No need to thank me, I’m happy to help out my favourite arachnid. I would say you could pay me back with a date, but pretty sure I’d end up in jail.’

Peter tries not to let his nerves show, reaching for the sauce instead. ‘Is that what this is?’

The tension at the table spikes, and he knows the man is watching him intently. Part of the giveaway is the forgotten chimichanga halfway to his open mouth. ‘Would-is-would you like it to be? I mean… would you want to? Shit I can’t believe I’m having this conversation with a fucking teenager.’

‘I’m seventeen,’ Peter huffs.

‘Still a teenager.’

They’re both avoiding the question. Peter takes a deep breath and looks up uncertainly at the man, remembering Matt’s words. ‘If this was a date you wouldn’t have the mask on, so the
question’s kind of moot really.’

If possible the tension gets even thicker, and Peter finds it difficult to breathe as Deadpool lowers the chimichanga back down to the plate and looks to the side. ‘Suppose you’re right,’ he sighs. ‘But seeing as my face would put anyone off their food, the mask stays on, so we’re not on a date.’

‘Could be,’ he says, voice cracking a little. He knows his face is bright red as the merc swings his face round to look at him, eyes of the mask wide. Steeling his nerves he takes a deep breath. ‘Please?’

It feels like an eternity passes before the man reaches up, fingers curling under the mask. He pauses, and Peter desperately tries to keep the hope that’s bubbling in his chest from his face, then slowly peels the mask the rest of the way off.

‘Oh,’ Peter breathes as the scarred face comes into view; but that’s not what’s caught his attention. ‘Wade your eyes are gorgeous.’ Then his brain catches up to what he’s said and he blushes bright red. ‘I mean-uh- you know- uh-’

‘What?’ Wade squeaks. ‘That’s what you come out with? Not “holy fuck what fire farted over your face?” You look at my eyes. Seriously?’

‘Well…yeah?’

Wade’s mouth falls open and he’s staring at Peter in shock. ‘You-what- are you real?’

‘Last time I checked. Unless you want to get into the whole “evil demon dream” theory of reality. Does this mean we can call this a date now?’

‘You-what- but- my face.’

‘What does your face have to do with a date?’

‘You- I- I can’t- I need to get the fuck out,’ before Peter can say anything Wade has pushed away from the table and all but run out of the restaurant.

‘What?’ Peter blinks, then growls in frustration and runs after the merc. He exits just in time to see the man disappear into an alley and gives chase. ‘Wade!’ When he reaches the entrance he can’t see the man anywhere, but a sound from above catches his attention and he looks up to see the man vault onto the roof.

Peter growls and, throwing caution to the wind, vaults up the side of the building onto the roof. He arrives to see the mercenary pacing backwards and forwards muttering to himself, and running his hands over his head. Frustration taking over Peter lets a web fly and drags the merc towards him.

‘What the hell was all that about?’ he demands once the man is within a couple of feet.

‘I…panicked?’

‘Panicked,’ Peter repeats. ‘What the hell did you need to panic for?’

‘You,’ he looks away in shame, ‘you didn’t freak out over my face.’

‘Why is that a reason to panic? Surely that’s a good thing.’
‘It is!’ Wade agrees quickly, looking back to Peter. ‘It’s just… you’re the first person whose seen my face and hasn’t reacted with some form of disgust. I hadn’t prepared myself for any part of me to be called “gorgeous” so I just… panicked.’

Peter feels his heart breaking. ‘But Wade…’ he struggles to find the words he wants, ‘why would I find you disgusting?’

‘Uh… you’ve looked at me right?’

Peter closes the space between them so he’s standing close enough to feel the warmth from the man’s body, dropping the end of the web he reaches a hand up to brush over the bald head. ‘I’m looking at you right now, and I don’t see anything disgusting. I finally get to look at one of my best friends, and there’s nothing not to like.’

‘Fuck,’ Wade breathes and then, before Peter can properly register what is happening the man kisses him. Strong arms tighten and would have crushed him against the hard chest if not for his powers, and honestly he’s glad the man is holding him up because he’s not entirely sure his knees would be able to support him. One of Wade’s hands travel up his side to his face, cupping the back of his head and deepening the kiss, making Peter gasp, and the mercenary takes the opportunity to tentatively explore with his tongue.

When he starts to pull away Peter makes a noise of protest, tightening arms around the man’s neck and jumping up to follow the man’s mouth, using his wall crawling abilities to hold onto Wade’s shoulders, and wrapping his legs around his waist. Wade stumbles back a couple of steps, but quickly steadies them and continues to kiss him. It’s deep and ferocious, and full of emotion, much like the man himself.

‘Fuck,’ Wade says again, pushing Peter away from him and taking a few steps back. ‘No, no, no I can’t be doing this. You’re seventeen!’

‘We’ve taken out criminals together, and I’ve taken out a supervillain wanting to steal the Avengers’ stuff and you’re worrying about my age?’

‘Of course I’m fucking worried about your age! You’re not even legal-’

‘Oh come on!’

‘No, listen to me, please,’ Wade says, turning pleading eyes on him. Peter sighs but nods, gesturing for the man to continue. ‘Look I know I’ve been making comments about your arse in spandex and all that, but I’m not about to start something like this with someone who is underage alright? I just… I do have some fucking morals. I mean usually they’re shit ones I’ll give you that, but I’m not moving on this. Peter you asked me if this was a date and I would absolutely love to be taking you on dates every single week and spoiling the shit out of you.’

‘So why don’t you? I want this, Wade.’

‘Fuck Baby Boy, you trying to get me put in prison? There’s only so much self-control I have. Look,’ he holds up his hands to stop whatever Peter is about to say, ‘I’m not saying I don’t want this but… Peter you’re still in school and you have a lot going on and I don’t want something with us to screw it up for you. I’m assuming Tin Can wants you staying in school and getting a degree and all that and, honestly, I agree with him. You need some normality in your life, and a crazy mercenary for a boyfriend doesn’t fit in that.’

‘Fits into every aspect of my life, you moron,’ Peter grumbles, crossing his arms over his
‘Look, how about we do more of what we did tonight?’ Wade suggests. ‘Without the whole person missing and exchanging information obviously. We meet up outside of patrols for food or whatever, but nothing more happens until you’re eighteen. Then we can decide if we still want to do the whole explore the dating scene.’

‘You seriously kiss me like that and then tell me I have to wait a year to be able to do it again?’ Peter demands.

‘Baby Boy you kiss me like that again before you’re eighteen and I am going to do things to you that will definitely be putting me into a jail cell for many many years.’

Peter blushes, but knowing he’s not going to be able to change the merc’s mind just nods. ‘Fine,’ he pouts, ‘but just so you know, when you get frustrated at taking it slow I’m reminding you this is all your idea.’

* * * * * * * *

He knows he’s in trouble when he gets home. It’s not just May sitting on the sofa waiting for him.

‘Spending the evening with Ned?’ Natasha asks, quirking an eyebrow at him. ‘I thought we agreed you would lay low.’

‘I am!’ he protests. ‘I promise I am.’

‘So what are you doing wandering around most of New York in the past two days?’

Peter tries not to come across as defensive as he reaches into his pocket and takes out the piece of paper that he’d copied the addresses on earlier, he places it on the table in front of her and then takes a seat on one of the armchairs.

‘What’s this?’ Natasha asks, taking the piece of paper.

‘I called in a couple of favours,’ he explains. ‘Well and owe a favour. Those are all areas of high activity with weapons distribution, most probably from HYDRA activity.’

Natasha’s eyebrows disappear into her hairline, and May looks furious. ‘Peter Parker what have you been doing?’ his aunt demands.

‘Technically I’ve just been walking to a couple of meeting points and talking to people. It’s other people that have done most of the work. Ned and I have just been collating information and listening in on police radios. Uh-I mean-’

‘Listening in on-’

Natasha cuts across his aunt. ‘Who have you been speaking to?’ Peter looks down at her question. ‘Deadpool?’

He nods, and he sees Natasha rub her temples. ‘Deadpool and… and Daredevil.’

‘What? Since when did you know Daredevil?’ she demands. ‘We’ve been trying to track him
down for months.’

‘I’m not giving you his name,’ Peter says, voice firm, ‘he knows who I am. It’s a mutual secret.’

Natasha studies him for a moment and then nods. ‘Alright. So these are all places of high activity?’

Peter nods. ‘Daredevil gave me those addresses. Deadpool had done his own investigation and got all of the addresses except the Expo as potential places for HYDRA activity. He’s checking out some of them and getting back to me. Daredevil’s keeping tabs on things and will let me know if anything else comes up.’

‘You’ve been busy,’ the red head comments, ‘May showed me your room.’

‘I couldn’t sit and do nothing,’ he says, looking down at the carpet.

There’s silence for a while. ‘You’ve done well, Pete,’ Natasha says eventually. ‘I’ll admit I’m impressed. Keep me updated if you hear anything else, but you don’t move against them, you understand?’ Peter nods. ‘I’ll let you know when we move in. You’re not coming though.’

‘What? Why-’

‘They wanted you as well as Tony,’ she snaps. ‘I couldn’t live with myself if you got hurt whilst we were trying to save him. And you can bet anything that Tony would have my hide if I let you come along. If you’re there Pete he’ll be too distracted keeping you safe to focus on getting out. We can’t risk that. Understand?’ He frowns but nods. She stands up to leave and he scrambles to his feet. ‘Don’t stop what you’re doing now though, you’ve made more progress than we have. Seems you’ve got some good contacts, Spider-Man.’

He gives a small smile, but doesn’t look up from the carpet. Then he’s pulled into a tight hug and, after a couple of seconds, he wraps his arms around her waist. ‘Be careful,’ he says quietly. ‘I don’t want any of you to get hurt.’

‘Takes more than a couple of HYDRA idiots to take us out,’ she says into his hair and he chuckles.

‘Bring him back, Nat. Please.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: So finally some Spideypool action! Sorry I know it's taken a while for the relationship side of this story to really take off. Now all we have to do is get Tony back and the Stony can take off.

Thank you to everyone who is still reading this story, and especially to the people who are finding it for the first time and persevering with getting through all of it! Extra big thank you to everyone who has left kudos and comments on this story, I do love hearing your thoughts on what is going on. The support from this story has been incredible.

I've had a few requests for a WinterIron story so I'm having a few thoughts about how to do that. It would be separate from this series, but I've got the start of an AU idea in
my head that I might make into WinterIron. For now I'm working on the next special which is set after this story finishes, and will then go on to the sequel for this one.

In the meantime do let me know what you think of these two chapters. I hope you continue to enjoy the story and, as always, do let me know what you think.

Thank you again and big love!
L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

‘You touch any of them,’ Tony growls, ‘and I’ll make sure you die a slow and very painful death.’
‘Any of them?’ Hammer echoes. ‘Or just the intern that’s more a son than an employee? Or the dear Captain who you’ve become more than a little closer to? Or what about the Soldier who so desperately wants your heart?’
‘Whatever you think you know, Hammer,’ Tony growls, ‘you don’t know shit.’
Hammer just laughs. ‘Whatever you say, Anthony. How about we give your friends a little call?’
Tony hits the floor hard, trying to roll so the thing in his chest doesn’t hit the concrete floor; he’s still struggling to breathe, not only because of the pressure on his lungs, but from the water he’s just been dunked in for the past thirty minutes. It’s just like being back in Afghanistan, and he’s pretty sure it’s no coincidence.

‘Ah Anthony! I’m so sorry I haven’t come by sooner. So much to do so little time.’

Tony wants to punch Hammer hard when he comes into view. ‘What the fuck did you make them do to me?’

‘Well you seemed so determined to get the arc reactor back to being a permanent feature,’ Hammer says, taking the only seat in his cell and putting his feet on the bed, ‘I just suggested that maybe you could use a hand with it.’

‘Cut the bullshit, Hammer. Why did you put the reactor back in my chest?! Why not just take it? Why not just leave me for dead?’

‘Oh you’re not much use to us dead, Anthony,’ Hammer explains, waving for the guards to drag Tony to his feet. ‘You’re much more use to us as a bargaining chip. Here’s the thing: that reactor in your chest? Not actually yours. It’s one left over from when my friend Ivan was here.’

‘Vanko? Wait, that means this is made with-’

‘Palladium. Exactly Anthony. So what you need to do is give us the schematics for the arc reactor, and tell us how to create your new element – what was it called? Yinsinium wasn’t it? Give us all of that and we’ll let you build your own reactor. One that won’t slowly poison you.’

‘And if I tell you to go fuck yourself?’

‘We target the rest of your team,’ Hammer explains. ‘One by one. Perhaps starting with your dear little intern, Peter. Or should I say,’ his eyes sparkle dangerously, ‘now what was it you called him? Your “kid” I believe it was when we went to the school. How long do you think he’d last with everything we’ve done to you? He is young so he may be able to withstand more. Maybe we should go a little harder on him at first-’

Tony knows he shouldn’t, but he can’t stop the roar of rage that erupts from his tattered throat and lungs as he tries, and fails, to launch himself at the smirking man. Hammer’s laugh does nothing to stop the tears of frustration from where he lies on the floor.

‘Just give me what I want, Anthony,’ Hammer’s voice is right in his ear now. ‘Or I might
have to ask your beloved team to send it over. Would you prefer I went for America’s golden boy rather than your intern? I know HYDRA would love to have Captain America as a new toy; and they’re still rather upset you’ve got dear Sergeant Barnes with you as well. They would like their prized possession back.’

‘You touch any of them,’ Tony growls, ‘and I’ll make sure you die a slow and very painful death.’

‘Any of them?’ Hammer echoes. ‘Or just the intern that’s more a son than an employee? Or the dear Captain who you’ve become more than a little closer to? Or what about the Soldier who so desperately wants your heart?’

‘Whatever you think you know, Hammer,’ Tony growls, ‘you don’t know shit.’

Hammer just laughs. ‘Whatever you say, Anthony. How about we give your friends a little call?’

‘Agent Romanov? There’s a call coming through from the same number that Justin Hammer called from before. Shall I put it through to you in the briefing room?’ FRIDAY asks.

Natasha looks up, eyes narrowing and nods. ‘Get everyone up here, FRIDAY,’ she tells the AI, ‘and put the call through.’

‘Everyone is on their way, estimated time of arrival for last person is three minutes. Call coming through now.’

‘Ah Miss Romanov I was hoping to speak to you,’ Justin Hammer’s smirking face has Natasha’s blood boiling, then she notices the other people on the video call and it runs cold.

‘What are you playing at Hammer?’ she demands. ‘And what the hell have you done to Tony?’ Her friend is kneeling between two guards, each of whom have a gun aiming at his head, and he’s holding his chest, his face twisted in a grimace of pain.

‘Oh of course. How silly of me,’ he replies, gesturing to the kneeling man. ‘Ah we have more guests, Anthony. I thought you’d all want to see how your dear friend is getting on.’

‘Nat what’s-’ Steve trails off as he takes in the video call in front of them, she turns and sees Bucky and Sam entering with him.

‘Tony!’ Rhodes has entered behind them and caught sight of his friend. ‘Hammer you bastard what the hell have you done to him?’

‘Ah Colonel, lovely to see you again. Perhaps you can help me convince your friend to be a little more cooperative, I’m afraid Anthony hasn’t exactly been playing ball so to speak. My new friends haven’t taken too kindly to that, have they Anthony?’ The look Tony sends Hammer is toxic, and the man gestures to one of the guards. ‘Show them.’

Natasha watches as Tony’s eyes go wide and he tries to struggle against the guard as he reaches down and rips the shirt the inventor is wearing.
‘Oh god,’ Rhodes collapses into a chair. ‘You put the reactor back in his chest?!? What the fuck is wrong with you?’

‘We made a deal,’ Hammer’s voice stops being smarmy and goes hard, ‘if he gave us the schematics to the arc reactor technology we’d let him go and give him back his upgrade.’

‘What do you mean give him his upgrade?’ Sam demands.

‘That’s not Tony’s tech,’ she says, voice barely audible as she takes in the reactor in her friend’s chest. ‘That reactor wasn’t made by Tony.’

‘Bingo! Well done Miss Romanov,’ Hammer’s grin is back.

‘Then who the fuck made a reactor to-’ Bucky trails off, and she can feel the rage pouring off of the man. ‘Don’t you dare tell me you’ve put a palladium reactor in his chest, Hammer,’ the Brooklyn drawl is thick as the man’s anger increases.

Natasha’s eyes go back to Tony, and she finds him staring straight back at her; she opens her mouth to say something, then stops at the barely perceptible shake of the head from the inventor. Then she notices his fingers. One hand is half covering the reactor, like he used to when he was feeling threatened out of the suit, but his index finger is tapping away.

Tap. Then he lifts his finger for a second. Taps and rests it on the reactor for a split second, two quick taps, and then again with the tap and rest before lifting it for a second. Tap, two tap and rests, tap. Lift. Three tap and rests. Lift.

The pattern repeats as the chatter continues in the background. Her eyes widen a little, then go back to look at Tony’s face. She sits back down in the chair she’d vacated, carefully picks up her pencil and, cautiously, copies the pattern onto the paper without looking down. She sees a tiny smile in Tony’s eyes.

‘Send me the schematics,’ Hammer snaps, ‘or the next time you see your friend he’ll have a hole in his head as well as his chest.’

‘I swear to you Hammer,’ Steve growls, Brooklyn accent nearly as thick as Bucky’s ‘when I get hold of you, you’re going to wish you’d stayed dead the first time.’

Hammer’s laugh startles most of them. ‘Oh ho! I must admit, Anthony, if I knew it was going to be this entertaining I would have done this call so much earlier. Tell me: just how long have those two been fighting over you?’

She sees the uncertainty in Tony’s eyes and the way he tries obviously not to look at them down the camera; behind her Bucky is all but growling, and she can feel the hostility from both him and Steve. Daring a look back she almost wishes she hadn’t, because the looks on both of the soldiers’ faces are terrifying.

‘Fuck you Hammer,’ Tony manages to croak out from cracked lips. ‘I already told you, you don’t know shit. Never did. Probably why all your tech was so shi-’

The back hand cuts him off and sends him flying into the legs of one of the guards. The room behind her erupts in anger, and she gets a sinking feeling at the satisfied look on Hammer’s face. He turns back to the team. ‘Send me the schematics. Or I’m afraid, Captain Rogers and Sergeant Barnes, I may let one of the guards beat you in your little competition.’

Natasha’s feels her heart clench at the implied threat and stands up before either of the
soldiers can make it worse. ‘We’ll bring you what you deserve, Hammer,’ she says. ‘I’ll send a message when we’re ready to this number.’

‘What-’ she turns and cuts off Steve’s remark with a glare.

‘Ah my lovely Widow, so glad one of you have some sense,’ Hammer smiles again. ‘You have until tomorrow at eight. If I don’t hear by then, I’m afraid your friend will have a few more holes. Bye, bye!’ With that the call ends.

‘Natasha, what the fuck are you-’

‘Get Clint and Scott here within two hours,’ she cuts off Rhodes, ‘and everyone else be ready to move out at twenty hundred.’

‘What…’ Wanda’s eyes suddenly light up. ‘You know where he is.’

Natasha smirks. ‘While the rest of you were doing such a fine job of keep him distracted, Tony managed to get a message through without Hammer realising.’ She holds up her piece of paper, with the hastily translated Morse code. ‘He was tapping on the reactor. Morse code. It’s one of the addresses Peter got from Daredevil.’

‘Where is he?’ Steve growls.

‘The old Expo site. What are your orders Captain?’

‘Sam, Rhodey? Go get Clint and Scott,’ the two scramble to do as their ordered. ‘Everyone else, get ready. No holds barred. I don’t care if we have to kill every man in that facility to get to Tony, we’re getting him back tonight.’

____________________________

Tony’s too terrified to even rest his eyes. Not that he’ll ever admit that out loud. After the video call earlier, and Hammer’s threat, he’s too worried to close his eyes in case he loses the opportunity to defend himself against the guards. He just hopes Natasha understands his message and the team finds him soon.

He’s starting to wish he hadn’t spent so much time awake before getting captured. Maybe Steve had been right.

‘Dammit I must be feeling bad,’ he mutters to himself, ‘if I’m admitting Cap was right.’ He closes his eyes and tries to hold back the tears, he’s promised himself he wouldn’t let these bastards see him cry. ‘Steve,’ he whispers, ‘please hurry.’

Just then there’s what sounds suspiciously like an explosion and the sound of lots of people shouting and hurrying past his cell.

‘Huh,’ he muses. ‘That sounds like one of Clint’s arrows.’

____________________________
A/N: Hi everyone! So the team are finally getting their backsides in gear to rescue Tony. I hope you enjoyed this chapter, do let me know what you think and do let me know if there is anything in particular you'd like me to try and tackle. I've had requests for WinterIron and Stuckony stories that have got my brain going so keep the suggestions coming in.

I can't tell you just how much it means to me that I've still got people sticking with this story, and the love from comments has been incredible. I've had a particularly difficult week at work this week, and getting a message to say I've had a comment and reading it has been one of the things that's kept me sane. So thank you all my wonderful readers and reviewers. Please, please, please if there is anything I can have a go at writing that you would love to see, either in this series or as a separate one, do let me know; I'd love to be able to show some appreciation back to you all.

All that's left is to say another huge thank you and I hope you all have a wonderful week. Love to you all!

L x

And of course, as always, here's your sneak peek:

A pained sound from the body in his arms makes him freeze as he turns to the door and look down. ‘Steve?’ the cracked whisper is barely audible, but dark eyes open slightly to look at him.

‘I’m here, Tony,’ he tries his best to comfort the man. ‘We’re all here. We’re getting you out.’

‘What took you so long?’ the man coughs. ‘You stop for drive thru or something?’

Despite everything Steve chuckles, remembering the words from their first battle. ‘Yeah, but we picked you up a cheeseburger so I hope you can forgive us.’

‘As long as it’s a double,’ Tony replies, eyes closing, ‘and you got me a large order of fries.’
Chapter Summary

The team launch a raid to get Tony back, everything seems to be going well until they run into a familiar face.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Steve waits next to Natasha and Clint on top of one of the buildings surrounding the old Expo site. Rhodes is currently doing a scan of the area with his armour, and they’re waiting for his results to move. The rest of the team is stationed around the area in groups, all waiting for his signal, Bucky’s in charge of one and Sam the other until Rhodes returns to them.

‘Anything yet, Rhodey?’ Steve asks, hands curling and uncurling in fists at his side.

‘There’s a couple of entrances, Cap, but nothing showing up as a red flag yet. Definitely been some movement around here though,’ comes the reply, ‘I don’t know how it didn’t get picked up.’

‘You want the entrance on the south side,’ a voice says behind them, ‘used to be the old food delivery entrance from what I can gather.’

Clint has an arrow to his bow faster than Steve can blink, and Natasha has her guns up. Immediately the former spy lowers them when she sees the newcomer. ‘Daredevil.’

‘Natasha I assume? Peter mentioned you quite a bit.’

‘Peter?’ Steve growls. ‘What do you know about Peter?’

Daredevil raises his hands in a sign of peace. ‘He asked for my help, I gave it to him.’

‘He’s the reason we had the addresses in the first place, Steve,’ Natasha soothes him, then turns to the red suited man. ‘What are you doing here now?’

‘I assume the same thing I am,’ another voice, this one sounding decidedly upset, pipes up as another man in a red suit climbs over the fire escape of the building. ‘Didn’t realise Spidey had asked for your help tonight too, Red.’

‘Deadpool,’ Daredevil growls. ‘I didn’t realise he’d asked for yours either.’

‘He didn’t,’ the mercenary replies, ‘but I promised to check out the addresses you gave, this was the last one and then he said the team were moving in so I headed over to lend a hand.’

‘What?’ Clint looks between the two red clad men, blinking a couple of times, but never once lowering his bow. ‘Hang on. Spider-Man asked the two of you to help us out?’

‘Not exactly,’ Daredevil replies. ‘It seems Deadpool is just being his usual irritating self. Me on the other hand, I asked him to let me know when you were moving against HYDRA. I wanted to
make sure none got away, I don’t need them establishing even more of a foothold in this city. That was the agreement we made when I said I’d help him try and find out where Tony Stark was being kept.’

‘We don’t have time for this,’ Natasha reminds him.

‘Well from the looks of it, Daredevil was right,’ Rhodes says over the comms. ‘That entrance might be our best bet.’

‘We need to make a decision quickly,’ the vigilante pipes up. ‘We’ve got a convoy on the way here, sounds like one of the weapons transports. If we don’t hurry we’re going to have even more weapons and people to contend with.’

‘I’m not even going to ask how you know that,’ Deadpool shakes his head. ‘Look here’s a suggestion. How about me and the walking Hallowe’en costume go take out the convoy while you lot go in and get Tin Can. We’ll head back here and help you clean up once the convoy’s dealt with. You alright with that Red?’

‘Not really.’

‘Look these guys have the experience working together right? We’re just going to get in their way until Tin Can is out of the picture. Once that happens we can then go in and have some fun.’

‘Why the sudden concern for Tony?’ Steve demands.

Deadpool looks at him. ‘I’m not sure Spider-Man would be able to cope if you lost him.’

Steve’s not sure he’d be able to cope either. He’s not sure any of the team would. Pushing the thought away he focuses on Daredevil’s next question. ‘Why the concern for Spider-Man, Deadpool?’

The mercenary frowns and glares at the vigilante. ‘Because he’s my friend you cock-sucking mother fucker. And strangely enough I do actually care about my friends.’

‘Alright stop!’ Steve shouts. ‘Go with Deadpool’s plan. You two take out the convoy, then come back and help if you want. We’ll focus on getting Tony out. Rhodey? Give Clint a lift over to the rooftop opposite the entrance.’

‘Roger that, Cap,’ and only a few seconds later Rhodes flies over and grabs hold of Clint, taking him to another spot on the compound.

‘Sam, come get Nat, I’m heading down to ground. Clint? When I give the signal blow that door to pieces.’

‘On it,’ comes the man’s reply.

‘Everyone else: once Clint’s blown that door we go in. Scott I want you small and searching for Tony. That’s your number one priority. Nat, Vis? I want you two downloading all the information you can from their computers. I’m expecting to have a lot of reading to do. Everyone else? Give them hell. Take out as many as you need to.’

‘Cap what do I do when I find Tony?’ Scott asks as Steve watches the two red suited men disappear down the fire escape.

‘Let us know and someone will come help you get him out. Whoever gets him, get him on
the Quinjet. Tony is our number one priority tonight; any extra destruction we can cause along the way is a bonus.’

‘Get ready for a lot of bonuses then,’ Wanda growls.

‘Hey Steve? Next time you take the hormonal teenager on your team alright?’ Bucky says, but Steve can tell the light-hearted tone is forced.

‘I would have thought you’d enjoy having Peter on your team next time, Buck,’ he tries to joke back.

‘I’m ready when you are Cap,’ Clint says. ‘Just tell me when to blow it.’

Steve reaches the ground and starts sprinting to the entrance. ‘Everyone else in position?’

‘Just waiting for you old man,’ Natasha replies.

‘Blow it.’

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Natasha straightens up after taking out another HYDRA guard and catches her breath. They’ve done well at catching them unawares, and the guards are still scrambling into some semblance of order; the chaos is mostly helped by Wanda, who is not even attempting to hold back on her powers, her face is furious, made slightly terrifying by the red light glowing from her eyes.

Honestly? Natasha is very glad the girl is on their side. She watches Clint take out two more with an arrow in his hand before nocking it to his bow and letting it fly, an explosion sounds a little later and some new guards are thrown to the floor before they even get a chance to join in the fight.

Clint grins at her. ‘You know I’m starting to think retirement doesn’t suit me. Think if I get the team to help do the porch Laura will let me come back?’

‘I thought you were supposed to be going camping this summer?’ she responds.

‘Oh yeah. Maybe just semi-retirement then.’

Vision appears next to her. ‘I have located the mainframe. Shall we collect our information?’

‘Lead the way, Vis. Clint you ok here?’

‘Am I ok? I haven’t had this much fun in months!’ the archer responds and runs back into the fight. As he takes down another two guards Natasha catches sight of Bucky. Seeing the Winter Soldier in action is something both beautiful and terrifying; he moves with all the grace that she remembers being instilled in her during her time in the Red Room, but the brutal way he cuts down the enemy, stepping over bodies as if they were nothing, sends a shiver down even her spine. She remembers having to fight him before, and is thinking HYDRA might be regretting training this particular soldier.

‘Natasha, we should hurry,’ Vision urges from further along the corridor.

‘Right. Sorry. Lead the way, Vis,’ she says, hurrying after the humanoid and felling another guard with a well-aimed shot.
‘Guys? I’ve found him,’ Scott’s voice comes over the comms. ‘He’s not good I’m going to need some help getting him out.’

‘Is he conscious?’ she asks, heart pounding in her chest as Vision puts another guard through the wall.

‘No, but he’s alive.’

‘Bucky on me,’ Steve’s barks the command through the ear piece. ‘Where are you Scott? We’ll be with you soon.’

Natasha tunes them out as Scott begins giving instructions. They’ve got even less time to get the information they need now, they need to hurry.

The sight that greets Steve when he crashes through the door is enough to make him see red.

‘Cap! Finally! We need to get him out of here, and fast,’ Scott says, helmet open as he checks over an unconscious Tony.

‘Shit,’ Bucky growls behind him, shoving past him to get into the room. ‘Stevie go get him, I’ll cover you on the corridor. Scott get up here and give me a hand, go scout ahead we need to clear the way to the Quinjet.’

‘Right, yeah,’ the Ant-Man says, scrambling away from the bed as Steve makes his way over, trying to keep the trembling in his hands from being noticeable.

Tony had looked bad on the video call, but seeing him in the flesh is worse. He’s pale, even underneath bruises and blood and dirt it’s easy to see how pale his is; his eyes have sunken, even in the brief time since he’d been taken, and he looks exhausted. His lips are cracked and one or two bits are bleeding sluggishly. The arc reactor is glowing in his chest, the skin around it caked in dried blood and grime, and looks nothing like the elegant piece of machinery it had always been before. The fingers on his right hand are bent at horrible angles where they’d quite clearly been broken and Steve feels his heart sink. If they didn’t heal correctly there’s every chance the genius wouldn’t be able to invent in the same way ever again, and if that happened Steve was sure it’d break the man.

‘Steve? We got to move, come on,’ Bucky says from the doorway. When Steve only kneels down next to the inventor his friend adds. ‘Please Stevie, I can’t… I can’t see him like this any more than you can. We need to get him out of here. Please. Move.’

‘Right,’ Steve forces the word past his closing throat and careful picks up the broken genius. It’s terrifying how light he feels, and Steve makes sure his shield is covering as much of Tony’s body as possible as he starts to move.

A pained sound from the body in his arms makes him freeze as he turns to the door and look down. ‘Steve?’ the cracked whisper is barely audible, but dark eyes open slightly to look at him.

‘I’m here, Tony,’ he tries his best to comfort the man. ‘We’re all here. We’re getting you out.’

‘What took you so long?’ the man coughs. ‘You stop for drive thru or something?’
Despite everything Steve chuckles, remembering the words from their first battle. ‘Yeah, but we picked you up a cheeseburger so I hope you can forgive us.’

‘As long as it’s a double,’ Tony replies, eyes closing, ‘and you got me a large order of fries.’

‘Bucky may have stolen some but I think most are left.’

‘Bastard,’ is the last thing Tony says as he lets his head fall against Steve’s chest.

He looks up at his friend, his face set. ‘Let’s get out of here, Buck.’

The Winter Soldier nods and puts his rifle to his shoulder. ‘We clear down this corridor, Scott?’

‘All clear, Bucky, I’m just dealing with a couple as you turn left.’

‘I’ll come give you a hand.’ As his friend disappears through the door, doing a quick sweep behind them, Steve follows on behind, constantly checking over his shoulder for any sign of pursuit.

Between the three of them they manage to make it most of the way back to the entrance before they run into trouble.

‘Now, now, Captain I think you’ll find you’re carrying something that belongs to us now,’ the smarmy voice that Steve is starting to loathe with every fibre of his being says from behind them, as a row of soldiers block their exit.

‘Shit,’ Bucky curses, swinging his gun backwards and forwards. Scott has managed to make himself small and Steve’s hoping none of their enemies have picked up on it yet.

‘Got fire ants incoming, Cap,’ Scott tells him, ‘but we’re going to need a few minutes.’

‘Get behind me, Steve,’ Bucky says, planting Steve firmly between his back and a wall. Steve does his best to wrap his body around the part of Tony his shield isn’t able to protect.

‘Guys we got a problem,’ Scott says to the rest of the team down the comms.

‘Yeah? Join the club,’ Clint grunts. ‘Where are you?’

‘By the exit. But we’re surrounded,’ Scott responds. ‘What’s happening with you?’

‘A lot of hostiles,’ is the response, followed by the sound of an explosion, ‘but we’re keeping our heads above the water. Sorry we’re not going to be able to help for a bit.’

‘Now, now, soldier,’ Hammer says, a self-satisfied smirk on his face, ‘let’s not be rude.’ Then he does something that makes Steve’s blood run cold. He takes out a red book and opens it, leafing through the pages.

‘No,’ Steve breathes.

Hammer begins to read a series of Russian words that Steve knows only too well. His best friend is frozen in place, the only movement is him shaking.

‘What’s happening?’ Scott asks.

‘Hammer has the trigger words for Bucky,’ Steve hisses. ‘Buck you alright? Stay with me!’
Hammer reaches the end of the words and closes the book again. ‘Soldier?’

‘Ready to comply,’ comes the monotone voice that has Steve’s heart sinking through his boots.

‘It worked,’ he croaks, pulling Tony tighter against him.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! I would say sorry to leave you on a cliffhanger but I'm not really. Hope you all enjoy this chapter.

Thank you as always to everyone who is sticking with this story, and big thanks to the people that are only just finding it and catching up in one go. We're getting close to the end now, which is a little surreal I'm not going to lie. And of course thank you so much to everyone who has left comments and kudos on this story. Your support is absolutely incredible and I love you all! I'm pretty sure I've been good this week and responded to everyone as well. Go me!

So all that's left to do is sign off and leave you with the sneak peek.
L x

And here you go:

‘Shoot him,’ Hammer says, stepping back behind his row of guards, ‘and bring me Tony Stark.’
Steve sees Bucky nod and can’t do anything as the man raises his gun.
‘Steve ants are here now! I’m setting them on the guys by the door. Run!’ Scott shouts.
‘Shoot him,’ Hammer says, stepping back behind his row of guards, ‘and bring me Tony Stark.’

Steve sees Bucky nod and can’t do anything as the man raises his gun.

‘Steve ants are here now! I’m setting them on the guys by the door. Run!’ Scott shouts.

‘If you insist,’ Bucky says, firing the gun and taking down the man standing next to Hammer.

‘What?’ Hammer shrieks as the men blocking the exit to the compound start going crazy.

Bucky makes short work of the rest of the guards, then turns his gun on Hammer. ‘Did you seriously think that shit would work on me?’ the man demands, his Brooklyn accent thick.

‘Stay back or I’ll blow this whole place to hell,’ Hammer snarls, pulling a detonation device from his pocket. Bucky pauses mid-step, gun still trained on Tony’s former business rival. Scott reappears in full height next to the Winter Soldier.

‘Nice play, man. You had us all fooled.’

‘Maybe I should take up acting,’ Bucky chuckles, looking from Hammer’s face to the device in his hand. Steve cautiously moves backwards towards the exit.

‘One more move, Captain, and this whole place goes up. Now give me back Anthony, or all of you are paying the price for trying to save him.’ Steve pauses at Hammer’s words.

Just then a shot rings out. Steve flinches on instinct, but it’s Hammer who lets out a wail of pain, clutching his hand as the device falls to the floor. Before he can work out who fired the shot Natasha appears out of nowhere, taking the former business tycoon to the floor, a gun to his head.

‘Thanks for the distraction, Deadpool,’ the woman says, inclining her head towards the entrance, eyes never leaving Hammer.

‘Pleasure’s all mine, Widow,’ the mercenary comes into view, walking past Steve and the others, and putting his gun away. ‘I don’t take kindly to people threatening my friends. That one’s for my Baby Boy, asshole.’

‘Oh great another psychopath,’ Hammer snarls. ‘Just how many of you are there?’

‘Considering you’ve been working for HYDRA I don’t think you can be saying much on that front,’ Natasha says. ‘Any last words?’

‘Nat,’ a weak voice from his arms has Steve looking down, ‘don’t.’
The red-head looks up at the inventor in Steve’s arms, then back at Hammer. ‘Tony—’

‘Please.’

She looks torn, then sighs and puts the gun away, taking a pair of cuffs from god only knows where, and binding the man underneath her. When she gets to her feet she drags him up with her and shoves him towards Bucky. ‘Take this piece of shit to the Quinjet. Vis has gone to help the others, we’ll get them all out and back up to you soon.’

‘Daredevil’s keeping the exit clear for you,’ Deadpool says. ‘I’ll come give you a hand inside.’ And with that the mercenary disappears into the tunnels, occasional shouts of: ‘Take that mother-fucker’ and ‘Bad Deadpool!’ followed by ‘Good Deadpool’ float back to them.

Bucky gives Hammer a blow to the back of the head with his metal fist and the man goes limp, the soldier slinging him over his shoulder and turning towards the exit. ‘I’ll come back as soon as this trash is in the Quinjet. Scott you alright to stay there with Steve and help defend it until we get back?’

‘Sure thing,’ the man says.

‘Nat,’ Tony weakly reaches out for the spy and she hurries to Steve’s side. ‘Thank you.’

She gently brushes a strand of unwashed hair from his forehead. ‘You just focus on making sure Steve gets you to that jet in one piece, leave the rest to us.’

‘Didn’t want him to be the one to make me wrong about giving you that gun,’ he croaks, before his eyes slip closed again.

Steve could have sworn he sees the sheen of tears in her eyes before she blinks and straightens up. ‘Get him to the jet. Now.’

‘Get everyone out, we want to be leaving in twenty minutes max,’ he responds, spinning on his heel and following the other two up the tunnel and out into the night air. Tony shivers in his arms and he pulls him closer, opening up to full running speed when he sights the Quinjet.

‘Steve! Wait up!’ Scott pants behind him, Bucky’s only just keeping pace a few steps behind.

The rest of the team turn up in pairs or threes. Steve and Scott have made sure Hammer is secured and are doing their best to patch up Tony. Rhodes is the first to arrive, bringing an injured Clint who is clutching an arm with a grimace of pain; the military man replaces Scott at the inventor’s side and, with their basic military training, he and Steve do what they can to get Tony stable. Scott sees to Clint in the meantime and by the time Natasha arrives, supporting an exhausted Wanda, Clint is heading to the controls at the front of the ship ready to take off when everyone is back.

‘Deadpool and Daredevil have said they’ll cover us once everyone’s on board,’ Natasha explains, heading to the front to sit next to Clint as Bucky returns. ‘Sam and Vision are making sure there’s nothing left before they come back. They’ll be two minutes tops. Clint? Start up the engines.’

‘One step ahead of you,’ he replies, wincing as he reaches up to flip a switch. The engines roar to life as Sam and Vision fly through the back. ‘Let’s go kids.’ Sam closes the door as the jet
takes off, and Steve is just able to catch sight of two red clad men disappearing into the darkness of the streets before it closes behind them.

He looks back down at the man lying across several seats, blankets already wrapped around him in an effort to keep him warm.

‘How is he?’ Wanda asks, sounding terrified and so very different from the determined fighter she’d been not fifteen minutes ago.

Steve shakes his head. He honestly has no idea.

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Peter can’t concentrate on his lessons.

They’ve restarted school now most of the building is repaired, and he’s miraculously managed to still keep the fact he is Spider-Man a secret. He keeps looking down at his phone, but no new messages have come in.

It had reached the news yesterday that Tony had been taken by person or persons unknown and the Avengers were searching for him. Natasha had sent him a message last night to say there were going after him; from what he’d heard from Matt and Wade, both of whom had gotten home with minimal injuries, the team had managed to get Tony out. The problem is he hasn’t heard anything about how the man is doing. It’s now mid-afternoon and he honestly didn’t give a damn about Spanish. He just wants to know how Tony is.

‘Mr Parker? Mr Parker!’ he snaps his head up, trying his best to ignore the sniggers from Flash. ‘Mr Parker can you please pay attention? This is the third time I’ve tried to speak to you.’

‘I’m sorry, miss,’ he mumbles, looking down at his desk.

‘I’m sure there are a number of things you would rather be doing than sitting in my lesson, however—’

A knock at the door has everyone turning to look as the Headmaster pokes his head through. ‘Apologies for the interruption. Mr Parker? Can you step outside please? And bring your books with you.’

*Oh great, now what have I done?* He wonders as he packs up his bag, ignoring the triumphant smirk on Flash’s face, and the worried frown on Ned’s, and walks towards the classroom door.

‘We’ll be having a vocabulary test next lesson Mr Parker, I suggest you get the list from one of your friends,’ his teacher says as he makes his way forwards.

‘I can give it to him, miss,’ Ned volunteers, and Peter sends his friend a thankful smile before he steps out of the classroom.

‘You wanted to see me, sir?’ he asks the Headmaster.

‘You have a visitor who is insisting you leave for the day,’ he says, gesturing down the corridor.
Peter’s insides twist uncomfortably, remembering the last time someone had come to his school. Then he catches sight of the red-head a little down the corridor. ‘Natasha!’ without thinking he runs towards the assassin, seeing the worry tightening her features, and wraps his arms around her. ‘Please tell me he’s alright,’ he mumbles against her as she holds him tightly. ‘Please, please, just tell me he’s alright.’

‘Shh,’ she soothes him, one hand reaching up to stroke through his hair. ‘We got him out, Pete. He’s back at the facility in the med wing. He’s-’ her voice catches a little and he can’t help the fear that courses through him, ‘he’s not in a good way, Pete; but the doctors think he’ll recover.’

‘Can I see him?’

‘I’m taking you up to the facility. May’s agreed you can stay as long as you like, and the Headmaster has said he’ll get work sent over for you,’ she says, pulling away just enough so only one arm is around his shoulders as she leads him out of the school and down the steps towards the waiting car. ‘We all agree he’ll feel much better if you’re around when he wakes up.’

Why is it every time he wakes up at the moment there’s stupid amounts of pain? Tony’s beginning to wonder just how many deities he’s managed to piss off in his lifetime.

He doesn’t want to open his eyes just yet, that usually leads to bright lights and lots more pain. So he decides taking stock of his surroundings and injuries would be a good start. There’s a steady beeping in the background, and the tell-tale sound of machines working.

_Huh either I’ve been moved or Steve turning up wasn’t a hallucination_, he thinks. His feet seem to be in working order, as do his legs; although even trying to move them a small amount has lots of pain shooting through his muscles. His chest still hurts, and it doesn’t feel like his lung capacity has increased much. He’s definitely lying on a bed, with a sheet tucked around him, but his arms are free. His left arm shifts and there’s no restraints to block the movement. He frowns as he tries to move the right one and there’s something stopping him from moving.

He blinks his eyes open, wincing at the brightness that assaults his eyes, making them water. Turning his head, his neck muscles protesting, he sees the reason his hand won’t move: there’s a mop of messy brown hair lying on top of it.

‘Tony?’ the soft voice has him turning to look to his left. Bright blue eyes, wide in disbelief, look back at him.

‘Steve?’ he manages to rasp, then immediately starts coughing. The noise has the soldier reaching for the water jug; it also has the mop of brown hair shooting up, wide brown eyes looking up at him.

When Tony’s managed to have a drink and stop coughing, he looks over at the young man, who is currently bouncing on his seat and looking like he wants to launch himself at him. Tony can’t help it, he reaches out a hand to the teenager. ‘Thank god you’re alright,’ he manages to get past his cracked lips.

‘Me?’ Peter all but screams. ‘You—but you’ve just been taken by HYDRA! Why are you—what are you—why are worried about me? You could have died!’ And before either of them can stop him Peter has thrown the top half of his body across the hospital bed and buried his face in
Tony’s stomach, hands gently, but firmly, gripping onto the hospital gown and bed sheets as he sobs. ‘I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean any of what I said, I don’t know why I was so angry and upset. And then you went and gave yourself up for me and- and I- I’m so sorry.’

‘Pete. Hey, Pete look at me,’ he runs shaky fingers of his left hand through the boy’s soft hair. ‘Peter, please.’

The boy looks up at him, tears streaming down his face. Tony reaches up with his hand and wipes away some of the tears with his thumb. ‘I don’t care what you say to me, Peter Parker, I’d take your place in a situation like that any day. You understand me?’

‘But- but why? I’d just told you-’

‘Peter I’ve learned in my life that words don’t mean a lot if actions don’t back them up,’ his voice is getting a little stronger now. ‘And words said in the middle of arguments mean even less. You shout and scream at me as much as you like, but that’s never going to stop me doing everything I can to keep you safe. You mean too much to me, to all of us.’

‘I’m sorry,’ Peter sobs, burying his face back into Tony’s stomach and hugging him again. ‘I’m so sorry. You’ve been like a dad to me for months and I- I thought the last things I was ever going to say to you were-’

‘Hey, come on kid. It takes more than a couple of HYDRA goons to keep me down. I’ve faced alien armies, a guy with fire breathing abilities, and not to mention you giving me a scare every other day. I highly doubt someone like Justin Hammer is going to be the one to finish me off.’

Peter gives a shaky laugh and sniffs. ‘Peter?’ the boy turns to look at Steve. ‘Why don’t you go tell Nat and the others that he’s awake?’ The boy nods and, giving Tony a proper hug this time, runs from the room to go and find the assassin.

‘Steve?’ The soldier turns to look at him at the question. ‘How bad is it?’

‘We managed to take out the base and-’

‘Steve,’ Tony cuts across him with a sigh, trust the soldier to immediately go tactical, ‘I mean… I mean me. How bad is it for me?’

He sees the soldier pause and look towards the door. ‘Tony maybe it would be better if you wait for one of the doctors-’

‘I want to hear it from you,’ he whispers. ‘Come on, Spangles, you’re making me nervous. Let’s start with some of the easy stuff: is there anything I need to be worried about other than my hand and the reactor?’

Steve shakes his head. ‘No broken bones anywhere else just… just a lot of bruising, lack of sleep and proper food. They said you may have lingering symptoms of concussion after being knocked out, but they had to wait for you to wake up to be a hundred percent sure.’

‘Ok so what about my hand?’

‘A couple of broken fingers,’ Steve’s voice catches, ‘but they think, as long as you follow instructions, you should have full mobility back once it’s all healed.’

‘So I have to do as I’m told for once?’
Steve lets out a shaky laugh and nods. ‘Tony-’

‘Why is the reactor still in my chest?’ he asks, fear tightening around his throat and making his voice sound strained. ‘Were they waiting for me to heal up from everything else before putting my body through the surgery?’ When the soldier doesn’t respond Tony starts to panic, the monitors telling both occupants that his heart rate was increasing. ‘Steve why haven’t they taken it out?’

‘Tony, shh, calm down,’ Steve moves to sit on the bed, he takes Tony’s left hand in both of his and rubs soothing circles on the back of it. ‘Come on, honey, calm down for me.’

‘Why is it still in my chest?’ he chokes out again, tears filling his vision.

The soldier takes a deep breath, then looks straight into his eyes, the blue ones filled with pain. ‘Tony, the doctors aren’t sure they can remove it. When they put it in… when they put it in they apparently caused a lot of damage to the structure of your chest. They think- they think if they were to take it out, your chest may collapse. Tony taking it out could kill you.’ He finishes on a whisper.

Tony feels like his world is coming crashing down around him. ‘No…no I got it out. It wasn’t supposed to go back in. Steve, please- Steve tell me it can come out. There must be someone we can contact, there must be someone who can get it out. Tell me- please- Steve tell me we can get it out. Steve, please-‘

As tears spill down his cheeks he’s pulled against the super soldier’s solid chest and he lets himself cry, gripping the front of the blond’s shirt with his one good hand.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Please don't hate me for what I did to Tony! I still love you all I promise.
Err...hope you enjoyed the chapter?

As always thank you so much to everyone who has left comments and kudos on this story. The amount of love I'm getting for this story every week is still blowing me away if I'm honest. Please do keep letting me know if there's anything you'd like to see from my writing - I've had a couple of suggestions and requests, some of which will be going into subsequent stories, and some are becoming stories of their own! I think there's a few comments I still need to reply to so will do that soon I promise.

Hope you all have a lovely week.
L x

And as always here's your sneak peek:
‘So Steve is my next babysitter? Poor you, Rogers,’ he snarks as the Captain walks into his hospital room.
‘Good luck, Steve, our resident grumpy guts is in fine form,’ Sam says, getting up from the chair. ‘Anyone would think he doesn’t appreciate us caring about him.’
‘He tried convincing me the Star Wars prequels were not a travesty to mankind. Get him out of the room.’
Healing

Chapter Summary

Tony continues to heal; Steve wants to help as much as he can and it has some interesting consequences.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Steve’s worried. Physically Tony is healing well and the doctors are happy with his progress; what has Steve worried is the blank look that is now an almost permanent fixture on the usually animated features. Peter’s the only one who can get more than a quirk of the lips out of the man, but even that takes a lot of work.

Tony’s been in the medical wing for over a week and the team have been taking it turns to sit at his bedside, none of them wanting to leave the man alone. In the nearly two weeks since he’d been captured Steve has felt there’s been something missing in the facility; almost like one of the lights isn’t working and hasn’t been fixed. He’d never realised just how much the inventor held the team together until now, and how much he’d relied on him.

Sam’s just taken over from Steve sitting at the genius’ bedside, the man is currently sleeping soundly, and the sound of the argument in the common room reaches his ears before he can see the participants.

‘Pepper he needs something to focus on,’ Rhodes is arguing, ‘you can’t keep him away from work forever.’

‘Rhodey I’m not having this discussion,’ comes the firm reply. ‘I’m not letting Tony anywhere near something resembling work until he is out of the hospital wing, is that understood?’

‘Pep you can’t make those decisions for him.’

‘Considering I’m CEO of Stark Industries, the company that pays for most of this facility including the medical care, I think I can,’ when Steve enters her arms are crossed over her chest and there’s a frown on her face.

‘Tony is going to go mad if he doesn’t have anything to do. All that’s going to do is make him force himself out of the med bay faster than he normally would.’

‘Get him to help Peter with his homework then.’

‘Oh come on! High school homework is not going to tax Tony’s brain; it barely taxes Peter’s.’

‘Rhodey the first time this happened we ended up with Tony becoming Iron Man and he nearly died from palladium poisoning; after New York he built an army of robots and nearly had a mental breakdown, and that led to Ultron. After the Accords…look every time something like this happens to Tony and he’s left alone to work on his projects it ends up getting worse. He’s not to have access to his work.’
‘Pepper,’ Rhodes is obviously not happy with this, ‘you cannot say what Tony can or cannot do anymore.’

‘I’m looking out for him Rhodey, and I’m still named as his next of kin so I think you’ll find I can.’

‘Actually, Pepper,’ Rhodes looks a little uneasy and clears his throat, ‘I don’t think you are.’

Her eyes narrow at him. ‘What are you talking about?’

‘All of the team, we’ve got Tony, Steve and Natasha listed as our next of kin,’ Rhodes explains, ‘in case anything happens.’

‘Tony took me off?’ the woman looks shocked.

Rhodes nods, placing a comforting hand on her shoulder. ‘It was something we all agreed on, Pep. We thought it would be the best option and safest for the whole team.’

Pepper’s face hardens again and she nods. ‘Fine, but he’s still not getting access to any of his projects. I’ve given the medical team instructions that he’s not to be allowed any of his gadgets. I’ll see you tomorrow.’ She leaves without another word.

Rhodes sighs and looks at Steve. ‘I know she’s as worried as the rest of us, but she’s not going to helping him by keeping him bored.’

‘Tell me about it, a bored Tony Stark is dangerous,’ Steve tries to chuckle.

‘I can see where she’s coming from, all of his, shall we say less than genius ideas, all came about after something traumatic happened.’

‘So did some of his best,’ he points out.

‘I know. But she feels this is the only way she can still protect him. Although Iron Man made a lot of positive changes in Tony’s life, it’s the one part Pepper’s never really been able to accept. He’s always been self-destructive and she sees Iron Man as the accumulation of all of that.’

‘I’d say it’s the opposite,’ Steve argues, and the other man nods.

‘I agree.’ The tall man sighs and then leaves the room, saying he has a physio appointment.

Bucky comes over from where he’s been sitting in the corner, it seems some of the habits he’d developed under HYDRA’s training, like managing to sit in the corner and stay unnoticed, hadn’t left him. ‘You’re plotting, Stevie. You’ve got that determined look in your eye that usually meant I had to get you out of trouble.’

‘The only one you may have to protect me from is Pepper,’ he gives his friend a smirk. ‘Think you can get me into Tony’s workshop?’

‘I know I can,’ the dark haired man grins.

‘So Steve is my next babysitter? Poor you, Rogers,’ he snarks as the Captain walks into his hospital
room.

‘Good luck, Steve, our resident grumpy guts is in fine form,’ Sam says, getting up from the chair. ‘Anyone would think he doesn’t appreciate us caring about him.’

‘He tried convincing me the Star Wars prequels were not a travesty to mankind. Get him out of the room.’

Steve just laughs and waves goodbye to Sam as the man leaves. ‘Do I need to tell Sam to stay out? We’ve been told you can’t have too much stress or excitement until the doctors are happy for you to be released.’

‘Doctors are never happy with my progress,’ he grumbles.

Steve chuckles. ‘Probably because you think you’re smarter than they are, Tony.’

‘I am smarter than them.’

‘That doesn’t mean you have to tell them that,’ the soldier sounds amused, but exasperated.

‘So you agree I am smarter than the doctors?’

‘I’m not supposed to be causing you any aggravation, and I imagine arguing with you would do just that,’ Steve smiles at him, and Tony can’t help the answering tug at his lips.

‘You may regret that my dear Captain.’ He sees the tablet in Steve’s hands and raises an eyebrow. ‘Any particular reason you decided to steal my tablet? Did you break yours again?’

Steve shakes his head, his smile turning decidedly mischievous. He can’t help but wish he had a camera so he could see that smile a lot more often. ‘I figured you could use some entertainment.’

‘I thought Pep had banned me from working? Something about me not being trusted when I’ve just come through trauma.’

‘Yeah she did,’ Steve admits, looking a little sheepish. ‘But I thought trying to get you back to doing normal things would do more good than having a bored Tony Stark; and hopefully you can stop terrorising the doctors and nurses. Besides,’ he grins at Tony as he hands the tablet over, ‘I thought if anyone could hide a tablet from some nurses it’d be our resident genius, billionaire, playboy, philanthropist.’

Tony looks down at the tablet in his hands in amazement, trying to work out all the emotions he’s feeling over the gesture. Steve had seen he was going stir crazy, had decided to go against Pepper’s instructions, and was encouraging Tony to break the rules put in around his recovery. All for him. His shoulders slump as he registers Steve’s last words.

‘Tony? What’s wrong?’ the soldier’s voice is soft, filled with concern.

Not able to bring himself to meet those blue eyes Tony turns to look out of the window. ‘Not much of any of that anymore.’

‘Any of what?’ the confusion is obvious in the man’s voice.

‘Not much of a genius to get captured by Justin Hammer of all people,’ he can’t keep the bitterness out of his voice. ‘Especially to let him carve me up worse than those bastards did in the
cave; and no one is going to want someone with a cold piece of metal for a heart, so there’s the playboy out the window. Soon I’ll only be of any use with the suit, and even then-

‘Tony-

‘Don’t try and give me any of your goddamn speeches, Cap,’ he spits. ‘I’ll just have to find some other way to make myself useful. Maybe take a cookery course so I can do more than pasta for dinner. I can always keep the Council off your backs I suppose, I am getting pretty good at arguing with Ross-

‘Tony, stop!’ Steve’s voice is firm and he snaps his mouth shut. He knows his voice has been getting more hysterical with each word, and there’s a steady stream of tears falling down his face he doesn’t want the other Avenger to see.

Steve sighs and Tony grips the sheets beneath his hands tighter, trying to stop the traitorous flow. ‘Will you look at me? Please?’

He compromises, knowing the soldier’s stubbornness rivals his own, and looks down at his lap rather than out of the window. The mattress dips from Steve’s weight as he moves to sit next to Tony’s knees. Then a hand is on the side of his face, gently urging him to look up and wiping away one of the tear tracks.

‘You want to know what I see when I look at this?’ he asks softly, resting two fingers over the bandages where a slight glow is showing through.

Tony feels his breath catch. The man has gone straight to the thing that’s causing him the most turmoil; even though the reactor has been changed to one of his own inventions, free of palladium and powered by Yinsinium, he still feels he’s being pumped full of poison. To have Steve touching it like it was something precious, especially since he’d had a nightmare last night of the shield sticking out of it, is confusing. ‘Proof that Tony Stark used to have a heart?’

‘I see hope, Tony,’ Steve continues, ignoring Tony’s comment, ‘because as long as the light is glowing I know you’re still with us. You’re still breathing, still alive. As long as you’re still with us we can get through anything. Not because you have the suit, although I’ll admit I’m happier to have you fighting in the suit than out of it; but because you have the most brilliant mind I’ve ever come across.

‘Because you can make us all laugh even when it shouldn’t be possible; because you brought us all back together, and without you I’m not sure how long it’d be before we fell apart. Tony, when we realised you’d been taken the whole team turned to me for what to do, and you want to know what my reaction was? I wanted to turn to you. My brain said “Tony will know what to do.” Except you weren’t there, and for a couple of seconds I felt completely and utterly lost.’

‘Steve-’ Tony’s finding it difficult to breathe, and not because of the metal casing embedded in his chest. There’s something almost like hope starting to press against his ribs.

‘I told you when we faced Ultron we’d do it together, and again when we were all back here. I meant it Tony, every word. Even more so now than I did then. Anything that comes our way we’ll do it together. Tony, I-’

Before he can stop himself he reaches forwards and pulls Steve’s mouth to his. The soldier makes a sound of surprise before relaxing into the kiss, the hand on the side of his face creeps to cradle the back of his head. When the inventor pulls back there’s a blush on the blond’s cheeks.
‘Tony, what-’

‘Well as much as I appreciate hearing how wonderful I am, I’m not getting any younger here, Steve,’ Tony teases, trying to ignore the tears on his cheeks.

A blinding smile creeps onto Steve’s face, and he puts his other hand up to frame Tony’s face. ‘There you are.’

Tony frowns. ‘What are you talking about?’

‘We’ve barely been able to get a smile out of you all week, I was scared we’d actually lost you. Hearing you teasing me again,’ Steve laughs and presses his forehead to Tony’s, ‘I can’t tell you how happy I am to hear it.’

‘You- but- is this real?’

‘I hope it is,’ the soldier’s breath ghosts over his face, ‘and if it isn’t don’t wake me up.’

‘Think we should check?’

‘What did you have in mind?’

In answer Tony pulls him in for another kiss, running his tongue along the soldier’s lips, begging for entry. Steve complies with a small laugh and shifts further up the bed to pull Tony closer against him, the hand on the back of his head running down his neck and back to rest on his waist. For his part all Tony can do is grip the broad shoulders like Steve is his lifeline.

He lets out a small moan of protest when the machines start beeping in warning and Steve pulls away. ‘You’re not supposed to be getting excited,’ he apologises, pressing a kiss to his forehead and pulling away a little.

‘Oh no you don’t,’ Tony grumbles, pulling himself more upright to follow the soldier down the bed.

‘Tony-’ Steve starts to protest with a laugh.

‘I thought you weren’t supposed to be upsetting me, Cap,’ Tony smirks, ‘and in order to do that I think you need to get up on this bed so I can use you as a pillow until my next babysitter turns up.’

‘You are impossible,’ Steve laughs, but gently helps Tony shift over so there’s enough space for him to sit next to him. When they’re settled he pulls Tony against his chest and watches as he opens up one of his smaller projects and starts working on it.

‘Thank you,’ he says, letting the comforting warmth from the man’s body finally ease away a lot of the tension he’d been feeling since he was taken. Acting on impulse, he pulls the hand that Steve has resting on his stomach to lie over the arc reactor.

‘You sure you’re alright with me doing this?’ the blond’s voice is quiet and unsure.

Tony nods. ‘I just…I need to know-’

Steve cuts him off with a kiss to his temple. ‘I know, Tony.’

‘Steve? Is this- are we-?’
‘We’re whatever you want us to be,’ comes the soft reply, ‘but I’d love to be able to call you my fella. If you’ll let me?’

Tony turns to look at the man’s face, seeing the sincerity and uncertainty in his piercing blue eyes. His reply is to press a kiss to the side of Steve’s mouth. ‘Only if I can call you mine.’

Steve grins and captures his lips in a bruising kiss that leaves Tony a little breathless when he pulls away. ‘Deal.’ He gives a small laugh. ‘You know I’ve been wanting to kiss you since the gala.’

‘Seriously?’ Tony scoffs. ‘I’ve wanted to do it since you went all determined Captain America with the Accords.’

‘What?!!’

‘Oh I didn’t admit to myself how much I wanted to do it. Not until your dancing lesson.’

‘Well that makes me feel a little better,’ Steve chuckles, and the sound reverberates through his chest and into Tony, making him relax even more. ‘Though if we’re going from not wanting to admit it, then I can honestly say I can’t remember a time when you got carried away explaining one of your projects when I didn’t get the urge to kiss that excited expression off your face.’

‘So if I started explaining one now I’d get another kiss?’

‘Don’t push your luck, you’re supposed to be healing and I’m going to be in enough trouble as it is if Pepper catches you with that tablet.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! I hope you enjoyed FINALLY getting to the Stony! Hopefully this makes up for all the crap I put Tony through in the last few chapters.

Thank you so much for all the wonderful support for this story; honestly all of the comments have just been incredible and I feel so lucky to have such wonderful readers enjoying this story.

I hope you continue to enjoy my writing.

Love you all!

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

‘So let me get this straight,’ Bucky says as they walk down the corridors of Peter’s school towards the auditorium. ‘Peter did a presentation for a history project and his teacher was so impressed it was chosen to be given at this big school event, and we all got invited to come along?’ His tone implies he knows someone is keeping something from him.
Presentation

Chapter Summary

Everyone finds out about Tony and Steve much quicker than they imagined, though very few people are really surprised. The team finally gets to see Peter's history presentation, though no one's told Bucky what the topic is.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘You’re dating Captain America?’

‘I think I already said this three times now.’

‘The Captain America.’

‘No a cardboard cut-out.’

‘As in Steve Rogers, Captain America?’

‘How many other Captain Americas do you know, Pepper?’ Tony rolls his eyes.

‘But… how?’

‘Are you saying I’m not good enough to be dating Captain America?’

‘Well… yes!’

‘Thanks, Pep.’

‘Tony I love you, but come on can you blame me?’

‘About damn time!’ Tony and Pepper turn to look at the newcomer in the door.

‘Hey Bucky,’ Tony smiles, then turns back to his CEO. ‘Pep can you give us a minute?’

‘I’m going to give you more than one,’ she says, ‘I need a lot of time to process this.’

‘Charming, Pep,’ Tony rolls his eyes as the woman leaves and the dark haired man sits on the space she’s just left on the bed. ‘Bucky-’

‘Tony I’m happy for you two,’ he says, taking hold of both of his hands, ‘I really am. You had me worried when you went missing, sugar, and I’m not sure my head could take it if anything happened to you. Seeing you happy, seeing you getting back to normal, even if it is because of Steve rather than me, is honestly the best thing that could happen as far as I’m concerned.’

‘You’re too good to be in my life,’ Tony replies, trying to blink back tears.

‘Nah,’ Bucky chuckles, shaking his head. ‘I’m still going to beat him bloody if he upsets you, and God help him if hurts you.’
Tony just laughs and pulls the man into a hug. ‘You’re one of the best men I know, Bucky Barnes.’

The team had found out about Steve and Tony the day they got together. Not because of them telling anyone, or because of video footage, but because Wanda had been the one due to sit with Tony after Steve and had caught them cuddling in bed. The girl had been so excited she’d screamed and run off to tell everyone before either of them could stop her.

It seems no one had been surprised. Well except for Clint and Scott, but that was because they hadn’t been at the facility much. Not even Peter was shocked, which had surprised Tony more than anything else.

It was only a couple of days after they’d started dating that Tony was finally released from the medical bay. He’d managed to keep the tablet a secret so Pepper hadn’t had a reason to scold Steve; how much the soldier had been scared of his CEO had provided a lot of entertainment for Tony.

‘I just want to go out for a couple of hours,’ he’s now sat in the doctor’s office trying to convince him to let him go and see Peter give a presentation at his school. ‘Please doc, I can’t miss Peter giving this presentation.’

‘Mr Stark, as much as I appreciate you wanting to support your protégé,’ the doctor says, ‘if you over-exert yourself you’ll set back your recovery. And I’m pretty sure you don’t want that on Peter’s conscience.’

‘Don’t you dare,’ he narrows his eyes at the doctor. ‘He doesn’t even know I’m planning to attend, he thinks Natasha is going in my place. I want to do this for him, as a surprise. Besides the whole team is going to be there; we’ll be at Peter’s school and I’ll be sat down for the whole time. The only time I’ll be walking is from the car to the auditorium. Come on doc, a bit of fresh air will do me good, and if it’s too much someone will bring me back. I stay cooped up in this facility any longer I’m going to go crazy. Not to mention we need the public to see me out and about like normal; they all seem to think I’ve died.’

The man pauses and thinks, then narrows his eyes at Tony. ‘You promise to only walk to and from the auditorium?’ He nods enthusiastically. ‘And to let one of your team know the moment you begin to feel too tired?’

‘I promise.’

The doctor sighs. ‘Alright Mr Stark, you’ve got the go ahead. But don’t be out for longer than four hours maximum.’

Tony salutes the doctor and grins. ‘You got it, doc.’

‘So let me get this straight,’ Bucky says as they walk down the corridors of Peter’s school towards
the auditorium. ‘Peter did a presentation for a history project and his teacher was so impressed it was chosen to be given at this big school event, and we all got invited to come along?’ His tone implies he knows someone is keeping something from him.

‘May arranged it with the school as a surprise for him,’ Natasha nods, they’re walking in a group around Tony making sure he’s blocked from view. Even Clint and Scott have joined them, having become rather attached to the teenager in their stay at the facility; neither of them have wanted to move away until Tony was more recovered, but they’ll have to return home soon or there’s going to be trouble with the Council. Steve knows Natasha has managed to get approval for them staying for now, but they don’t want to push their luck.

‘What did he do the project on?’ Bucky asks. Steve has to look away before he starts laughing, and he hears Wanda sniggering behind them.

‘You’ll find out the same time as the rest of us,’ Natasha tells him, ‘we’re nearly there. Let’s make sure Tony’s settled with May then we can find somewhere to sit or stand. We all remember our positions?’

‘Nat don’t turn this into a bloody mission,’ Tony moans from next to Steve; he takes the inventor’s hand in his own and gives it a quick squeeze before releasing it. They haven’t told anyone outside the team about their relationship yet and are wanting to keep it that way as long as possible.

‘You can shut up,’ she says, smiling at the man’s frown.

‘I’m in the seats a few rows behind Tony next to Rhodey,’ Wanda responds.

‘I’m at one entrance and you’re at the other,’ Vision replies.

‘Bucky and I are sat in the opposite block of chairs,’ Steve says, ‘right at the back of the auditorium.’

‘I wanted to be in the rafters,’ Clint teases, ‘but apparently that’s frowned upon so Sam, Scott and I will be standing at the back.’

‘Because you would have been more of a distraction to Pete than Bucky would be,’ Tony retorts, ‘and no one is putting him off during this presentation. He’s already nervous as hell and doesn’t need any of you making it worse.’

‘Fine,’ Bucky rolls his eyes, ‘like we would anyway. Not when it’s something this important to him.’

‘Alright we’re here,’ Natasha says, and Steve spots May standing outside of a large doorway, beyond he can spy the auditorium. Tony greets Peter’s aunt and she takes his arm and guides him towards their seats in the second row. The rest of the team enter in their assigned groups; when Steve enters with Bucky he can’t see Peter anywhere, but there’s an open door where he can see a few students milling around so he assumes the teen is through there. He gives a smile and a wave to Ned, sitting a few rows behind Tony and May and gets a huge smile and wave in response.

‘What you got?’ Bucky asks as they take their seats, eyes sweeping the auditorium.

‘Parents, teachers, school kids and a team of misfits,’ he responds with a grin. ‘You got anything different?’ Bucky shakes his head and Steve lets himself relax a little. ‘Looking forwards to seeing Pete’s presentation?’

‘Why do I get the feeling I’m the only one who doesn’t know what the topic is?’ his friend
asks.

‘Because you’re paranoid? Now shut up I think it’s starting.’

A middle-aged man walks out of the back room that Steve had seen earlier, a group of teenagers following behind him, and Steve finally spots Peter, looking like he wants to run as fast as his enhanced muscles will let him.

‘Hello everyone, welcome to our school event and thank you to parents and friends of the students who are giving their presentations here today who have come to support. We have six students giving presentations that they have given as part of their schoolwork, their teachers have been so impressed that they’ve been nominated to give them today. Now, I’ll hand over to our first student, Miss Emily Howard, to give her presentation from her science class.’

Steve does his best to look interested in what the girl is saying, but his eyes keep being drawn to Peter and Tony, and Bucky’s fidgeting at his side; Tony, he notices, is listening with rapt interest and applauds enthusiastically when the girl is finished. There’s some opportunity for questions at the end, and Steve has to bite back the smile at his partner obviously trying to hold back the urge to either ask a question or make a comment. There’s a boy that gives a presentation afterwards, and Steve has no idea what it was about if he’s honest.

‘And now,’ the Headmaster returns to the microphone, ‘we have a history presentation from Peter Parker. Come on up, Peter.’

Peter looks like he’d rather the ground swallowed him, but he takes a deep breath and walks up to the microphone; his eyes skim the crowd and Steve sees the moment he catches sight of Tony sat next to May. The boy’s eyes widen a little and then there’s a small smile on his face, followed by an easing of his shoulders.

‘Hey everyone,’ he says, voice a little shaky, ‘uh, I’m not very good at talking in front of people so I’m sorry if I stumble a bit. So we were given a project in history to make a presentation on someone who has made a difference in history.’

‘Ten bucks says he chose you,’ Bucky grins at Steve. Trying not to smirk Steve shakes his hand.

‘Prepare to lose, Buck,’ he chuckles.

‘Now some of you may know that I’ve been really lucky to be given an internship at Stark Industries, so I thought I’d possibly be able to cheat a bit and choose Captain America. Unfortunately someone was a little quicker than me and had already chosen him and we weren’t allowed to do the same person as someone else. So I was a bit stumped. Then I was up at the Avengers Facility one weekend to help out and I got talking to Captain Rogers about the people who had been big influences on him, especially during the war, trying to get an idea of who I could do my presentation on. He came up with a lot of names I’m sure we’re all familiar with: Dr Erskine, who made the super soldier serum; Howard Stark, who built the machine used to inject the serum, and then helped to create the iconic shield; Agent Carter, along with members of the Howling Commandos. But then Na- Agent Romanoff made the comment that without one particular person Captain America would have forever stayed a propaganda side show and may not have become the hero we know today.

‘So I chose to do my presentation on a person who was, and still is, a huge influence on Captain America, and the rest of the Avengers. The person that Captain Rogers went behind enemy lines on a solo mission to find and rescue-’

‘No way,’ Bucky mutters.
‘-the person who has had a huge impact on history: Sergeant James Barnes, former Howling Commando, now part of the Avengers and known as the “Winter Soldier”. I’m sure some of you are probably thinking this is quite a strange choice, especially given how polarised the media is in their portrayal of him, but I’ve been able to speak to people who know him, and I’ve met him myself, so I’d like to take this opportunity to tell you, what I hope, is a slightly less biased version, and so you can get to know the Bucky Barnes that set Captain America on the road to be a war hero.’

‘But’

‘Just shut up and listen, Buck,’ Steve whispers.

Peter tells stories that he and Bucky have told the team from Steve’s pre-serum days when they were growing up together; stories about shared Christmases between the two families, Bucky pushing Steve to try new things and not become a recluse despite his health issues, and of course of having to rescue Steve from getting beaten up because he couldn’t keep his mouth shut.

‘If you speak to Sergeant Barnes,’ Peter chuckles, ‘he’ll say that Captain Rogers still can’t keep his mouth shut.’ That earns a laugh from the crowd, and Steve looks at Bucky out of the corner of his eye; he hands the man a tissue, noticing the tears falling silently down his face.

‘It’s very true,’ Bucky whispers, taking the tissue and wiping his eyes.

‘Punk.’

‘Jerk.’

Peter then moves to the war, not focussing too much on Steve’s transformation, but instead on the research he’d done on Bucky’s activities when he was in the army, up to being taken prisoner in Azzano. Then came the stories of the Howling Commandos, for once not focussing on Steve’s part in the missions, but Bucky’s; Peter doesn’t linger too much on the mission on the train, and tries not to talk too much about his time with HYDRA, talking about what was necessary but not trying to pretend that Bucky hadn’t been one of their best assassins. Steve is impressed though as, although everything that Peter says is factual, he manages to tell a sympathetic story, bringing in research he’d done on brainwashing and some of the methods used.

Then comes Germany and everything that happened around the Accords, and yet still Peter doesn’t shy away from talking about Bucky’s role and manages to not make it sound like he was fully to blame. Steve glances at Natasha and can see the woman is just as impressed as he is in how Peter is handling talking about some very sensitive chapters in the Avengers’ history. As the boy finishes with Bucky’s integration into the Avengers he’s starts on his conclusion.

‘I know I’ve spoken a lot, and most of this is stuff that people have already heard, but I hope you have learned something new from this presentation. Although none of the information itself may be different, I had to do a lot of re-evaluation of what I’d been taught in school when I spoke to members of the team about it, and I hope you’ve been able to do the same from this presentation. I’m sure there’s a lot of questions and I will do my best to answer them, but no promises.’

There’s a multitude of hands that go up, and the Headmaster is the one choosing the people; Peter is looking nervous again.

‘I’d like to know,’ one of the mothers says, ‘if you honestly think the Winter Soldier is safe, having met him.’

The Headmaster looks as if he is going to interrupt, obviously not happy with the question, but Peter
doesn’t hesitate. ‘Absolutely,’ his voice is steady, ‘the only reason you’d have to be scared of the Winter Soldier is if you tried to hurt someone innocent. More so if you hurt someone he cares about. I’ve never had reason to be scared of Sergeant Barnes, and I don’t think I ever will.’

‘I think before we take any more questions,’ the Headmaster says, ‘can I request that we keep them as unpolitical as possible. Please remember that Mr Parker is a student here.’

Steve notices a couple of the hands going down and some people looking a little sheepish.

‘I’ve a question for you, Peter, which I meant to ask when you gave this presentation in class,’ the woman is evidently Peter’s history teacher. ‘Why did you decide to choose Sergeant Barnes as your project? What was it about his story that appealed to you?’

Peter appears to consider the question, a small frown on his face that Steve knows is him trying to work out the best way to phrase what he wants to say. ‘I said at the beginning I chose him because, without him, Captain America wouldn’t be the person we know today and, honestly, I don’t think the Avengers would be either. As to why his story appealed to me?’ He pauses again to think. ‘I guess it’s because… because he meant so much to someone as a friend that they weren’t willing to give up on him, no matter what anyone else told them or what they saw. He’d been… he’d been broken by HYDRA, he’s had so much hatred directed at him from the media, and yet there are still people who are willing to stand by him. Not just Captain America, but the whole team. I suppose what I’m trying to say is: his story just proves that, even if you screw up or you end up in situations where you do something you don’t really want to, the people that are important to you can still forgive you and still accept you.’

Steve reaches over and takes hold of his friend’s hand, squeezing it in support. The tissue he’d passed him earlier has been shredded in the metal fingers, and there’s still a steady stream of tears flowing down his face.

‘Last question,’ the Headmaster says.

‘I want to know,’ the voice is Ned’s and Steve can’t help but smile, ‘if the Winter Soldier was here right now what would you most want to say to him?’

Peter opens and closes his mouth a few times obviously trying to think of an answer, and Steve realises that he hasn’t seen the whole team is there in the auditorium. Whatever he says he doesn’t know Bucky is going to hear it. ‘I guess I’d want to say: thank you.’ He looks back up from the floor to where Ned is sitting. ‘I’d want to say thank you for what he did for Captain Rogers and what he does for the team. But most of all I’d want to say thank you for accepting me, an awkward, nerdy kid from Queens, and for being my friend.’

There’s a big round of applause for Peter as the boy blushes bright red and then retakes his seat. Steve doesn’t hear much from the remaining presentations, but does remember to clap at the end of each one.

When it’s over and people are beginning to stand up to leave Peter all but leaps out of his chair and goes to give both May and Tony a hug; Bucky stands up as soon as he’s reached the two adults and makes his way down the stairs.

The people Bucky passes stop talking when they realise who is walking down the steps of the auditorium, and Steve has to keep in his laughter at Peter’s face when he catches sight of the man walking towards him. Steve is still a few steps up when Bucky reaches the teenager and pulls him into a hug, obviously shocking a lot of people in the auditorium. After a couple of seconds the teenager returns it.
‘Thank you,’ he hears Bucky mutter into the boy’s hair.

‘Thank you,’ comes Peter’s soft reply.

‘You made me lose ten bucks, you owe me kid.’

‘Seriously?’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! I hope you enjoy this update, thank you so much to everyone who has left comments and kudos - I'm glad no one at the moment is annoyed with how long it's taken for Steve and Tony to get together. I was starting to worry it was taking too long I must admit.

Hopefully the sneak peek gives you an idea of what the focus is going to be for a couple of chapters. Let me know if there's anything you'd like to see from this series, or even other stories. As always thank you so much for the truly wonderful and overwhelming support for this story.

Love to you all,

L x

Here's the sneak peek:

A shout goes up from the direction of the pool table and Wade looks over with a frown; sounds like the newcomer was making a name for themselves. He's certainly surprised to see one of the more lecherous members of Sister Margaret's pinned up against the wall, but can't see the person pinning them because of the crowd of chanting mercs.

'You might want to go take a look,' Weasel suggests.

'Why? I've got a perfectly good view from here. Besides it's probably Mark just grabbed the new guy's arse like he always-' the crowd has moved enough that Wade catches sight of a mop of brown hair and a lithe frame holding the man against the wall.

'Yeah told you to go have a look. Might save you a phone call,' Weasel chuckles, then breaks off when he catches sight of Wade's face. 'Uh Wade? Wade!'
Peter’s nervous. He’s not heard from Wade in nearly a week, and every time he phones the merc it goes straight through to answerphone. So now he’s contemplating walking into the building opposite and, honestly, he’d much rather face the Vulture again.

He’d remembered the name of the place from the couple of times Wade had mentioned it, and had decided his best bet to track down the mercenary was here. Trying not to think what any of the team’s reactions would be if they knew what he was doing, he pushes open the door to ‘Sister Margaret’s’ and walks down the dark staircase.

The place is big and noisy, and Peter resists the urge to put his hands over his ears to try and block out some of the noise, and it stinks; there’s the smell of stale booze, body odour and what Peter suspects might be urine. And that’s only the scents he can work out. Despite that none of the surfaces look dirty, and his feet aren’t sticking to the floor yet so he considers that a bonus. His spidey-senses are telling him to be wary, but nothing that suggests he needs to run out the door.

Dodging past tall, well-built people, Peter makes his way to the bar; behind are two men, both are around the same height as him, one looks to be of Indian heritage, and the other has a mop of light coloured hair and glasses.

‘What the fuck are you doing kid?’ the one with glasses asks when he catches sight of him. ‘Are you even old enough to be in here?’

Peter hops up onto a bar stool and tries to look more confident than he feels, reminding himself that if he can take out the Winter Soldier he can take on the mercenaries in this place. ‘I’m looking for a merc and hoping you can help.’

‘Well we’re the right place to come for mercs,’ the man replies, looking around uncomfortably, ‘but I’m still not sure this is the place you want to be, kid.’

‘Please don’t add yourself to the list of people trying to be my babysitter,’ he rolls his eyes. ‘I’m looking for a specific merc. You heard of Deadpool?’

The man’s eyes narrow and he crosses his arms. ‘Ok first: how the fuck do you know Deadpool? And second: what the fuck would you want with one of our craziest bastards?’

‘Mutual friend,’ he replies, ‘and the answer to the second is private. Do you know where he is?’

‘Yeah but I’m not telling you.’

‘Why not?’
‘Because you haven’t told me why you want to find him and how you know him. I’m also not comfortable with having a kid in here, so I’d rather you leave.’

‘I’m not leaving until I know what’s happened to Deadpool,’ Peter can feel his irritation rising. ‘And you are not going to be able to make me leave.’

The man scoffs and turns to a burly, bearded man who has just come up to the bar. ‘Buck? Do me a favour and take the kid outside before he gets hurt.’

‘Sure thing, Weasel. Come on, kid, let’s get you on your way home,’ the man reaches out and takes hold of Peter’s arm.

He sighs, takes hold of the man’s wrist and, in a move Natasha had got him to perfect a couple of weeks ago, has the burly man pinned down against the bar with his arm twisted up behind him. ‘Don’t even try it,’ he says, releasing the man and hopping back up on the stool. He turns back to Weasel. ‘Believe me when I say you’re not going to get me to leave?’

‘Holy fuck,’ Weasel looks at him with wide eyes. ‘What the fuck are you?’

Peter pauses, then reaches into his jeans pocket and passes the man a small disk with his Spider-Man emblem on it. ‘I told you. I’ve come here from a mutual friend. I just want to know what’s happened to Deadpool seeing as he hasn’t contacted m- my friend in nearly a week.’

Weasel frowns and takes the disk, looking down at it, then his eyes widen and he looks between Peter and the disk. The other man behind the bar tries to get a look but Weasel closes his fist around it. ‘Piss off and go wipe some tables, Dopinder.’

‘But why can’t I-’

‘Trust me, Deadpool is not going to want you to see this.’ Grumbling Dopinder does as he’s told and walks off, then Weasel waves Buck away and turns back to Peter. ‘He’s on a job. Last minute thing, but I had a call from him earlier and he should be back tonight. You going to leave if I tell him to call or are you going to insist on waiting? I take it I don’t have to worry about any of the guys bothering you.’

Peter gives him a small smile. ‘I’d appreciate it if I could wait.’

‘You not got a curfew?’

‘Trust me someone knows where I am all the time, whether I want them to or not; and family are used to me coming in late sometimes.’

Weasel just nods and pours him a coke. ‘No alcohol.’

Peter laughs and thanks him. ‘Can I play some pool while I wait?’

‘That depends,’ Weasel says, sizing him up, ‘how good a shot are you?’

‘I can keep up with Hawkeye.’

‘Yes. I’m betting on you. Win me money and you stay as long as you want.’
Wade is exhausted by the time he makes it back to Sister Margaret’s and all but collapses onto a bar stool, asking Weasel for a drink and handing over the card.

‘Can I charge my phone? Forgot to take my fucking charger.’

‘Sure thing Wade, hand it over and I’ll put it behind the bar.’ Weasel then hands him the money for the job, which he pockets without checking. He’s too tired to check anything right now.

‘Let me know when there’s enough of a charge I can make a call? I have a feeling I’m going to be in trouble with someone, I may have forgotten to let them know I was leaving.’

‘Will do, Wade,’ Weasel says, a small grin on his face. ‘By the way you seen the action over at the pool table? There’s a newcomer taking everyone’s money and he pinned Buck to the bar.’

‘Weasel I don’t give a fuck what’s happening at the pool table, all I want is to get enough charge to make a call and then go home and collapse until next year.’

‘Trust me, Wade, you’ll want to have a look at this one. Real looker.’

‘I thought I told you I’m off the market for a while.’

‘Yeah and I think I know why.’

‘Oh trust me you don’t.’

‘I think I might.’

‘No, Weasel,’ Wade laughs, a small smile on his lips as he thinks of Peter, ‘you really–’

A shout goes up from the direction of the pool table and Wade looks over with a frown; sounds like the newcomer was making a name for themselves. He’s certainly surprised to see one of the more lecherous members of Sister Margaret’s pinned up against the wall, but can’t see the person pinning them because of the crowd of chanting mercs.

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‘Why? I’ve got a perfectly good view from here. Besides it’s probably Mark just grabbed the new guy’s arse like he always–’ the crowd has moved enough that Wade catches sight of a mop of brown hair and a lithe frame holding the man against the wall.

‘Yeah told you to go have a look. Might save you a phone call,’ Weasel chuckles, then breaks off when he catches sight of Wade’s face. ‘Uh Wade? Wade!’

Wade however, is seeing red, and pushes himself from the bar stool and through the crowd around the pool table to the front, just as Mark gets thrown to the side to land on a heap on the floor.

‘Touch my arse again,’ the newcomer says, in a very familiar pissed-off tone, ‘and I’ll break your hand. Got it?’

‘Where the fuck did you crawl from, kid?’ Mark chokes as he scrambles to his feet and away from an angry Peter.

‘None of your damn business. Now if you don’t mind I have a game to win,’ he growls, spinning around and pots his last three balls one after the other. ‘Anyone else want a game?’

Boothe goes to raise his hand but Wade shoves past him and grabs the cue off of Peter’s last
opponent. ‘You can play me, Baby Boy.’

The smirk on Peter’s lips tests every inch of self-control Wade possesses. ‘Think you can keep up?’

‘You’ll have to see won’t you? You want to break?’

‘I’ll let you go first, you’ll need all the help you can get.’

Well ain’t that the truth? Just not in the way Peter was insinuating; because after play passes to the teenager and Wade is having to watch him bend over to take the shot he was really hating himself for his self-imposed no-touch rule in their budding relationship. When play passes back to him he passes closer to Peter than necessary and growls. ‘Want to explain what the fuck you’re doing here?’

‘Want to explain why you didn’t mention you were going on a job and I’ve not been able to contact you in nearly a week?’ the teen shoots back, glare just as fierce as the one Wade sends him.

He takes his shot and waits before its Peter’s turn again before replying. ‘I didn’t get chance before I left and I forgot my charger. I was getting Weasel to charge it so I could call you.’ He frowns at the brown-eyed teenager moving past him. ‘What’s your excuse?’

Peter doesn’t respond so when it’s his turn again Wade grabs his arm and turns him to face him. ‘Start talking, Baby Boy.’

He frowns up at Wade. ‘It’s your turn.’

‘Answer me,’ he growls. ‘What are you doing here and drawing attention to yourself?’

‘I was worried about you alright?’ is the hissed reply. ‘Considering who you helped take on to get Tony out, then you drop off the map? I disappear to Hell’s Kitchen for a couple of hours and you freak out at me. You drop off the face of the planet for nearly a week and I’m not allowed to do something?’

Wade opens his mouth to respond when he’s cut off by Buck. ‘Hey you two playing a game or what?’

They jump apart as if they’ve been electrocuted and Wade takes his turn, hitting the cue ball maybe a little harder than necessary. They continue the game, not saying much to each other but sending a couple of glares across the pool table. They end the game and Peter wins, marginally, to a chorus of cheers from the surrounding mercs and offers for another game.

‘Sorry, guys, but I should probably be heading home,’ the teen says.

Wade catches Weasel’s eye and gestures with his head to the back room and, when Peter goes up to the bar to return his glass, Weasel says something to him and takes him out the back. Giving it about half a minute, Wade hurries after them.

‘What are you doing, Weasel? There’s no exit back here,’ he hears Peter sigh.

‘No but we need a talk,’ he says, stepping into the room. ‘Fuck off, Weasel.’

‘Charming as ever, Wade, and you’re welcome,’ Weasel says as he leaves the two of them alone, closing the door behind him.
Peter frowns up at him, arms crossed and hips forward in a posture of pissed-off Spider-Man that Wade knows very well indeed. ‘Wade what are you doing? If you think I’m going to stand here and have an argument over this you’ve got another-mph!’

Wade cuts him off, darting forwards and pressing a hard kiss to Peter’s lips, backing him up so the teen is caught between the wall and him. He breaks it off before the teenager can get his brain in gear to return the kiss. ‘Do you have any idea how fucking hot you are when you’re taking out burly mercenaries out of the suit? Not to mention when you’re pissed off. *Fuck, Baby Boy,* I thought you were hot before, but that was just plain unfair.’

‘I thought you said we couldn’t do this for a year?’ he’s trying to be snarky, but is still breathless from the kiss and Wade can’t help but feel proud of that fact.

‘Aww was my kiss so good you can’t even snark properly?’

‘Screw you, Wade.’

He groans. *Please* don’t tempt me.

Peter just laughs and runs his hands up Wade’s chest, letting one rest on his shoulder while the other runs over the skin of his head. ‘Please don’t disappear again,’ he says, brown eyes soft and pleading.

‘I didn’t mean to this time, Pete, I swear. Weasel called me with a last minute assignment and by the time I had chance to call my phone was dead and I hadn’t packed my charger. I know: I’m a fucking moron. I’m sorry.’

Peter just smiles, standing on his toes to press a kiss to Wade’s lips, and it takes everything inside him not to chase the younger’s lips as he pulls away. ‘Just send me a text or *something.* I don’t even care if you get Weasel to let me know from now on. I just…I thought HYDRA had got you and I couldn’t have lived with myself if-’

‘Hey,’ he presses a finger to the teen’s soft lips, ‘no more of that, Petey-Pie. We’re both fine, let’s just leave it as that, yeah?’ Peter scrunches up his face. ‘What?’ he asks.

‘Don’t call me Petey-Pie *ever* again.’

‘Aww but I like that one!’

‘I don’t.’

‘But-’

‘No, Wade.’

Wade pouts. ‘Please?’

Peter starts shaking his head and then pauses, and the look he gives Wade has him slightly concerned. ‘How about a deal?’

‘What kind of a deal?’

‘You remove the no kissing rule, and I’ll let you call me Petey-Pie.’

Wade groans, closing his eyes and letting his forehead rest against Peter’s. ‘You’re really testing my fucking self-control here.’
Peter just shrugs and when Wade opens his eyes again there’s a grin on the teen’s face. ‘Well it’s your choice, Wade. Either you remove the rule and get to use that nickname, or you don’t and stick to just using Ba-’

Really there’s no competition, Wade thinks as he kisses Peter again, burying the fingers of one hand in the teen’s hair and pulling him closer. ‘You’re going to be the death of me,’ he says when they pull away.

The smile on the brunette’s face makes him feel a bit giddy. ‘Pretty sure that’s impossible, Pool.’

‘Yeah well you’ve been all sorts of impossible so far, Baby Boy. I really wouldn’t be surprised by anything you pull out of the bag any more. Now I really do think we should get you home before you manage to convince me to remove *all* the rules I put up around this.’

Peter sighs mock-dramatically. ‘Damn it you figured out my evil plan.’

Wade just laughs and pulls him towards the door. ‘Come on, Spidey, even arachnids need their sleep.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! Thank you so much for all the comments and kudos this week, I love getting to read the comments through the week and hearing what you guys think of everything.

Also there's a surprise for you this week: double update! No particular reason, just fancied it.

L x
Wanda's Interrogation

Chapter Summary

Wanda does a bit of digging into Peter's love life; and Tony has to deal with the public's reaction and speculation to the team watching Peter's presentation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘Dude I still can’t believe the Avengers came to see your presentation.’

‘Ned this was like days ago now, can we please move on?’

‘People are choosing to talk to me because Captain America knew who I was, no we can’t move on. We are not moving on.’

Peter just shakes his head as Ned continues to talk excitedly about how the team had actually talked to him, properly, in front of the whole school. His phone goes off with a message and he looks down, a smile creeping onto his face as he reads the message.

‘From Wade by any chance?’ Ned rolls his eyes.

Peter looks up, surprised. ‘Uh, what?’

‘Oh come on, Pete, it is so obvious when you get a message from him. Are you actually going to admit you’re dating yet?’

‘We- I- Ned, shut up,’ he hisses, looking around the people around them. ‘I’m not- I mean we’re- but you know it’s more of a-’

‘Oh wow you’re hooked,’ his friend laughs, closing his locker. ‘Are you going to introduce me at some point?’

‘What? Ned it’s not like that, it might take a bit of time. I think we need to be, you know, official before introducing him to many people, especially with, you know, his job and everything.’

‘You mean the fact he’s an insane mercenary?’

‘Ned, please,’ he groans as they fight their way through the crowds in the corridor to the entrance. ‘Can we not do this at school?’

‘Right, sorry,’ his friend says, ‘but you are going to have to introduce us eventually.’

‘Yeah I know,’ he huffs, responding to Wade’s message. ‘You want me to see if we can give you a lift home?’

Ned shakes his head. ‘I’m meeting Mom down the shops, I’ll see you on Monday? Who’s picking you up?’

‘No idea,’ he replies, ‘Tony text me to say it’s a surprise. Which has me worried.’
‘He did promise not to let the Winter Soldier pick you up for a while,’ his friend reminds him.

‘That’s true… but still I’d like to know- Wanda?’ he blinks in surprise at the young woman leaning against the school gates. She catches sight of the two of them and smiles, waving as they get closer and coming up to give them both a hug.

‘Hey boys, good week at school?’

‘It was so boring!’ Ned exclaims, much more comfortable with the girl than he is any of the other team members. ‘You are so lucky you don’t have to go anymore.’

‘Since when can you drive?’ Peter asks her.

‘I don’t. But I had a demonstration earlier and asked Tony if I could come pick you up afterwards so Happy drove,’ she explains. ‘Come on he’s waiting for us. Is he always this impatient?’

‘Probably more so than he’s being with you.’

Wanda just laughs as they wave goodbye to Ned and the two youngsters climb into the back of the car; his phone pings with another message and when they’re sat back and buckled in Peter takes it out and smiles, chuckling to himself as he reads the merc’s response. ‘So who’s that messaging you?’

‘Err… no one,’ he tucks his phone into his pocket and tries to look innocent.

At the way Wanda’s eyes widen and the smile breaks out slowly, Peter’s heart sinks. ‘Is it a girl you’re seeing?’

‘No. Why would you say that?’ he huffs, looking over at Happy as he digs his phone out again to respond to Wade’s text, the driver is looking in the rearview mirror obviously eavesdropping on their conversation.

I’m getting the Spanish Inquisition from Wanda, I hope you’re happy, he sends the merc.

‘Well if it’s not someone you’re seeing why won’t you tell me?’ she teases him.

‘Because I want to keep some part of my life private’

‘It is a girl you’re seeing!’

‘No it’s not a girl I’m seeing.’

Wanda blinks a couple of times. ‘Is it a boy you’re seeing?’

‘Wanda!’ he’s cut off by another message coming in and looks down at his phone.

Try telling her “these are not the droids you’re looking for”.

She’s the one with the mind powers not me remember?

When he looks back up Wanda is grinning like the cat that got the cream. ‘Ok Happy I’m closing the screen,’ she says, reaching over and ignoring the man’s protests.

‘Oh come on! I want to hear this as much as you do!’ he says.
‘Yeah but you’ll tell Tony and I can keep a secret,’ she shoots back as the screen finishes closing and she turns back to Peter. ‘It is a boy you’re seeing isn’t it?’

‘No,’ he says, ‘it’s not a boy.’

‘You’re not dating an alien are you?’

‘What? Why would you ask that?’

‘Well I’m dating a robot so it’s not exactly a huge leap.’

‘No he’s not an alien,’ Peter huffs, crossing his arms and sinking into the seat. Then he realises what he’s said and shoots back up, eyes wide. ‘Uh, I mean-’

‘I knew it!’ Wanda crows. ‘Hang on. Since when are you gay? I thought you were dating Liz before I got back?’

‘I took her to Homecoming,’ Peter rolls his eyes, ‘and I’m bi.’

‘And you’re only telling me this now because?’

‘It never came up before?’

‘I’ve asked you hundreds of times if there’s anyone cute at your school! Hang on he’s not at your school is he?’

‘No,’ Peter admits, looking back out the window. ‘Wanda promise me you won’t tell anyone and promise me you won’t freak out?’

‘I promise I won’t tell anyone, especially Tony,’ she rolls her eyes, then grins, ‘or Bucky.’

‘God, please don’t let Bucky find out,’ Peter groans.

‘And I promise not to freak out,’ she says, voice and expression calm and encouraging. ‘I’m excited if nothing else. My little brother’s got himself a date.’

‘It’s… it’s someone more from Spider-Man’s life than mine,’ he admits.

Her eyes go wide. ‘It’s Daredevil or Deadpool right?’

‘How did you- oh right they turned up to help get Tony out. Err… yeah it’s um, it’s Deadpool.’

‘You’re dating Deadpool?’

‘You promised not to freak out,’ he reminds her.

‘I’m not freaking out I’m just surprised,’ she admits, ‘I mean Daredevil sounded like he was more up your street.’

‘What?’

‘Well he just seemed more…together? Less bat-shit insane? Didn’t talk to himself as much? Any of this ringing bells?’

‘Yeah ok so Wade’s not exactly winning prizes for the most stable of personalities-’

‘Wade?’ Wanda asks with a giggle. ‘Ok spill. Tell me everything!’
With a sigh, and knowing he won’t get any peace until he does, Peter tells the girl everything; starting with when he first met Deadpool on patrol, all the way up to meeting him for tacos to get information on HYDRA.

‘Wait you mean you haven’t been going out that long?’ she asks.

He shakes his head. ‘Only a day or so before you got Tony back,’ and he tells her about their first date, blushing bright red when he tells her they kissed and she squeals.

‘He told you no kissing?’ she laughs. ‘Ok in all seriousness, this guy is good. I’ll admit I’m still worried about the age gap, but considering he’s putting in rules like that I think he’s good.’

‘Well,’ Peter tries not to look guilty, ‘I may have convinced him to remove the no-kissing part of that rule.’

‘Uh-huh,’ she raises an eyebrow at him, ‘something tells me there’s a story here.’ He caves and tells her about his visit to Sister Margaret’s. At first she’s furious that he went there and put himself in that situation, but when he goes on to tell her about winning pool and pinning a couple of the mercs she’s laughing hysterically. ‘I can just imagine their faces when this scrawny kid takes them all out!’

‘Hey! I’m not that scrawny,’ he pouts. It takes a bit of coaxing for him to finish the story, admitting to how he got Wade to agree to removing the no-kissing rule.

‘Even though he’s as stubborn as you say he gave in that quickly? You must be one hell of a kisser!’

Peter goes bright red. ‘I don’t know… but I wasn’t going to wait a year to get another one from him.’ He groans and puts his head in his hands. ‘You’re turning me into a teenage girl. Stop it!’

‘Aww, Peter’s in love,’ she cackles. Then calms down. ‘In all seriousness I’m happy for you,’ she smiles at him, ‘I haven’t seen you this happy talking about someone ever really. If he makes you happy then I’m happy. But I still want to meet him so he knows what’s going to happen if he hurts you.’

‘That and you just want to see him,’ he rolls his eyes, then takes out his phone when it pings with a new message.

_You still alive, Baby Boy?_ That’s when Peter realises he has two other messages from the man he hasn’t replied to.

_Sorry Wanda wanted to hear all about you. She also wants to meet you._ He shoots back.

‘So? Can we meet him now?’ she grins.

‘Oh no. How do you expect to explain to Happy why we want to go to a bar?’

‘Fair point. Ok we’ll organise for me to come visit one day at the weekend and you can take me then. No arguments.’

‘I thought you wanted to be my sister not my mom,’ he rolls his eyes.

_No. No way. She’ll fry my brain and leave me a gibbering wreck for even looking at you!_ Is the response from Wade.

Peter laughs and shows it to Wanda, who just rolls her eyes. ‘He’s just as dramatic as you are.’

He just sticks his tongue out at her and replies. _No she won’t. She’s just excited I’m actually dating_
someone, and gets to keep it a secret from the rest of the team.

His phone pings again a couple of minutes later; it’s from Weasel and Peter bursts out laughing at the message, showing it to Wanda. Wade’s freaking out about mind control and becoming a vegetable. What did you say to him? Because honestly I can’t be f**ked to try and follow what he’s saying.

Tell him to stop being a baby. He’s freaked out because Wanda wants to meet him. Just remind him that my adopted super-sister is the least of his worries if Iron Man or the Winter Soldier find out before I get the chance to tell them. Not to mention Black Widow.

‘I thought you were supposed to be trying to make him feel better?’ Wanda asks as she reads Peter’s response.

‘Nah,’ he grins at her, ‘it’s much more fun to wind him up.’

I hate you sometimes. Is Wade’s next message.

You won’t be saying that when I’m back in the suit and on patrol. It’ll be ass comments all over again.

You’re going to be the death of me.

Don’t worry I’ll kiss it better.

‘Eww… now you’re getting gross,’ Wanda scrunches her nose up as she continues to read over his shoulder.

‘Why are you still reading my messages?’ he pulls his phone back out of her line of sight, blushing bright red.

Tony groans as the channel lands on a daytime chat show, the title at the bottom reads: ‘Does Tony Stark have a long lost son?’ The entire team turning up to watch Peter’s presentation has sparked a myriad of theories, ranging from the one he is currently watching, to people thinking he’s grooming the boy to become the next Iron Man.

‘Well it’s not the most outlandish theory we’ve seen so far,’ Steve tries to look on the bright side. ‘Let’s face it Tony, if you could you’d adopt Peter in a heartbeat.’

‘Not helping,’ he grumbles as Rhodes chuckles from the other sofa.

‘It’s only not helping because it’s true,’ the other soldier teases him.

‘Can we focus more on what we’re going to do to get Peter out of the spotlight please?’ he huffs.

‘You’d be better off speaking to Nat about that,’ Steve says, putting an arm around him and pulling him close as he sits on the sofa, handing over the bowl of blueberries he’d requested a couple of minutes earlier.

‘It’ll all blow over as long as we keep it on the down low how much time he’s spending with us,’ Rhodes says. ‘Though if you’d taken down that video of him giving his presentation it might not
‘Yeah but he deserves to be an internet sensation,’ he laughs, ‘especially since he put that together with no help from any of us. He didn’t even do a practise run through with me.’

They turn their attention back to the three women talking on the show. ‘But you have to admit, Val, the teen does look a lot like Tony Stark; and he’s about the right age for when Tony was in the height of his playboy phase. Maybe he’s a long lost love child that he just got back in contact with.’

‘Or maybe he only just found out about him,’ another woman says, ‘and now he’s trying to make up for lost time?’

‘Either way did you see those two interacting after the presentation had been given? It’s so sweet! Just what a father and son relationship should be.’

‘Alright turning it off now,’ Tony grumbles, ignoring the laugh from Rhodes and the way Steve is shaking from trying to hold in his own. ‘I thought you were supposed to be nice to me seeing as I’m still technically recovering?’

‘Oh now you want to still be in recovery?’ Rhodes says. ‘When we’re telling you to take it easy and not do so much work we’re being overbearing and fussy, but as soon as we start joking around you want to be all “I’m too ill you have to be nice to me”? Not going to happen, Tones.’

Giggling cuts off Tony’s retort and they look to the hallway to see Wanda arriving with a red faced Peter, who promptly drops his bags by the entrance and comes over to drop next to Tony on the sofa with an exaggerated: ‘You are the worst person in the world!’ at Wanda.

‘I mean I could be if you wanted me to-’

‘No!’ he cuts her off, eyes wide. ‘Whatever you were about to say the answer is no.’ She just cackles in response and goes to grab a drink from the fridge.

‘Do we want to know?’ Steve asks, looking between the two youngest team members.

‘Considering Wanda has been giggling since they arrived, but will not tell me the reason behind it, and Peter has been blushing just as long I’d wager that the topic of their conversation has to do with Peter’s love life and Wanda has just discovered something about it he doesn’t want shared,’ Vision says, entering behind them with a sigh.

‘What? No!’ Peter says, eyes widening even further as he looks between all the occupants of the room. The giveaway that he’s lying comes from the panicked look of help he gives Wanda.

‘Vis,’ Wanda sighs, rubbing her temple, ‘if that were the case, maybe think about what you just said and why that wouldn’t have helped.’

‘So?’ Tony nudges the teenager at his side, grinning at the boy’s uncomfortable look. ‘Do we get to hear about it?’

‘Tony, leave him alone,’ Steve sighs. ‘I’m sure if it was anything serious he’d let us know.’

‘Exactly that!’ Peter says, latching onto Steve’s attempt to save him like a drowning man. ‘Yeah, nothing serious at all, Wanda’s just getting over excited about nothing.’

‘Really?’ he laughs, then scowls at Steve. ‘Stop spoiling my fun.’
‘Yeah, promise. I’ll tell you if anything does start getting serious,’ the teen is nodding so furiously that Tony’s worried his head might fly off. ‘Although I did have to ask you something kind of related to dating, but not my dating life. It’s more May’s than mine.’

‘Kid I swear if you ask me to give you the birds and the bees talk I’m sending you to your room.’

Peter’s eyes, if possible, go even wider. ‘Oh god no! Why would you think that? Eww I really don’t want to be thinking about that and May and… can we just not?’ He gives a shudder and then refocuses. ‘No it’s… well see May’s started seeing someone and it seems to be going really well, which is good because he seems like a nice guy and that’s not the problem at all but… well see she either goes to his on the weekends when I’m here, or he comes to ours on the other weekends.’

‘And you don’t want him to find out you’re Spider-Man?’ Rhodes guesses.

‘Exactly. It’s not exactly great for my dating life, let alone someone else’s. I mean, how do you explain to someone your nephew can bench press a car and not expect them to run for the hills?’

‘Well I suppose that’s one way to keep the creeps away,’ Wanda laughs.

‘Yeah but it means I can’t go on patrols on that weekend and, well, patrols is where I get rid of loads of my excess energy. If I keep saying I’m going to Ned’s then he’s going to start asking me to stay back to spend some “bonding time” together,’ the teen makes a face. ‘Which would be fine, but there’s only so many times I can say no before he’s going to start thinking I’ve got a problem with him, and then that’s going to cause an argument, or maybe more than one. And if May starts shouting I get upset, and then she gets upset and then there’s the possibility of more shouting, then I’m not allowed on patrols during the week; and not to mention the shouting really hurts my ears, then I get a migraine and it’s just—’

‘Pete, what do you want us to do?’ Tony laughs, cutting off the teen’s rambling.

‘Oh, right, sorry, yeah. Um… well…. can I come up here three weekends a month rather than just two?’ he turns those big brown puppy eyes on Tony.

‘Course you can,’ he smiles as the teen wraps his arms around him in thanks. Well it’s not like he was going to be able to resist the puppy eyes anyway. ‘You want me to clear it with May?’

‘No it’s fine I’ll speak to her,’ he replies, much happier again. ‘Anyway I’m going to go put my stuff in my room. Be back soon!’

As soon as he’s out of the room Steve turns to Wanda. ‘Ok tell us everything you know about this girl Peter is seeing.’

Wanda bursts out laughing and stands up. ‘Oh no. You’re getting nothing from me, Cap,’ she says, and tugs Vision out of the room.

‘Nice try,’ Tony gives the soldier’s leg a consolatory pat.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hope you enjoyed the double update this week. I’d love to know what you think about Wanda being the first member of the team to learn about the relationship between
Peter and Wade.

Thank you so much again to everyone for your continued support with this story. I’m enjoying writing this series so much and it is honestly mostly because of all you wonderful people!

Do let me know if there’s anything you’d like to see from the characters or stories and I hope you continue to enjoy reading this :)

Love you all!
L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

‘Well I suppose that really depends on what he classes as ‘enhanced abilities’ doesn’t it?’ the third woman, who Tony thinks is the one called Val, adds. She turns to the camera. ‘Just to remind all of our viewers that Secretary Ross is proposing legislation that means anyone with enhanced abilities must register with the United States Government, he says as a way to ensure the safety of the individuals as well as the general public. It would mean everyone on the Avengers team would need to register, as well as several of the vigilantes we see around the country. Ross himself named some of the vigilantes he’s be working to find the identities of, including Spider-Man, Daredevil and Deadpool. That’s just in New York alone.’

‘He said what?’ Tony demands.

‘I believe he also made a comment about the teenager the Avengers have been showing an interest in,’ the first woman adds.

‘Oh yes,’ the second woman sounds far too excited, ‘it was a proper “shots fired” at Tony Stark that one.’

‘I believe the quote was,’ Val looks down at her notes, ‘ah yes here it is. “No one would be exempt from the registration, even if they are someone’s precious intern and think they may have protection from other individuals.” He then went on to say-’
‘Why are we still watching this?’ Tony asks as Rhodes turns the volume back up on the chat show once Wanda and Vision are out of the room.

‘Because it’s entertaining?’

‘Are they talking about Peter being his son or his successor?’ Natasha asks as she walks in.

‘Both I think? They were just on about him being his son before. Long lost love child or something,’ Rhodes answers.

‘Which is ridiculous seeing as I made sure there were no children from any of my partners,’ he huffs, ‘I mean, give me some credit.’

‘That and Howard would have killed you if you’d left an illegitimate child running around,’ Rhodes adds.

‘That too,’ he nods in agreement. Then something on the TV catches his attention.

‘What about what the Secretary General has said about getting people to register? Do you think that’s going to have an impact on whether Stark acknowledges the boy?’

‘Well I suppose that really depends on what he classes as ‘enhanced abilities’ doesn’t it?’ the third woman, who Tony thinks is the one called Val, adds. She turns to the camera. ‘Just to remind all of our viewers that Secretary Ross is proposing legislation that means anyone with enhanced abilities must register with the United States Government, he says as a way to ensure the safety of the individuals as well as the general public. It would mean everyone on the Avengers team would need to register, as well as several of the vigilantes we see around the country. Ross himself named some of the vigilantes he’s be working to find the identities of, including Spider-Man, Daredevil and Deadpool. That’s just in New York alone.’

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‘This is getting ridiculous,’ Rhodes fumes, ‘he’s wanting people to register? It’s only so he knows who he can target to add to the Avengers roster, or who he can make his own team out of for when we do something he doesn’t like.’

‘We’ve slipped too far out of his control,’ Natasha adds, coming to join them, ‘that’s why he’s doing this. He wants-

‘Tony?’ Steve’s question cuts her off; the soldier is looking at him worriedly. ‘What’s wrong?’

‘FRIDAY?’
‘Yes boss?’

‘Show me the video call from Hammer the day after Scott arrived. I want to see what both sides were able to see.’

‘Yes boss.’
‘Tony, what-’

‘Give me a second, Steve,’ Tony says, leaning forwards as FRIDAY gives him what he asked for; he scans everything until the moment Peter walks through the door, then he presses pause. ‘You see what I see?’

Natasha’s eyes go wide. ‘Peter’s not in shot. Not fully.’ Tony presses play again, only pausing again once Bucky has gone to block Peter from view.

‘There is nothing in the shot that Hammer would be able to tell who Peter was apart from his voice,’ Tony’s furious. ‘So how the hell did he know that was Peter walking through the door?’ He looks up at Natasha. ‘Nat I want to speak to Hammer.’

‘Tony I really don’t think that’s a good idea,’ she says, looking to Steve for support.

‘Fifteen minutes. You and me in a room with him. I just want to ask him some questions of my own,’ he tries to reason with her. ‘I think I’m on to something here, I just need him to confirm it for me. The only person he might admit it to is me because he’ll want to show how much he managed to pull the wool over my eyes. Come on, Nat, you’ll be there with me. Steve can wait outside the whole time. Fifteen minutes that’s all I ask.’

Natasha looks between him and Steve, then nods. ‘Alright. Fifteen minutes. Rhodes is watching the whole time on the cameras, I’m in there with you and Steve is sat outside. The minute I tell you to get out you leave without argument, is that understood?’

‘Perfectly,’ he grins at her, ‘now can we get this over with?’

Tony’s been working on his portable screen the whole time Natasha has been getting everything ready for him to go and see Hammer, and FRIDAY has been working her magic for him. Suddenly a lot of things have fallen into place. Odd comments that hadn’t sat right at the time, and certain team members that had been targeted. Now he just needs Hammer to confirm it for him.
Natasha opens the door and nods for Tony to go in; Steve drops the arm that has been around his waist and presses a kiss to his forehead. ‘I’m right outside if you need me,’ he reminds him.

‘There’s a reason no one trusted you to speak to him, babe,’ Tony grins at his boyfriend, ‘we do need him still able to talk.’ Steve just blushes and takes his seat, directly opposite the open door it gives him the opportunity to turn the full force of his Captain America stare onto Hammer before Tony enters and the door closes behind him.

‘Well I see you chose America’s golden boy after all,’ Justin Hammer says from where he’s handcuffed to a table. They’ve kept him at the facility until they have all the information they need from him, and from the files they took from the complex. There’s a lot to get through.

‘See here’s the thing that’s been bugging me,’ Tony says, taking a seat opposite his old rival as Natasha crosses her arms and leans against the wall. ‘You were always notoriously shit at anything, even when you tried to copy my stuff you still screwed up; you even managed to screw up teaming up with a villain. The only thing you could do better than me was be a pain in the arse. Well and look like a complete fucking idiot. So,’ he fixes Hammer with one of his stares, the ones he’s been perfecting ever since meeting Peter, ‘just how did you manage to find out about the fact Bucky had feelings for me, and that Cap and I were dancing around each other? Because not even the rest of the team knew about all of that.’

‘I have my ways, Anthony,’ Hammer shrugs.

‘Yeah, it’s called getting one of our guys to pass you surveillance footage,’ he looks back at his screen and pulls up what he’s found. ‘Disguising it as regular checks on the security system, but there’s still evidence there that certain excerpts have been copied. I’m guessing this was then passed on to you through a contact; so I want to know: who was your contact?’

‘I’m not telling you which of your staff is spying on you,’ Hammer laughs.

‘No I already know who it is, and I’ve already sent orders for them to be detained. Nat’s going to have a lot of fun getting to the bottom of things with them,’ he pauses to take in Hammer’s appearance. ‘It seems Clint had all the fun with you before she got a chance.’

‘I had to let him have some fun before he went back to retirement,’ Natasha shrugs from the wall.

‘Semi-retirement,’ he grins back at her, ‘I don’t think we’ll be able to keep him away now. I almost feel like he needs to come back to talk to Hammer again, I mean they did turn out to be such good friends by the end of it.’

‘If you think you can scare me into telling you who my benefactor is you can think again, Anthony,’ Hammer sneers. ‘It’s only a matter of time before he gets me out of here, and you can’t touch him.’ The man laughs. ‘That’s the best part of this whole thing Stark,’ he sneers, ‘you can’t touch him.’

‘So it’s man we’re looking for,’ Tony muses out loud, ‘obviously a man in a high position, most likely in the government seeing as you are adamant that I won’t be able to do anything about him doing what he likes.’ Hammer starts to look wary. ‘I mean it would also have to be someone who has shown they have some idea of everything you’ve already proven you know,’ he lazily looks over at Natasha, seeing her eyes widen very slightly which tells him she’s just realised what he’s already worked out.

‘Oh come on, Stark,’ Hammer laughs, ‘you think you can work it out? He got me out of that
prison right from under your noses and you didn’t realise what had happened until I phoned you to tell you.’

‘So someone who was also at the prison to make sure everything went to plan. Probably also the same person who caused a distraction by trying to get Bucky under his control, which I imagine would have gone very differently for us had he actually managed to get the brain washing to work, and then may have hinted to me that he knew about my feelings for Steve. Something that he only would have known about had he seen a certain interaction between me and Bucky from our surveillance. One that I now know was copied and sent on to someone. Tell me I’m getting close, Justin, come on.’ He smirks at his former rival, whose eyes have suddenly gone wide. ‘Wouldn’t also be someone who has been trying to get this team under his control as long as we’ve been separate from SHIELD? Wouldn’t also happen to be someone who is now pressing for enhanced individuals to be registered? I imagine so he can build his own team to fight us?’

‘I-I- I don’t know what you’re talking about.’

‘Oh you were always as shit at lying as you were everything else,’ Tony waves his comment off. ‘Tell me Hammer, did Ross also supply you with notes on my capture in Afghanistan? Is that why you tried to imitate that so much? Because you also knew about my hydrophobia? About where it came from? Did he tell you to make sure I died or did he just tell you to break me?’

‘You can’t take him on, Stark,’ Hammer spits at him, ‘he’ll bring the whole team down if you try. And then he’ll go for your precious intern. It’s only a matter of time before he works out that Peter is Spider-Man.’ The man laughs at the brief flash of surprise that Tony can’t conceal. ‘Oh don’t be so shocked, Anthony. I watched the footage from your capture and saw young Peter’s face when my men took his mask off. I must admit I am very impressed with that young man. As soon as Ross gets me out of here, he’s first on our list I can assure you.’

Tony does his best to grin at the last sentence. ‘Thank you for confirming my suspicions, Justin. As always, it’s a pleasure doing business with you.’

‘Wha-’

He stands up, cutting off Hammer’s response and leaves the man spluttering behind him, Natasha hot on his heels as they close the door behind them. ‘Did you hear all that?’ he asks Steve as the soldier stands, wide eyed, when they close the door.

Steve just nods. ‘When did you work it out?’

‘When I heard that quote from Ross this morning,’ he replies, and the three of them fall into step walking along the corridor.

‘He called Peter your “precious intern” just like Hammer did in the call,’ Natasha realises.

‘Everything else just clicked into place.’

‘So what are we going to do?’ Steve asks. ‘Surely with this we can take him down once and for all?’

‘Let me make a couple of calls,’ Tony says, ‘we’ll get SI’s legal team on this. I want to make sure we don’t miss any loop holes. The bastard is going down, but we’re doing it so he’ll never be able to come back up. I need to get Rhodey to speak to the President as well.’

‘We’re doing this by the book then?’ she asks.
Tony nods. ‘Just this once we have to. If Ross is mixed up with HYDRA…’

‘Hey,’ her small hand stops him and turns him around, ‘one thing at a time, Tony. First things first we get rid of Ross; HYDRA will always be a thorn in our side it seems.’

‘It’s not just that though is it?’ Steve asks him.

Tony shakes his head. ‘I’m… if Ross is involved how many of the Council are too?’

The other two share a look. ‘You can’t be suggesting we break from the Council? After what happened with the Accords-’

Tony shakes his head. ‘That’s what some of the calls are I need to make. Just- just trust me on this ok? The less anyone else knows the more you can deny if it goes wrong.’

‘We’ll follow your lead,’ Steve nods and gives him a small smile, pulling him into his embrace. Natasha leaves them as Tony feels some of his tension melt away, safe in the cocoon of Steve’s arms.

‘I’m scared,’ he admits quietly.

‘So am I,’ comes the reply, ‘but I know we can face anything as long as we’re together.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. I'm so sorry I'm late posting this week. I'm doing a course on top of the job and got carried away with studying and forgot I hadn't posted! I hope it was worth the extra bit of waiting time.

Thank you so much to everyone who has commented, left kudos and especially for sticking with this story. The continued support is amazing and I really do appreciate you taking the time to take this journey with me.

So this chapter is more setting up where the sequels are going to be taking us. I am intending to cover Infinity War and End Game (as long as I'm not too emotionally distraught after watching it!), and have a couple of ideas for stories coming after them as well. Do let me know if there's anything you'd like to see in them by the way! I'm still trying to think of special ideas as well.

Do let me know what you think about this chapter and where you think this series is going to go. I'd love to hear your thoughts!

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:
‘Place the call, FRIDAY, it’s way past time I spoke to the old man again.’
‘Yes boss.’
‘Well, well, well,’ the familiar voice says, ‘I would say I’m surprised, but considering what I’ve been hearing I’m not really. What can I do for you, Stark?’
‘I think,’ Tony replies with a small smile, ‘it’s more a case of what can we do for each other?’
Phone Calls and Advice

Chapter Summary

Tony makes some phone calls to get some help, Peter gets some dating advice, and Steve and Tony have a long over-due conversation.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Tony manages two calls before his lungs protest and he starts to cough after he hangs up on his conversation with Stark Industries’ top legal team. He gasps, reaching for the glass of water on his table, but sends it flying, the water spilling out over the table top; tears start to cloud his vision as he struggles to catch his breath.

‘Shh, hey come on,’ a large warm hand is on his back and another glass is brought up to his lips. ‘Just take small sips, honey. That’s it.’ Focussing on Steve’s voice helps push back the panic at not being able to breathe and Tony’s able to take gradually larger sips until the glass is empty. ‘There you go.’

‘Thank you,’ he croaks, taking deep calming breaths as the soldier continues to rub warm circles on his back. He hates that he’s trembling from sheer tiredness.

‘Do you need to make any more calls?’ Steve’s voice is pleading.

Tony pauses, considering his options; there’s at least five more that he wants to make, but they aren’t necessarily needed. Not right now at least. ‘I need to make one more, then I’ll take a break.’

‘Tony, please don’t make me watch you kill yourself with work after just getting you back.’

He turns and reaches up to cup Steve’s face with one hand, pressing a kiss to the soft lips. ‘One more call and I promise you I’ll make it quick. No more than ten minutes tops.’

‘Tony-’

‘This is one I have to make, babe,’ he apologises. ‘I’ll leave all the others until later or tomorrow.’

‘If you’re not on your way up in fifteen minutes I’m coming down and throwing you over my shoulder.’

‘Do you promise me to take me to bed afterwards? Because I may just stay down here on purpose if that’s the case.’

‘You’re impossible,’ Steve chuckles, pressing a kiss to Tony’s mouth and then standing up. ‘Make your call, honey, I’ll have your coffee waiting for you when you come up.’

‘Steve, I-’ the words he wants to say catch in his throat, so instead he just smiles and says, ‘thank you.’
Steve kisses his forehead and smiles back. ‘Make your call, then come and join us.’

Tony watches the man leave, unable to get rid of the smile on his face; when the blond is finally out of sight he sighs and turns around. ‘Place the call, FRIDAY, its way past time I spoke to the old man again.’

‘Yes boss.’

‘Well, well, well,’ the familiar voice says, ‘I would say I’m surprised, but considering what I’ve been hearing I’m not really. What can I do for you, Stark?’

‘I think,’ Tony replies with a small smile, ‘it’s more a case of what can we do for each other?’

Peter hesitates before he knocks on the door.

‘Come in,’ comes the voice from inside, and he gingerly pushes the door open and steps into the man’s bedroom. ‘You alright, Pete?’

He nods. ‘Yeah, I was just wondering if I could get your advice on something?’

‘Sure,’ Sam says, patting a spot on his bed, ‘what’s eating you?’

‘Well,’ he sits down and starts fiddling nervously with the duvet, ‘it’s kind of embarrassing, and I’d appreciate it if you didn’t mention it anyone…’

Sam closes the book he’d been reading and sits up straighter. ‘Pete if you don’t want me to say anything I won’t. Unless I think you’re going to be in danger, alright?’

Peter nods and then looks back down at the cover. ‘Well, I’m guessing you heard about the fact that when we got here Vision let it out the bag that I might be seeing someone.’

‘Yeah that spread like wildfire,’ the man chuckles, ‘and something is telling me that you’re about to say things are more serious than you led the others to believe.’

‘A little,’ he admits, ‘the thing is… I’m not sure how to tell Tony.’

‘And why is that?’

‘Well… I think he’s expecting me to be dating a girl for one thing.’

‘Wait,’ Sam blinks, ‘you’re not?’

‘No?’

‘Is that a question or an answer?’

‘Answer,’ he mumbles.

‘That can’t be the real issue, Peter,’ Sam chuckles, ‘seeing as Tony and Steve are together.’

‘No it’s not… it’s just, he’s a bit older than me.’
‘Ah, and you don’t think Tony will approve?’

‘No I don’t think he will.’

‘Just how much older are we talking?’

‘Umm… old enough to potentially be a problem.’

‘Alright I won’t push,’ Sam assures him, ‘but what is it you want me to say?’

‘I don’t know,’ he all but wails, flopping back on the bed so he’s looking up at the ceiling. ‘I just feel like I should tell Tony at some point and I’m not sure how to bring it up, and I don’t want him to find out by accident because that’ll just be worse. And it’s not like I don’t trust him that I don’t want to tell him, I just don’t want him to be disappointed, and I’m worried he won’t be happy.’

Sam is quiet for a while, and Peter wonders if the man is actually going to help him or just watch him suffer. ‘I think,’ he says eventually, ‘that you’ll know when the best time to bring it up is, Peter, and I’d suggest waiting until you know it’s not something that’s going to fizzle out soon afterwards if you’re so worried about his reaction. I’d also suggest you get him alone and you tell him about being worried that he’ll be disappointed, as well as how you feel about this guy. I’d also say maybe explain to him how you two ended up together. It might surprise you how accepting he can be, especially when it comes to you.’

‘You really think it won’t be that bad?’ he asks hopefully.

‘I think, even if he isn’t happy with whoever your partner is,’ Sam says carefully, ‘he’s not going to risk losing any relationship with you. So even if he isn’t happy he’ll at least give them a chance.’

Peter nods. ‘I hope so. I think they’d get on really well.’ He gives the man a smile and sits up. ‘Thanks, Sam.’

‘Anytime, kid,’ he smiles back. ‘And if you want to tell me who it is so I can rub it in Bucky’s face feel free.’

Peter just laughs and starts walking towards the door. ‘Not today, but maybe soon.’

Tony jolts awake, heart beating fast as he takes gasping breaths, hand reaching up to cradle the reactor in his chest.

‘Boss would you like me to alert Captain Rogers?’

‘Yeah,’ he croaks out, unable to even attempt to calm his shaking as he pushes his covers off, letting the cool air of the room calm him. Before he’s even managed to get his breathing under control his door is opening and Steve’s walking in, only in his pyjama trousers and hair still mussed from sleep.

‘Tony?’

The inventor doesn’t reply, just holds his hand that’s not cradling the arc reactor out to the soldier. Steve’s at his side in seconds, pulling him against his chest and rubbing warm hands up and
down his shaking back. Nearly ten minutes later he’s finally calm enough to relax in the soldier’s arms. ‘Just ask me, Steve,’ he murmurs into the man’s bare chest, eyes closed as he listens to the heartbeat just under his ear.

Steve is quiet for a couple of moments then, in a quiet voice, he asks, ‘What was your nightmare about? Was it…did you see the shield again?’

Tony shakes his head. ‘No,’ he replies and feels the muscles underneath him relax, ‘no I was… I was drowning, Steve. First in Afghanistan, then when I came out of the water I was back with Hammer; they put me under again and it was- I was through the portal with the nuke. All I could see was the darkness of space and the Chitauri getting closer, then one… one reached for my chest and,’ he buries himself closer to the chest underneath him and takes a deep breath, ‘Obie was there. Holding the reactor in his hand and watching me-

Steve presses a kiss to his head, cutting him off as his breathing starts to get ragged again. ‘Tony no one is going to take that reactor from you while there’s still a single breath left in my body,’ he promises.

They’re quiet for a little longer, taking comfort in each other’s warmth; Tony is still trying to process that this is real, that Steve actually wants him. Part of him, that sounds suspiciously like his father, is telling him it’s too good to last. ‘Steve?’

‘What is it, honey?’

‘I’m sorry.’

‘What for? Not for asking me to come in? Tony you know I don’t mind-’

‘For the Accords,’ he says softly, not quite brave enough to look up at those blue eyes even in the half light that FRIDAY’s provided them with.

Steve pauses before replying, caught off guard with the topic of the conversation. ‘I don’t hold anything against you for it,’ he says carefully, ‘not anymore, not after you got everyone back together.’

‘I know but-’ Tony sighs and sits up, finally daring to meet that piercing gaze. ‘Steve I don’t want to keep on doing this with that still hanging over us. We’ve not actually talked about it yet; we’ve shouted things at each other that hints what we’ve thought and felt about the whole thing, but we’ve not had a proper conversation where we listen to what the other has to say without emotions getting in the way. I don’t- I’ve screwed up too many times by not talking about things like this and I don’t- I can’t mess this up, Steve. I can’t risk losing you because I’m too afraid to talk about something.’

Steve opens and closes his mouth a couple of times, and Tony can see the war going on across his face; it seems that, just like him, Steve both wants to have the discussion and doesn’t want to at the same time. ‘Are you sure you want to have this conversation now?’ he settles on asking.

‘I’m certainly not going to be able to sleep again tonight,’ he admits, ‘and we’re less likely to be interrupted at,’ he glances at the clock, ‘half past two in the morning than we are during the day.’

The blond runs his hands up and down Tony’s sides and nods. ‘Alright, on one condition.’

‘And that is?’ he feels uncertainty clawing at his insides.

Steve gives him a small smile and pulls him back down onto his chest, laying his head on his
shoulder. ‘We do it like this, so you remember I’m not going anywhere and I can make sure you don’t go running scared.’

He tightens his arm around Steve’s waist, reaching with his other one to link their fingers together. ‘You’re a bit of a sap aren’t you?’ Steve chuckles, and it helps to relax against him.

They sit there for hours quietly talking over everything that had happened with the Accords. By the end of it Tony’s feeling emotionally wrung out and absolutely exhausted, but he also feels a little lighter; the sun is just starting to lighten the sky when they finally stop talking.

‘Think you can get a couple more hours sleep?’ Steve asks, fingers stroking through Tony’s hair.

‘Only if you stay here,’ he mumbles.

‘Tony I’m not sure that’s-’

‘If you say anything resembling the word “proper” I swear I’ll kick your arse from here to Brooklyn and back again.’

Steve laughs. ‘Alright I won’t say anything then.’

‘And you’ll stay here?’

‘If you want me to.’

‘I sleep better with you here,’ he admits. Steve doesn’t say anything, just adjusts them both on the bed and pulls the covers over them. ‘You don’t have to ask to come in here you know.’

‘You’ve had a lot of choices taken away from you, especially recently,’ Steve says quietly, ‘I don’t want to take away any from you here.’

‘I’m not sure what I’ve done to deserve you,’ Tony replies as he feels sleep creeping up on him. ‘Trust me I’ll tell you if I don’t want you here for some reason. Not that I can think of a possible one right now.’

‘Well tell me when you want me here, or come and join me,’ he hears as he starts to fall asleep. There’s three words he wants to say as he drifts off, but he doesn’t quite have the courage right now.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! Thank you so much for the continued love for this story, I'm glad you're still enjoying it. Thank you for everyone who is taking the time to comment, I do love getting to read them and reply so please keep leaving your thoughts.

I’d also be interested to see where everyone thinks we might be going with this series. Do leave your predictions, you never know you might give me some inspiration for a different track!

Seriously thank you so much to everyone who is reading this story, everyone who has left kudos, and especially everyone who is continuing, and starting, to leave comments. I
cannot thank you enough!

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

‘I can’t believe you talked me into this,’ Peter grumbles as he opens the door to Sister Margaret’s.
‘Oh come on you’re dying to introduce your secret boyfriend to someone,’ Wanda teases. ‘You seriously came here by yourself?’
Super-Sister Surprise

Chapter Summary

Peter takes Wanda to meet Wade at Sister Margaret’s. Whilst there some people turn up looking for Wade, and Peter asks him a little more about his past.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘I can’t believe you talked me into this,’ Peter grumbles as he opens the door to Sister Margaret’s.

‘Oh come on you’re dying to introduce your secret boyfriend to someone,’ Wanda teases.

‘You seriously came here by yourself?’

‘I’ve come here once,’ he rolls his eyes. ‘Do me a favour and follow my lead and, uh, don’t get angry unless I do.’

‘Why would I get angry?’

‘Well…some of them can be a little…grabby?’

‘Are you telling me they hit on you?’ she demands, pausing as they reach the bottom of the stairs with her hands on her hips and a hard look on her face.

Peter gives her a sheepish grin. ‘One of them tried. Once. Didn’t dare to do it again.’

‘The one you pinned to the wall?’

‘Maybe?’

‘Aww,’ Wanda wipes away an imaginary tear, ‘my little brother all grown up and threatening mercenaries.’

‘Oh shut it,’ he shoves her through the door, a small smile betraying him. The bar is busy but Peter still recognises some of the faces from the last time he was here; he directs Wanda to the bar and gives Weasel a small smile as the man raises an eyebrow at him.

‘Please don’t tell me you’ve lost him again.’

Peter shakes his head. ‘No, I just-well Wanda wants to meet him and you know he’ll just panic if I pre-warn him, and then we’ll have to have a long debate over the mask so-’

‘So you thought you’d ambush him here.’

‘Not ambush exactly. I was thinking more surprise.’

‘Are either of you actually old enough to be in here?’ Weasel huffs. ‘Actually you know what? I don’t want to know. Neither of you are drinking.’

‘Yeah like we could explain why we’d been drinking when we make it back to the facility,’
he rolls his eyes. ‘You know when he’s due in?’

‘About an hour.’

‘Want us to win you some more money?’

‘Is the Pope Catholic?’

Peter laughs and introduces Wanda to the barman. ‘You often let underage people in here?’ she asks him.

‘Only when it’s physically impossible to get them to leave,’ Weasel replies. ‘This little punk nearly ripped Buck’s arm off last time he was here.’

‘That’s a huge exaggeration,’ Peter huffs.

‘And the money?’ she asks.

‘His way of paying for my silence and tolerance.’

‘If you can tolerate Wade I don’t see how I can be worse,’ Peter frowns.

‘I like him,’ Wanda decides, grinning at Peter’s slightly offended expression and taking the bottle of coke that’s offered to her.

‘Only because he’s ganging up on me with you.’

‘Of course!’

‘Hey kid!’ Wanda tenses at the shout from one of the mercenaries. ‘You owe me a game from last time. I need to win my money back.’

Peter winks at her and turns to face the approaching man, who stands nearly a head and a half taller than him. ‘Bring it on, tough guy. Just don’t go crying to Mommy when I wipe the floor with you.’ That earns him a chorus of laughter from the surrounding people and bets start being played as he drags Wanda over to the table.

‘Who’s this, kid? Your girlfriend?’ another one asks, that Peter recognises from last time.

He laughs in response. ‘Nope, this is my adopted big sister. Play nicely boys or you’ll find out I’m not the only one who can take you lot on.’

‘Are you trying to egg them into a fight?’ Wanda hisses in his ear; he just waves the question off and goes to grab a cue.

They play a couple of games, and Peter notices the woman starting to relax the more she’s around the mercenaries; she’s learning, just as quickly as he did it seems, that the group is fairly harmless unless it’s towards each other.

It’s only when a pair of men approach the bar and start speaking to Weasel that the normally rowdy group starts quietening and watching the newcomers warily. ‘Give me the cue,’ Buck mumbles in his ear, ‘and head out the back. Go on we’ll make sure they don’t see you.’

Peter nods gratefully, letting the man take the cue from his hand and dragging Wanda out before the woman can protest.
'What’s going on?’ she hisses at him as they wait just down a corridor, out of site of the bar but close enough that Peter can still hear what’s going on with his enhanced hearing.

‘I don’t know, keep quiet so I can hear.’ Thankfully she doesn’t argue.

‘We’re looking for someone name of Wade Wilson,’ one of the men says, Peter peeks around the corner and sees the man lean against the bar.

‘Not sure I can help you,’ Weasel responds, crossing his arms.

‘Well see a little birdie told me,’ the man says, ‘that you could. So when you next see Mr Wilson I’d like you to pass on a message to him.’ He hands a card over to Weasel, who doesn’t take it and so he places it on top of the bar with a smile. ‘Tell him we’d like to help improve what Ajax started.’

‘Yeah well I’ll start asking every new person who walks in if their name is Wade Wilson,’ Weasel says, deadpanned.

‘You do that,’ the second one says, then turns to look around the bar and Peter ducks back down the corridor, losing sight of the conversation. ‘Now I don’t suppose you get any youngsters in here do you?’

‘Yeah I frequently welcome the possibility of getting closed down by having underage kids come into my bar.’

‘Forgive my friend,’ the first man drawls, ‘but we have information that suggests Mr Wilson knows a resident superhero, name of Spider-Man, and we’d be very interested to speak to him too.’ Peter tries to keep his breathing even so he doesn’t worry Wanda, but that last sentence has his heart pounding.

‘Yeah well as I’ve already told you, we don’t know any Wilson and I’m definitely not having underage kids in my bar. Now unless you want to buy a drink I suggest you both leave.’

‘You seem very keen to get rid of us for someone who doesn’t know the people we’re after,’ the first man says.

‘Mind if we take a look around?’ the second one asks.

‘Strangely enough yes I do mind you taking a look around my business premises when you have no reason to,’ Weasel says, ‘and when you’re in the merc business you tend to get twitchy when people turn up out of the blue asking questions.’

‘Well we might just have a look anyway,’ the second man says. Before Peter can try to get Wanda to move he hears the sound of guns cocking.

‘Think you might want to leave now,’ Weasel suggests, ‘we don’t take kindly to people trying to poke their noses into our business.’

‘We’ll go for now. Do give Mr Wilson our best and pass on our message; I’d hate for him to miss out on us helping to rectify what Ajax got wrong,’ the first man says. Peter doesn’t dare look out until he hears the first gun be put away. He fills in Wanda with the conversation while they wait for the coast to clear, and then they head back out.

‘Who’s Ajax?’ she asks as they head towards Weasel.

‘I’m hoping Weasel can tell us,’ he replies as they take a barstool each. ‘Who’s Ajax?’
‘Wade needs to tell you,’ is the reply, and Peter sees a business card in the barman’s hand. ‘Now go and play some more pool before anyone else puts two and two together and comes up with Spider-Man.’

Peter holds Weasel’s gaze for a couple of moments, then looks down at the bar and just nods before pushing away, pulling Wanda with him.

‘Peter shouldn’t we-?’

‘Leave it Wanda,’ Peter says, taking his cue back from Buck and restarting his game. They spend the next half an hour playing pool with the mercenaries, Wanda sometimes taking over from Peter and managing to hold her own, earning herself a reasonable pile of winnings by the end of the half hour.

‘I think we should do this more often,’ she grins, counting the notes she’s won as Peter lines up for a break.

‘Oh no, don’t even think about making this a regular thing,’ he says, eyes not leaving the balls on the table; he grins as he pots one from the break and shrugs at the groan from his opponent.

‘You’re no fun; you listen to Steve way too much,’ she grumbles, ‘taking the sensible option. Can you please get more of Tony’s spontaneity?’

He raises an eyebrow at her. ‘You mean like bringing you to a bar full of mercenaries?’

He just laughs and shakes his head, as he turns back to take his shot he notices a familiar profile entering through the door; grinning he turns his attention back to the game, waiting for the man to notice them at the pool table. It doesn’t take long. His spidey-senses picking up when he gets the man’s attention; it’s a different feeling than the normal alarm system they usually set off, more like a note that lets him know there’s another person who has his back. He gets it from the Avengers now as well, having spent time training with them, but he’s had it longer from Wade.

‘My turn,’ he says when Peter beats his current opponent, taking the cue from him.

‘Fine by me,’ Peter shrugs, ‘but I’m handing over.’ He grins and passes the cue to Wanda, setting up the balls for their game.

‘Oh really? And who’s your friend?’ Wade asks with an eye roll.

‘Wade meet Wanda. Wanda this is Wade,’ he says it as casually as he can, trying to keep the smile from his lips as he straightens up. The merc’s face goes from suspicious, to shocked, to terror all in the space of a couple of seconds and Peter takes pity on him, going to stand next to him and putting a hand on his arm. They’re trying not to draw attention to the fact they’re together whilst in the bar so it’s the most physical touch Peter can allow himself.

‘Nice to finally see you’re not a figment of Peter’s imagination,’ the girl smiles at him, putting chalk on her cue. ‘You breaking or am I?’

Wade’s gaping like a fish out of water so Peter takes him on and answers. ‘Why don’t you break Wanda? You’ll need all the help you can get.’

‘Charming,’ the girl huffs but takes the white ball and lines up her shot.

‘Sorry I didn’t warn you,’ he mutters to the merc, ‘but she really wanted to meet you and I knew
‘I’d freak out if I warned you.’

‘I’m freaking out now.’

‘Yeah but she’s not pulled any mind control powers on you so you know you’re doing fine,’ he teases, moving away as it’s time for the man’s shot.

‘Not helping,’ he grumbles and moves to the table. Peter takes a couple of steps back and goes to lean against the wall watching the game, letting the two of them talk over the table. He’s pleasantly surprised at how quickly they do relax around each other, and by the time they’ve finished their game he’s not feeling quite so terrible at having ambushed Wade with the surprise visit from his super-sister.

‘I’m heading to the bathroom I’ll meet you at the bar?’ she says, walking off before he gets a chance to say anything.

‘So,’ he turns to his boyfriend, ‘she’s not as scary as you thought right?’

Wade fixes him with a hard look. ‘Please don’t tell me you’re going to pull the same stunt with the whole team?’

Peter laughs and shakes his head as they walk towards the bar. ‘Don’t worry I promise to give you some warning with the others. Hey Wade?’

‘Yeah Baby Boy?’

‘Who’s Ajax?’

Wade’s whole body goes rigid, and the look he turns to Peter almost frightens the teenager, if it wasn’t for the fact his spidey senses haven’t changed their tune. ‘Weasel failed to mention you were there when the two men arrived.’

‘We were down the corridor but I could still hear what was said,’ he tries to keep his tone calm, though everything about the mercenary is screaming defensive. ‘Who is he, Wade?’

‘No one important.’

‘They must be to have this kind of reaction from you,’ he tries again. ‘Come on, Wade, if they’re looking for information on me too I need to know what to keep an eye out for.’

‘You leave them to me! Don’t you fucking dare try to take them on.’

‘I’m not going to,’ he pacifies the man. ‘I swear I won’t. But if I don’t know who they are or what they’re involved in how can I know to leave if I stumble on something?’

Wade’s jaw is still firmly set, but he looks a little more likely to listen. ‘Just…someone from my past who I killed. A long time ago.’

Peter pauses as Wade turns back to the bar and orders a beer from Weasel. Then he takes a deep breath. ‘Is it something to do with the Weapon-X programme?’

There’s barely enough time for his senses to send off a short warning before Wade’s grabbing his arm and dragging him out towards the back room; he doesn’t struggle, reading the anger radiating from the other man, and really hoping Wanda doesn’t choose now to reappear. He’s not entirely sure she’d help the situation. He hears Weasel calling to Wade as they disappear into the corridor and then
he’s being shoved through the door to the back room and Wade’s following him through it, slamming the door shut and leaning back against it, arms crossed over his chest and a furious expression on his face.

‘Wade?’

‘So tell me this, Spider-Man,’ Peter winces at the use of his alter-ego’s name dripping with anger and sarcasm, ‘just how much fucking research have you actually done on me and how much have you been pretending you know shit about? Seeing as you apparently know all about Weapon-X I’m starting to wonder just how good an actor you actually are.’

‘I don’t know anything about the Weapon-X programme,’ Peter assures him, deciding it’d be better for him not to get in the man’s space, ‘except its name and that they think that’s where you got your regenerative powers.’

‘“They” being your buddies the Avengers I assume?’

‘It was brought up when Natasha found out you were in New York, not everyone was familiar with you so she gave them a brief run down: career in the military, then working as a mercenary up to the Weapon-X programme, and back to being a merc after you… well after you…’

‘Killed everyone to do with the programme? Come on Spider-Man you know what I am, why can’t you say it?’

‘Sorry,’ he looks down and leans against one of the tables. ‘I just…I didn’t want everything I knew about you to be from what others said, because I knew from that conversation alone they didn’t really know you. I didn’t want you to feel like I’d been spying on you or anything, especially since that’s all I’d heard and I hadn’t asked them for any more information. I just…’ he sighs and wraps his arms around his waist, ‘I wanted you to trust me enough to tell me about yourself.’

There’s a few moments of silence, and Peter doesn’t dare look up. He has a feeling he’s messed things up between them big time and he’s not sure what to do to fix things.

‘Cancer.’

‘What?’ Peter looks up in confusion.

‘That’s the reason I signed up to the programme,’ Wade continues, looking at the wall to the side rather than at him, even so Peter can read the vulnerability in the man’s frame. ‘I got diagnosed with cancer, well, everywhere. It was terminal and Vanessa and I had tried everything. Spent our savings going around the world, but nothing worked. Then someone approached me, here in this bar actually, and offered me a way out; I left Vanessa before she could talk me out of it and went to sign up, hoping I could go back to her when it was all done.’

‘Natasha said they wanted to create soldiers to sell to the highest bidders,’ his voice is small. Wade nods and sighs. ‘Obviously the fuckers didn’t sell it like that, I only found out after they’d made this mess of me. Turns out my healing abilities are attacking the cancer as quickly as it can form; unfortunately that means I get the side effects.’

‘The scars?’

‘Yeah, my stunning good looks,’ he huffs a dry laugh. ‘Ajax was the name Francis gave himself; stupid fucker must have got it off a soap box or some shit. Francis was the main man behind the programme, or at least he headed the division that got hold of me; he was the one that organised the
torture in order to get my latent mutant genes to come to the forefront. Then the sadistic fuck did it just for fun. Didn’t like it when I took out the whole operation just to try and get him to fix my face.’

‘He couldn’t do anything about the scars?’

‘No. Bastard made me think he could, but ended up not being able to do shit.’

Peter takes a few tentative steps forwards, then stops when he’s still just over an arm’s length away from the man, holding his hand out as if wanting to take hold of his arm. ‘I’m sorry, Wade.’

‘So am I, Pete,’ he says, finally looking back at him. Peter’s not sure who moves first, but Wade’s arms are around him and holding him tight against his hard chest, and he’s gripping the man’s hoodie in his hands, burying his nose in the soft material.

‘I just didn’t want to hear something on a patrol and phone Tony and not know I had to let you know first,’ he mumbles into the material. ‘If something had happened to you because I hadn’t warned you-

‘I didn’t want you to go looking for them,’ Wade admits, cutting him off. ‘I didn’t want them getting their hands on you and doing to you what they did to me. I couldn’t- shit Pete, it’d break me if they did.’

‘You’d have thought after last time we’d have learned not to try and keep stuff from each other,’ he laughs.

‘Yeah I remember you chasing me up the side of a building.’

‘Only because you’re an idiot!’ Peter huffs, then leans back and pulls Wade down for a kiss. ‘Trust me, Wade,’ he asks when they break apart, ‘please?’

‘I do, Baby Boy,’ he replies, ‘I just…I worry about you.’

‘And you think I don’t worry about you?’

Wade’s reply is cut off by the door opening to reveal a frowning Wanda. ‘Peter if you’re back here doing things you really shouldn’t be before you’re eighteen I’m telling Tony.’

‘What are you my mother?’ he rolls his eyes, not moving away from Wade’s embrace. ‘We’re having a discussion here.’

‘Oh that’s what you’re calling it these days?’ she raises an eyebrow with a slight smirk. ‘Looks like much more than a conversation if you ask me.’

‘Yeah well I didn’t,’ he huffs, ‘and in our defence you did come in at the end of the conversation and the start of the more fun things.’

Wanda closes her eyes and covers her ears. ‘I don’t want to know. I don’t need that mental scarring!’

‘Oh come on nothing more than kissing was going to happen!’ Wade defends himself. ‘I’ve already told him that.’

‘Yeah I know, I’ve had him moaning about it,’ Wanda giggles, pulling her hands away and opening her eyes again. ‘Now come on, Pete, we need to phone Happy and head back towards the facility before they send someone after us. You sure you want to run the risk of Bucky finding you back here?’
Peter’s eyes go wide and he scrambles out of Wade’s arms and out the door. ‘Bye Wade see you later!’

‘Hey!’ the merc protests, then he frowns at Wanda. ‘You made me lose my goodbye kiss.’

Wanda laughs and walks up to the man, placing a kiss on his cheek. ‘Hopefully that’ll do for now,’ she says, then walks after Peter.

Just as she reaches him he darts back into the room and places a kiss to the man’s lips. ‘Told you she’d like you,’ he grins and races back out to follow the girl back up the stairs, leaving a very shocked merc standing in the room, one hand reaching up to his face.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! I hope you enjoyed the Wanda and Wade meet. Do let me know what you think, I’d be interested to know what you feel about her being the first of the team to officially meet him as Peter's partner.

Thank you so much to everyone who has left comments and kudos on this story. I did have a review left on another site asking for a double update this week just as I was getting everything ready to post. Now let it never be said I don't give you what you ask for: so here's a double update coming your way!

L x
Friends Return

Chapter Summary

Peter starts to open up to Tony about his new relationship, but they're interrupted by some unexpected visitors.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Tony has fought off Steve and got Peter to himself down in the workshop; they’re working on the old Mark II suit that he’d given the teenager for his birthday. Peter’s body is currently half hidden by the suit as he has a look at the de-icing system that is situated in the back of the torso.

‘This is awesome!’ the voice comes from inside. ‘What made you even think to put this in? I never would have thought about it until I was frozen up.’

‘I didn’t,’ Tony chuckles, wheeling his chair over as Peter ducks his head out, grease staining his face, ‘I nearly ended up flat as a pancake.’

‘Woah really? That must have been terrifying!’

‘Well it was fun when I realised I was going to be alright, but yeah wasn’t much fun before that.’ He comes over and starts explaining some of the other parts of the suit, then Peter takes a section over to a work bench to take it apart. ‘Hey kid?’

‘Yeah?’ Tony knows Peter’s only half listening as he has a half-frown on his face that he gets when he’s concentrating on something.

‘How’s things going with that girl you’re seeing?’

He tries not to grin as Peter freezes and looks up warily at him. ‘Well, uh, you see the thing is…’ he runs a hand through his hair, looking everywhere around the workshop but at Tony. ‘It’s not a girl.’

‘Oh?’ Tony’s eyebrows raise into his hair. ‘Failed to mention that before. I’m guessing you’re bi then seeing as you took that girl to Homecoming.’

Peter nods. ‘Yeah, um, so things are going well I guess?’

‘Did Wanda by any chance get you to take her to meet him when she came to get you yesterday?’

‘How did you know?’ the teen’s eyes are huge.

Tony laughs. ‘She was looking far too smug for you two to have just gone to watch a film.’ Peter mumbles something he doesn’t quite catch, and Tony leans back in his chair watching the teen carefully. ‘I appreciate you not wanting to scare them off by having the whole team meet them,’ he says, ‘but you know if they make you happy then you shouldn’t have too much to worry about when it comes to everyone approving.’
Peter looks at him with what he can only describe as a hopeful expression. ‘You think so?’

‘Why wouldn’t we?’ Tony frowns slightly.

He looks down and starts fiddling with the bits of suit on the bench. ‘Well…he’s a bit older than me so I thought you might not be too happy with that.’

‘Older as in twenty years older and I need to be worried?’

‘No he’s definitely not twenty years older,’ Peter rolls his eyes and he can’t help but smile at the slight relax of the teen’s shoulders.

‘But older enough that he’s legal and you’re not right?’ Peter blushes bright red and looks down, nodding his head.

‘He’s made it clear that nothing is going to happen until I’m old enough though,’ and Tony really has to bite his lip to stop from laughing at the petulant tone in the teenager’s voice.

‘Well he’s already in my good books,’ he teases the teenager, earning himself a huff that makes him laugh. ‘Anything else you care to share about this mystery man?’

Peter opens his mouth to answer when FRIDAY interrupts. ‘Boss? We’ve just had a large group land in the grounds; energy signatures are comparable to those of the Bifrost, and two of the lifeforms are showing as being Thor and Dr Banner.’

‘Bruce is here? And Thor?’ Tony jumps up and grimaces as the action makes the arc reactor grind against his ribs. Peter is by his side in an instant, ready to support him should he need it, and they make their way to the elevator.

‘What do you think’s happened?’ Peter asks.

‘I’m sure we’re about to find out. FRIDAY can you get the others to meet us at the front doors?’

‘Sure thing, boss, passing on the message.’

‘Who else is around?’

‘Captain Rogers and Sergeant Barnes are already on their way there now; Miss Maximoff and Vision are just getting up from the sofas; Agent Romanoff is coming up from the gym; Mr Wilson and Colonel Rhodes are currently off the facility.’

‘Do you want me to wait here?’ Peter asks as the doors open and they step out onto the ground floor.

‘No way kid I need you next to me to keep me standing. Steve fusses too much, at least you know when to let me stand on my own feet again,’ he gives the teenager a warm smile, the boy practically glowing with pride.

‘Tony?’ Steve hurries towards them. ‘Are you sure you should be heading outside? We can bring everyone up to the common area and-’

‘See what I mean?’ Tony ignores his boyfriend and says to the teenager, who tries his best to hide his smile by ducking his head. ‘I’ll be fine, honey, now let’s go make sure Thor and Bruce are alright.’
‘FRIDAY says there were a number of people,’ Natasha appears from behind him and Tony tries not to jump, ‘what do you think that means?’

‘If something’s happened on Asgard it could be Thor’s come here seeking sanctuary,’ Steve muses out loud, ‘or it could be there’s trouble and he’s stopped here to warn us with a band of warriors.’

‘Let’s hope they’re not as enthusiastic as he is about Pop Tarts,’ Natasha says with a smile as they’re joined by Wanda and Vision.

‘Shall we go meet our visitors?’ Tony suggests, leading the way with Peter only a step or two behind ready to support him if he gets tired. He doesn’t like to admit how quickly he still tires out, or how quickly he can become breathless; and what he’d said earlier is true, most of the others tend to fuss when he does, Peter and Natasha are the two that are there to give him a shoulder to lean on and then let him go back to standing on his own when he’s alright again. He can’t begin to explain how much that means to him.

Steve quickens his pace so he’s walking in step with him; Tony grins at him, looking at him out of the corner of his eye. ‘You keeping tabs on me Spangles?’

The blond rolls his eyes. ‘If they are warriors I want to be able to stop them before they crush you. If Thor is anything to go by Asgardians aren’t brilliant at controlling their strength around us mere mortals.’

Tony’s bark of laughter stops short when they catch sight of the group on the lawn. Thor and Bruce are supporting a motionless body between them and struggling up towards them, behind them is a group of maybe twenty or thirty people, all who look like normal civilians rather than the warriors they were expecting.

‘Go,’ Tony tells Steve, letting him, Bucky and Natasha run ahead to meet their friends. He arrives a couple of minutes after them with Peter, Wanda and Vision in tow. ‘What happened?’ Then he catches sight of the person between Thor and Bruce. ‘Someone want to explain what happened to Loki?’

‘Tony he needs help,’ Bruce says, cutting across whatever Thor is about to say.

‘Bruce?’ Tony asks in surprise, looking at his friend.

‘He’s the reason we’re alive,’ the scientist explains, ‘please, we need to help him. If for no other reason than he knows our enemy better than any of us.’

‘Bruce I really don’t think it’s a good idea to keep him here considering-’

‘Peter help Bruce get Loki to the medical wing,’ Tony cuts across Steve, moving forwards. ‘Then I want you to find Dr Higgs, and only Dr Higgs and get her to help look over him alright? Make sure they’re in one of the private rooms. Ross cannot know about this.’

‘Tony what are you-’

‘If Bruce has done a one eighty on him,’ he cuts across Natasha, ‘then there must be a damn good reason behind it. But we can wait to hear it until he’s stable-’

He’s cut off by a cry of pain from both Bruce and Thor and the pair drop Loki to the floor. Except Loki looks very different to how he was a couple of seconds ago.
“What-”

“He’s a Frost Giant!” a hiss goes up from someone in the small crowd behind them.

“A what now?” he looks between Bruce and Thor hoping for an explanation. “Because to me he just looks like a freaky smurf and I’m pretty sure I’d have made some comment about it when we fought him if he’d looked like that before.”

“The Jotuns are the sworn enemies of our people,” another of the crowd responds. “No wonder he betrayed you, my king. We should not allow the traitor to live! A Frost Giant at the heart of Odin’s household? It’s an abomination! They must have switched him with your brother when he was a baby.”

“Silence!” Thor thunders. “Loki is my brother and a Prince of Asgard and will not be spoken of in this manner. Or did you forget that he sacrificed himself to save you?” He turns back to his friends. “I shall explain later but it seems the glamour our father put on him has faded as his life energy dwindles. His skin will give us frost bite if we touch him. How are we supposed to move him now? It could kill us to try.”

“I’ve got an idea,” Peter says, darting forwards and pulling out a web-shooter; the teenagers quickly wraps webs around the shoulders and upper torso of the motionless man and then gestures towards Thor. “Let’s see if we can get him up, the webs should stop our skin from coming into contact with his; or at least enough to get him up to the medical wing. I’ll help you take him, I’ve got the fastest healing so that way if it does come through I’ll heal up quicker.”

“I thank you, young master, you are a truly kind warrior. I look forwards to making your proper acquaintance,” the god of thunder says.

“Uh, yeah… you too?”

“I’ll come with you,” Bruce says, following behind them. “I might be able to give some suggestions to the doctor and can start getting him set up while our friend here goes to find the doctor.”

“My king, what would you like me to do?” a woman steps forward, addressing Thor.

“Apologies,” Thor pauses and turns to the team. “Friends this is Brunnhilde, a Valkyrie: a warrior maiden of true nobility.”

“Why don’t I take Loki?” she suggests, taking Thor’s brother from him, “and you can see your friends and tend to our people.”

“Thank you,” he says, though he looks after Loki worriedly.

“Ok so why don’t we get all your people settled into rooms?” Tony suggests to Thor. “Wanda, Vis? Can you two get them all settled into rooms on the guest level? Keep them all in the east wing of the compound, it attracts the least amount of attention. We’ll meet you in the common area when you’re done. Have FRIDAY get some food ordered in and delivered to the guest common area and they can eat and drink while we work out what the hell is going on.”

“We’re on it, Tony,” Wanda nods, and then starts to usher the gathered people behind Thor to follow Vision; the group goes fairly easily when Thor reassures them they are safe.

“Come on Point Break,” Tony pats Thor’s shoulder, “let’s get you upstairs and you can tell us what’s going on when the others join us. We’ve got a few things to catch you up on as well.”
It takes a bit of time but eventually they manage to calm Thor down enough for the god to sit on one chair for more than five minutes; Valkyrie was happy to stay at the breakfast bar when she’d spied Tony’s minibar and had been given free access to, having left Loki in more capable hands than hers.

Wanda and Vision are the first two to return, reassuring Thor that his people are settling into their rooms and will soon be eating. Tony’s made sure they can’t access any more of the facility other than the east wing guest quarters until he knows more of what’s going on. Eventually Peter and Bruce enter, the scientist looking especially tired as he rubs his eyes.

‘Dr Higgs is with him now,’ Peter explains, ‘she’s said it will take a bit of time but she’s hopeful he can pull through. She said she assumes she’s not to talk about this unless you tell her otherwise.’

‘Which is exactly why I still pay her,’ Tony sighs in relief. ‘Your brother’s in the best hands we can give him Thor.’

‘Thank you, my friend,’ he says, his head falling to his hands.

‘Thor, what happened?’ Steve asks.

‘How about we start?’ Tony suggests, giving Steve a meaningful look. ‘I think Point Break has had a rough time so why don’t we fill them in on what’s happened here and give them time to get their heads sorted?’

‘Good idea,’ Natasha nods, then proceeds to explain everything that has happened since Bruce and Thor left them; she covers the Accords and then the team getting back together, introducing Peter and explaining about Scott.

‘So there’s an Ant-Man and a Spider-Man?’ Bruce asks, blinking in confusion.

‘Yeah we’re still waiting for the next insect to appear,’ Bucky laughs, ruffling Peter’s hair as the teenager grumbles.

‘I thank you Spiderling for your kindness towards my brother,’ Thor says.

‘It’s not-’

‘Pete? Just leave it for now,’ Tony cuts across him, then turns to Thor. ‘You want to tell us what’s happened to you Point Break? And why you’re sporting the space pirate look?’

Thor nods and, between him, Bruce and Valkyrie, they tell the story of how Thor discovered Loki masquerading as Odin, discovering they had a sister with an attitude problem the size of Everest, finding each other under the Grandmaster’s tournament, defeating Hela and the destruction of Asgard. Then comes the attack when they’d left the ruins of their planet and how their vessel had been attacked by the Mad Titan.

‘His name is Thanos,’ Bruce explains, ‘he’s the one who first sent Loki.’

‘And the Chitauri?’ Natasha asks. Tony tries his hardest to hold in his shiver, but he knows he fails when Steve puts an arm around him and pulls him close.
Bruce nods. ‘Yeah, it seems he was actually controlling Loki with the mind stone, just like
Loki did with Clint and Selvig.’

‘So Loki wasn’t in his right mind when he attacked us?’ Steve asks.

Bruce shakes his head, turning to look at him and then his eyes widen. ‘Uh…is there
something you guys forgot to mention?’

Tony looks at Steve and grins. ‘Oh yeah… surprise?’

‘Surprise??’

‘Oh come on Brucie-Bear, don’t be like that. It’s only just happened to be fair. Apparently
there’s only so long Steve could resist my dashing good looks.’

‘That is definitely not how it happened,’ Steve rolls his eyes. ‘But we’ll tell you more later,
there’s a lot more to the story than us finally getting together.’

‘Emphasis on the finally,’ Natasha adds. ‘But you were saying about the attack?’

‘Right, yeah,’ Bruce still looks thrown but shakes himself back into focus. ‘So Thanos turns
up and demands the Tesseract; we didn’t realise Loki had taken it from the vaults.’

‘He’s never been very good at leaving valuable trinkets behind,’ Thor chuckles hoarsely.
‘The fool.’

‘A fool that saved us,’ Valkyrie points out. ‘Odin knows he’s never going to be my favourite
person, but he did try to kill Thanos to protect you.’

Thor explains how Thanos wipes out over two thirds of the remaining Asgardians and
severely injures Heimdall before Loki steps forwards and offers allegiance, using it as a cover to
attack the titan; how Thanos had stopped him using the stone in his gauntlet and stabbed him,
wanting to keep him alive long enough to find out where the Tesseract was. It had given Heimdall
the opportunity to gather the strength to send all of them, including Loki, to Earth.

‘I’m sure,’ Thor’s voice breaks, ‘that he paid for our lives with his own.’

‘I’m sorry, Thor,’ Steve says; the god simply nods.

‘So you think Thanos is on his way here?’ Tony asks.

‘I’m certain of it. He’s attempting to gain all of the Infinity Stones. If Loki has brought the Tesseract
with him then there are three stones here on Earth: one is with Vision,’ he points to the stone in the
humanoid’s forehead, ‘and one is with a sorcerer Loki and I have met before.’

‘Please don’t tell me it’s Doctor Strange,’ Tony groans.

‘You know of him?’ Thor asks. ‘Is he on the team?’

‘Oh no,’ the inventor laughs. ‘He made it very clear in his responses that he has absolutely no
interest at all in joining our team.’

‘We should still warn him,’ Natasha says, ‘how many stones are there?’

Her question is cut off by Dr Higgs entering the room, her expression is grim but she
manages to give them a tight smile. ‘I’ve done all I can without having any in-depth records of what
to expect from his physiology. His signs are good and I’m hopeful he will make a good recovery; how quickly or how fully still remains to be seen.’

‘I thank you good lady,’ Thor says, the relief evident in his voice and features.

‘You’re more than welcome,’ she turns to Tony. ‘I assume I leave this particular patient out of my reports Mr Stark?’

‘Thank you Dr Higgs,’ he nods, ‘make sure I owe you a holiday somewhere of your choice alright?’

She laughs and waves him off. ‘Just doing my job. I’ll return to my patient for now and assign two of our most discreet nurses to him.’

When she’s gone Steve turns to the group. ‘Before we talk any more about our next steps we need to get more people here. Doctor Strange should be here for one if he’s in danger for holding one of these stones; we should probably get hold of T’Challa as well.’

‘We should contact Clint and Scott,’ Natasha agrees. ‘If Thanos is heading this way we’re going to need all the help we can get.’

‘I shall need to replace Mjolnir,’ Thor adds. ‘Valkyrie and I shall head to Nidavellir when Loki is recovered enough to help us; he’s used to travelling the universe in ways no one else is. There we shall be able to get a weapon that can kill Thanos.’ He turns to Tony and Steve. ‘I must ask a large favour from you my friends.’

‘Ask us anything, Thor,’ Steve assures him.

‘Will you allow my people and Loki to stay here? And protect them until I return?’

Tony feels Steve tense next to him and knows the soldier isn’t happy. ‘Honestly Thor? It’s a lot to ask when we have to put aside the knowledge that this is the guy we first had to fight against as a team. However,’ he holds up a hand to cut off whatever the god is about to say, ‘having seen the way your people reacted to his, what I assume is his, true form? The knowledge that he was under mind control when he attacked us? I’m willing to give him a chance if Steve and Natasha are.’

‘What about the rest of us?’ Wanda asks with her arms crossed.

‘You didn’t know him,’ Tony points out, ‘therefore you shouldn’t have made an opinion on him considering everything you’ve already heard. Bruce and Thor have already made their decisions; the only other members of the original team apart from me are Steve, Natasha and Clint. As Clint isn’t here, Steve and Nat are the ones that need to say. Or are we going to bring up everyone’s actions prior to joining the team?’ he raises a challenging eyebrow.

‘Point taken,’ she says, having the decency to look sheepish.

‘I’m not happy,’ Natasha says, looking at Thor, ‘but seeing as you two have changed your minds I’ll give him a chance. One chance.’

‘Thank you,’ Thor whispers.

‘I’m not happy either,’ Steve says, ‘but since everyone else is willing to give him a chance I will. He makes one move to hurting anyone, Thor, and he’s on his own.’

‘I understand, Steven, thank you,’ he replies.
‘Now that’s settled,’ Tony claps his hands together and stands up, grimacing and swaying slightly as he feels lightheaded. ‘Damn.’

‘Tony,’ Steve’s frustrated tone sounds near his ear and he stands up to steady him. ‘Will you please slow down?’

‘What’s happened to Tony?’ Bruce looks worriedly at his friend.

‘Long story, Brucie. We’ll fill you in over dinner. But in summary,’ he sighs and unbuttons his shirt to show the arc reactor in his chest, ‘some bastard put this back.’

‘What?’ Bruce leaps to his feet and comes over. ‘Tony, but… you can take it out again right?’

‘No, uh,’ he swallows past the lump in his throat, ‘we’ll explain later alright? Steve can you contact T’Challa and get him to head over here? It might be worth him bringing Shuri as well.’

‘Sure,’ Steve still looks worried, but seeing he’s a little steadier on his feet again heads to do as he asks, pressing a kiss to his forehead. ‘Just behave yourself alright?’

‘Yeah like that’s ever going to happen,’ Bucky scoffs, ‘I’ll join you.’

‘Nat can you call Clint and Scott? I’ve got another phone call I need to make.’

‘Sure, Tony,’ she says.

‘Can the rest of you look after our guests? Vis why don’t you show them where their rooms are when they’re ready?’

‘Of course,’ the humanoid responds.

‘I’ll be back soon,’ he promises, and heads towards the elevator and his workshop.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hey everyone! So we’re now officially on the road to Infinity War! Let me know what you think of Bruce and Thor’s return in the comments, I do love to hear from you about where this is going and how you feel about it. Please do also leave comments on where you think changes need to be made, I find them really useful so please don't be worried about leaving them. Thank you so much to everyone who has come so far on this journey with me, I hope you continue to enjoy it as we get closer towards Thanos' arrival. Hope you all have a lovely Easter!

L x

As always here’s your sneak peek (yes I am giggling evilly as I copy it over):
‘We are not having this argument,’ Peter crosses his arms over his chest, ‘and anyway Wanda didn’t exactly run screaming when she saw them either so that just proves my point!’

‘How does that prove your-’
‘When exactly did Wanda see Wade scars?’ Tony’s voice is dangerous as he cuts off
Wade's response and Peter tenses, eyes going wide as he looks to the girl for help.
‘Uh…’ the two of them say in unison.
‘Peter Benjamin Parker-’
‘Uh oh,’ he squeaks as Tony says his full name.
‘-down in my workshop. Now!’
Chapter Summary

Loki is reintroduced to the team, Peter's relationship with Wade comes to light, and the team discover who Tony has been talking to

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘Tony?’

‘What is it Pete?’ he pauses before he enters the elevator.

‘Well…’ he looks down at his feet, then back up and rubs the back of his head, ‘you know you said we’d need all the help we can get?’

‘Why do I get a bad feeling about this?’

‘Well I know Daredevil wouldn’t want to join the team, but I’d still warn him about what was happening,’ the teenager mumbles, ‘but, well… did you want me to see if Deadpool would give us a hand? I mean I know he’s probably not your top choice, but he’s really not all that bad I swear and-’

‘-and I owe him my life,’ Tony cuts off the teen’s rambling; at the shocked expression he sighs. ‘Natasha told me what he did when the team came to get me out, and how he helped you out with finding information. I’d say that means I should give him a chance don’t you?’

‘I mean…it’d be great if you would, but I understand if not. I just- I wanted to offer.’

Tony looks at the teen carefully, arms crossed over his chest. ‘Alright, kid, invite him up. But he’s on the same probation as Loki is alright? I’ll warn the team when I get back from this call.’

Peter’s face lights up and he throws his arms around him. ‘Thank you!’ he says, then runs off, pulling out his phone.

‘Why do I have a bad feeling about this?’ Tony mutters to himself before going to place his own call.

‘I’m still not happy,’ Bucky grumbles for what must be the tenth time since Tony had told everyone Deadpool was heading up.

‘Stop being such a baby,’ Wanda rolls her eyes, ‘I’m sure he’ll be fine. He can’t be that bad.’

‘You’re just siding with Peter,’ Bucky huffs.
‘To be fair, Buck,’ Steve adds from where he and Tony are sat on a sofa, ‘he did help us get Tony out because Peter asked him to. Maybe he has turned over a new leaf.’

‘Wonder why that could be,’ Wanda mutters into his ear.

‘Shut up!’ Peter hisses in reply. ‘Are you trying to get me skinned alive?’

She rolls her eyes. ‘Oh come on! Anyone tries to take him out I’ll stop them. He’ll be fine.’

‘I’m more worried about me if they find out he’s the one I’m dating,’ he responds.

‘What are you two whispering about now?’ Sam asks them; everyone is now back at the facility and they’ve just finished eating their own weight in pizza. Scott and Clint are due to arrive either tomorrow or the day after once they’ve made arrangements with their families; T’Challa should be with them tomorrow and is bringing Okoye, he’s leaving Shuri back in Wakanda as it’s easy enough to contact her should they need anything.

‘What we’re not allowed to have a conversation now?’ she demands.

‘Do you always argue this much?’ a weak voice asks from the doorway. ‘You’re as bad as Thor.’

‘Brother!’ Thor leaps to his feet and hurries to the man’s side; he’s still looking decidedly blue and waves his brother away when he gets close.

‘Careful you great oaf! I can’t seem to get the glamour back on so you’ll have to avoid touching me or you’ll get a nasty case of frostbite.’

‘It’s good to see you awake, brother,’ Thor says with obvious feeling.

‘Yes well I feel like we’ve done “get help” about a hundred times over, so if you don’t mind I’d like to sit down.’

‘Good to see you up and about, Reindeer Games,’ Tony says from the sofa. ‘Can I get you a drink?’

There’s a small smile on Loki’s face. ‘Are you bargaining or threatening, Stark?’

Tony lets out a laugh. ‘Strangely enough, neither this time.’

‘I’ll still pass, thank you all the same.’ Loki collapses into a single chair, obviously so he doesn’t come into skin contact with anyone.

Tony’s response is cut off by FRIDAY. ‘Boss? Deadpool has just arrived.’

The atmosphere in the room gets tense. ‘I’ll go get him,’ Peter says, hopping down from his stool at the breakfast bar.

‘I’ll—’

‘I’ll go with him,’ Tony interrupts Wanda and hauls himself to his feet. ‘Come on, Underoos, I think it’s about time I thanked the man myself for helping get me out.’

‘You’re not going to threaten him are you?’ he asks his mentor as they enter the elevator.

‘Of course I am,’ he winks at Peter, ‘but I’ll go easy on him, promise.’
Strangely enough, that doesn’t make him feel better; as they walk out the front of the facility, Peter catches sight of a suited Wade and waves goodbye to Dopinder as he drives off.

‘You know the taxi driver too?’ Tony raises an eyebrow at him.

Peter shrugs. ‘Dopinder is Pool’s usual ride,’ he tries to explain as innocently as possible. He barely remembers not to run up and give the man a hug, instead keeping pace with his mentor, and giving his partner an encouraging smile. ‘Hey Pool.’

‘Spidey,’ the man’s voice is tense. ‘You needed something?’

‘We’ve got big trouble heading our way,’ Tony explains before he can get a word in, ‘of the universe ending kind by the sounds of it. Peter here seems to think you may be of some help; and considering you helped save my life, I might be inclined to agree if you manage to behave yourself.’

‘Yeah I’m not great at behaving,’ Wade says, ‘sorry to disappoint so early.’

‘I don’t behave that often,’ Tony retorts, ‘but I can manage it enough to get along with everyone. You should try it some time.’

‘If you guys need help,’ he looks between them, ‘and it helps keep Spidey safe I’m in.’

Peter sees Tony give the man one of his calculating looks at the choice of words, but he doesn’t say anything; instead he gestures for the man to follow them into the facility. ‘Come on then let’s get this over with. Something tells me it ain’t going to be pretty.’

‘Is he talking about the situation or my face?’ Wade asks Peter.

‘You’re such an idiot,’ he huffs in response and follows his mentor inside, ignoring Wade’s protests as he does.

They enter the common area to a fierce debate going on.

‘Thor I told you to leave me alone,’ Loki snaps, trying to get his brother to move without touching him and injuring him.

‘I just want to help, if you would just let me-’

‘Thor leave him alone, you’re not going to be helping his recovery if you’re winding him up,’ Tony sighs, rubbing his temples.

‘He won’t accept help,’ Thor grumbles, but still moves away from his brother.

‘When I stop looking like a nightmare then I will let you touch me. I’m saving you from injury you fool!’

‘You look more like an ice sculpture than a walking nightmare,’ Peter says, walking closer to the god. ‘Looks kind of cool if you ask me.’

Loki blinks up at him. ‘Did- did I just hear him correctly?’
‘I think you look like a nightmare if it’s any consolation,’ Bucky says from his spot on a sofa.

‘And you wonder why we don’t want you making us feel better,’ Peter rolls his eyes at the dark haired man. ‘Honestly I don’t see what your issue is.’

‘I am the monster that we used to get told stories of as children,’ the red eyes are challenging as they look back at him, ‘so forgive me for not believing you.’

‘Wow I got told stories about the Boogeyman and werewolves. I think I prefer your monsters, they look so much cooler. Can you actually create ice if you’re a Frost Giant?’

‘Wha- I think so? I’ve never held this form for long so I’m unsure how to do so, but I know Jotuns can usually create ice weapons as an extension of their limbs.’

‘We so need to get you to do that when you’re better. That would be so cool!’

‘Is- he- I-’ Loki seems completely unsure how to take his enthusiasm.

There’s a laugh from behind him. ‘Yeah I reacted much the same way when he first saw my face; I swear this guy has no sense of what is normal.’

‘Oh come on!’ Peter feels the need to defend himself. ‘The scars are really not as bad as you make out.’

‘Yes they are.’

‘No they’re not.’

‘Yes, they really are.’

‘We are not having this argument,’ he crosses his arms over his chest, ‘and anyway Wanda didn’t exactly run screaming when she saw them either so that just proves my point!’

‘How does that prove your-’

‘When exactly did Wanda see Wade scars?’ Tony’s voice is dangerous and Peter tenses, eyes going wide as he looks to the girl for help.

‘Uh…’ the two of them say in unison.

‘Peter Benjamin Parker-’

‘Uh oh,’ he squeaks as Tony says his full name.

‘-down in my workshop. Now!’

‘Uh…Wanda can you-?’

Wanda smiles at him encouragingly. ‘Sure.’ She turns to Wade. ‘Come sit next to me, Wade. I’ll make sure the team leave you alone.’

‘Why would we not leave him alone?’ Steve asks.

‘Are you telling me you’re dating Deadpool?’ Bucky shouts.

‘No one,’ Tony points a finger at them, ‘is to jump to any conclusions or do anything until
we get back. Understood?’

‘I’ll keep them in line, honey,’ Steve assures him, ‘and Wanda will make sure Deadpool is still in one piece.’

‘Well this could have gone better,’ Peter mumbles to himself as he follows Tony to the elevator, his last sight of the common area is of Wade hurrying to hide behind Wanda, and the girl threatening Bucky with her glowing fingers as he starts stalking towards them. At least he knows Wanda will keep Wade safe, and Vision will side with her.

He’s more worried about himself right now.

‘In my defence,’ he starts as soon as they enter the workshop, ‘I was going to tell you this afternoon and then we kind of had other worldly visitors ruin the moment.’

At Tony’s look he snaps his mouth shut. ‘Boss? Agent Romanov has asked you don’t start the grilling until she arrives.’

‘Of course,’ Tony grumbles, then looks back at Peter. ‘Alright kid you have until Natasha arrives to work out exactly how you’re going to explain this.’

‘Err...right.’ How was he going to explain this?

‘So considering there’s no explosions I take it things are going well so far?’ the assassin asks as she enters the workshop.

‘He hasn’t started speaking yet so all in all not too bad,’ Tony responds, arms crossed over his arms. ‘Alright, Peter, you have two minutes. I suggest you talk fast.’

‘So I honestly didn’t ever intend to start dating a mercenary I swear, but it just sort of-well just happened. I mean we were just hanging out more after patrols and became friends and then, I guess something kind of changed just before Hammer attacked the school, and then we started dating just before the team got you out. And to be fair you were all for approving of him when you heard about the rules he’d put in place because I’m, you know, younger than him,’ at Tony’s expression he quickly adds, ‘and I’m taking that back. Taken back.

‘I don’t know why I like him,’ he admits, looking down at the ground and leaning back against one of the workbenches. ‘But it just feels- I guess inevitable? He’s always there in patrols and he has my back. There’s so many times he’s turned up when I’ve been getting into a bad situation and he’s got me out of it without a second thought; without me even asking. He looks after me without making me feel like I’m useless- he’s got my back. And he’s one of the few people I don’t have to worry about getting wrapped up in something from Spider-Man’s life and being in danger. Like I said: he’s got my back and I’ve got his. He can be there for me as Spider-Man and as Peter Parker, and I don’t have to look after him, I’ve just got to support him the same way he does me.

‘He’s one of my best friends,’ he admits, voice quiet, ‘and he makes me laugh. I just- I can’t imagine him not being there anymore. And I don’t agree with his job, it’s one of the few things we actually properly disagree on, but he is making an effort to change. I asked Weasel for some of his recent targets. All the ones he’s killed recently are gang members, firearms smugglers, drug dealers, leaders of sexual exploitation rings... he’s only going after bad people. Don’t get me wrong I’d still
prefer he didn’t kill at all, but I know it’s what he does. And when we first talked about actually
dating he put in all these rules because I’m, you know, younger than him, and he’s not moving on
them. I tried but he’s more stubborn than any of you.’ He sighs and shrugs. ‘So, yeah.’

‘Did you actually breathe in any of that?’ Tony asks.

‘That’s what you focus on?’ he can hear the eye roll in Natasha’s voice but doesn’t dare look
up at either of them yet.

‘What do you think?’ the inventor asks.

‘I think you already know what I think,’ is the reply. Oh so helpful, Peter thinks, hugging
himself tighter. ‘I imagine it’s the same as you,’ she concludes.

‘Well he has saved Peter’s life in the past, and he did come and help when Hammer tried to
take him at the school.’ Peter feels his breath catch at the inventor’s words.

‘And we owe him for helping get you out and stopping Hammer from activating that
detonator,’ Natasha continues, and Peter dares to look up at them.

‘It’d be a bit wrong of us to give one murdering psycho a second chance and not another,’
Tony shrugs.

‘Are we talking about Loki or someone else?’

‘I think it’s several people at this stage,’ Tony huffs a laugh; then he comes over to stand in
front of Peter, taking in a deep breath and placing his hands on Peter’s upper arms, looking him
straight in the eye. ‘I’m not going to lie and say I’m happy about this, or that I’m going to accept it
overnight. But we owe him for all our lives, and for yours a couple of times over, and we’re giving
Loki a chance: so we’ll give him the same. I guess it’s the least we can do.’

‘Thank you,’ Peter smiles up at Tony. He’s startled to see tears begin to form in the man’s
eyes.

‘Pete,’ he sighs and then reaches up to brush a strand of hair off his forehead, ‘you’re the
closest thing I’m ever going to get to a son. Ever since what happened with the Vulture… I’ve been
trying not to baby you and let you prove to yourself, and everyone else, just how much you’re
able of. But after seeing that building site he dropped on you-’ he stops and clears his throat
before continuing, ‘it takes everything in me not to keep you locked up somewhere safe. Honestly?
A mercenary for a boyfriend is not helping that urge.’

‘Better than a girl whose dad tries to steal your stuff though right?’ he asks, voice thick as he
holds back the wave of emotions after Tony’s confession.

Tony pulls him in for a hug, which he easily returns, hiding the tears that are leaking from his
eyes in the material of the man’s shirt. ‘Not sure just yet if I’m honest.’

‘You’re the best, Tony.’

The three of them return to the common area to a chorus of shouts. Tony looks at Steve and takes
pity on his boyfriend, who looks like he’s caught in the middle of World War Three and isn’t sure which side he should be on. Sam looks like he’s trying to keep the peace with Steve, and the two are stood in the middle of the room; Wanda’s in front of Wade on one side, hands glowing threateningly, with Vision halfway between her and the two soldiers. Opposite them are Bucky and Rhodes, looking like they want to tear someone apart; Loki is still on the sofa where they left him, a faintly amused smile on his face, Thor hovering behind him looking between the two sides and obviously unsure what to do or who to support. Valkyrie is sat at the bar with a bored expression on her face, a half empty bottle of whiskey dangling from her fingers, and a stressed looking Bruce sat next to her.

‘Stop jumping to conclusions and give Peter a chance to tell his side of the story,’ Wanda demands, ‘or I’ll knock both of you out’

‘Oh come on this is clearly a case of him taking advantage of the kid’s kindness,’ Rhodes argues.

‘All of you stop it!’ Steve snaps. ‘We’re willing to give Loki a chance but not Deadpool? Do you realise how wrong that is?’

‘Oh and I suppose you’re ecstatic over this situation,’ Bucky drawls, ‘come on, Stevie, don’t even try to convince me you’re in any way happy about this.’

‘I’m not,’ Steve admits, ‘but it’s not my choice, nor is it yours, who Peter decides to spend his time with.’

‘I will point out,’ Loki says from his spot on the sofa, ‘that you are wasting time arguing about the Spiderling’s affections when the being capable of destroying half of the universe is on his way here.’

‘No one asked for your input.’

‘You will not-’ Thor looks ready to knock Bucky out for snapping at his brother.

‘Look I’m just going to go while I still have all my limbs intact,’ Deadpool says, backing towards the door.

‘Oh shut it all of you!’ Tony shouts, immediately regretting it as he struggles for breath; Peter is supporting him within a heartbeat and helps the inventor to a seat. ‘Wade you stay where you are.’

‘What-’

‘Rhodey shut it,’ Tony snaps.

‘Tony?’ he looks up at Steve as he kneels in front of him, worriedly taking in his quick gasps as he fights for air.

‘I’ll be alright,’ he promises the blond, squeezing his hand, ‘just give me a minute.’

‘Tony,’ Rhodes’ voice is a little calmer now, ‘please don’t tell me you support this-’

‘Rhodey, please,’ he looks at his friend, ‘I don’t have the breath to argue. So you’re all going to shut up and listen for once. Alright?’ He waits for everyone to nod, and nods in answer to Peter’s quiet request to go and stand with Wade, Steve taking his vacated seat; when he’s caught his breath again he starts speaking, looking around the assembled group. ‘Look,’ Tony sighs, ‘Loki’s right. Whether we want to be working with everyone or not, we’ve not got much of a choice; at the end of the day we’ve got the biggest bad we’ve ever faced on his way here and we’ve got to find a way to
work together or half the universe is going to suffer. If saving the universe means learning to work with former enemies then fine I’ll do it. Hell if I thought it’d make a difference I’d get Hammer out of his cell and up here.’

‘Tony you can’t mean that,’ Rhodes protests.

‘Trust me Rhodey,’ Tony looks his friend in the eye, ‘I really, really do. I see that wormhole almost every night, I see what was coming for us through that thing almost every night. It’s one of the reasons I don’t sleep well,’ he notices Loki grimace and look down, ‘and the one who made it all happen is finally ready to bring his big guns. This guy has been in my head for ten years; I want him gone and I want us all to still be around to celebrate when he is.’

‘We’re just going to ignore the fact that our youngest team member, who has only just turned seventeen, is going out with a thirty year old mercenary?’ Rhodes demands.

‘No, we’re not,’ Natasha puts a hand on Tony’s shoulder, ‘but neither is it for us to say who he can and cannot see; none of us are his legal guardian. Wade is on probation, the same as Loki: both of them need to be on their best behaviour.’

‘I’m screwed,’ Wade moans, ‘I’m not going to be able to behave myself that long.’

‘Could have fooled me Mr I’m-making-up-loads-of-rules-even-though-I-usually-ignore-them,’ Peter grumbles.

‘As Peter has not so eloquently put,’ Natasha smirks at the teen, ‘Wade has already put in rules to their relationship because he’s underage. You’ll probably be surprised at how responsible he’s being about the whole thing.’

‘Responsible and Wade in the same sentence? Now I’ve definitely heard everything,’ Peter says.

‘We need to work on your charming personality, Spidey.’

‘Well I don’t think there’s anything wrong with it,’ Wanda crosses her arms and leans against the wall next to the couple, ‘and if we’re so worried about age gaps how come no one’s saying anything about Steve being about sixty years older than Tony?’ Loki just about manages to stifle a laugh.

‘She’s got a point,’ Natasha says, looking down at the two of them.

‘Can we please get back to the topic of impending doom?’ Tony asks, then sighs. ‘There’s something else I need to tell you about…’

‘Why do I have a bad feeling?’ Rhodes asks.

‘Everything with Ross has just thrown up the fact that we can’t keep doing this by ourselves anymore,’ Tony says, looking down at his hands. ‘We should have seen it coming, but none of us picked up even a whisper of it. We’ve been too busy focussing on each other that we’ve not been looking at threats from outside, or at least not seeing them for what they are. We need someone who sees the things we don’t; someone who’s better at knowing things than we are.’

‘Well I know one thing, Stark,’ a voice says from behind him, ‘I’m still good enough to get past your security.’

‘Only because I let you,’ he responds, looking over his shoulder at the newcomer, ‘and as
always you have impeccable timing. You’ll have to tell me how you do it, I think I need to be more dramatic.’

‘That, Tony,’ Nick Fury says, stepping into the room, black coat fanning out behind him, ‘is one thing you definitely do not need to be.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone! There's a slightly earlier update this week as EndGame is officially out in the UK! I'm sure anyone who has already seen it is going to need some emotional support, and those of us still to see it will need it in the future. There will be another update Friday/Saturday depending on when I get chance to update, so a double update spread out a bit more through the week.

Thank you to everyone who has left a comment. I do have an announcement regarding comments over the next few weeks: I'm putting a ban on any mention of what is involved in End Game in comments for the next few weeks until people have had a chance to see the film. Please don't take this as I don't appreciate your comments at all, I'm just very conscious that I don't want any spoilers creeping into the comments, whether I've seen the film or not there's a big likelihood that not all the readers have yet and I don't want anyone to have anything spoiled for them. I know I'd be gutted. If you do leave a comment that has something I would consider a spoiler in it I will delete it - fair warning! If you feel the urge to write something relating to End Game in a comment write: 'I am Groot!' Those of us who have seen it will probably be able to guess what you've said and it won't spoil it for anyone else.

So now that's over: thank you for everyone who is still reading and commenting. Please do let me know what you think of this chapter. No one guessed who the old man was Tony was talking to! I feel slightly proud of this.

I hope you all enjoy this chapter and the one I'll be posting in a day or two. And to everyone who is watching End Game: stay strong! We'll get through this together! (Though I've been psyching myself up for two weeks to watch it and I'm in no way prepared!)

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:
‘Did he just call me a princess?’ Loki asks from the sofa. Thor laughs behind him.
‘Indeed he did, brother. I think it suits you.’
‘Of course,’ Loki rolls his eyes, ‘remind me when my powers return to turn you into a frog again.’
‘Wait you can do that?’ Peter asks, eyes wide. ‘Can you teach me how to do it?’
‘No!’ Tony, Bucky, Natasha and Wade all chorus at the same time. Peter just pouts and crosses his arms.
Gathering Allies

Chapter Summary

Tony and Nick begin to explain some of the plan they’ve been working on, and more allies continue to arrive and provide their input. The preparations to face Thanos begin.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘Tony what the hell is going on?’ Steve frowns, looking between him and Nick.

He simply sighs as Nick moves further into the room. ‘I’m sorry I didn’t tell any of you this was coming, but if Ross caught wind of it I wanted you to all have deniability.’

‘You seem to have been doing a lot of that recently,’ Natasha raises an eyebrow at him, ‘keeping stuff to yourself until a certain point so we can deny all knowledge and stay out of prison.’

‘First with planning Bucky’s escape should we not break the brainwashing,’ Wanda adds, ‘all the way through to this. You’re forming bad habits, Tony.’

‘In his defence,’ Nick says, taking a seat at one of the stools, ‘I agreed it was for the best. Meant we could continue laying some groundwork without Ross picking up on it.’

‘Groundwork for what?’ Sam asks.

‘You were right, Steve,’ Tony says quietly, looking at his partner and seeing the blue eyes cloud in confusion. ‘We never should have signed the Accords, we never should have let ourselves be controlled by the government. I should have seen this coming. I mean, damn it, I had the foresight to keep the Iron Man suit out of their hands.’

‘No you just didn’t want them to play with your toys,’ Rhodes interrupts with an eye roll.

‘-but I didn’t think to keep the team out of them. Now we’ve got proof Ross is connected to HYDRA, and who knows how many of the others on the Council as well. I’m sorry,’ he ignores Rhodes’ comment. ‘I’m sorry to all of you that I didn’t see this as a possibility and try and stop it then.’

‘Tony-’

‘Let him finish, Cap,’ Nick says softly.

‘But we couldn’t carry on the way we were either; we weren’t in control of what was happening, we weren’t in control of the damage we were causing. We were at our best place when we had SHIELD at our back, but even that wasn’t safe from corruption.’

‘Hence why he got in touch with me,’ Nick continues, ‘and we started putting our heads together to try and find a better solution.’

‘Ross is calling for enhanced individuals to be registered,’ Tony picks up again, ‘it’s only a
matter of time before we get restricted on our movements as well. With his links to HYDRA, I wouldn’t be surprised if it doesn’t take long for enhanced individuals to be sent to special camps for containment. All of this, because of the Accords.’

‘Tony,’ Nick’s voice is firm, ‘the Accords needed to happen.’

‘I agree,’ an accented voice says from the doorway.

‘T’Challa,’ Steve smiles at the newcomer. ‘General Okoye. You got here faster than we thought.’

‘You should never underestimate Wakandan technology,’ the king chuckles as he and his guard enter the common area. ‘But what Colonel Fury says is correct. The Accords needed to happen in order for faith to be restored in the Avengers, and all the work that Tony and the rest of you have done in restoring the team has been integral to that as well. Combine this with the evidence we can collect against Ross and his actions, and we should have a good case to present a new suggestion to the world.’

‘A new suggestion?’ Sam looks between him, T’Challa and Nick. ‘What new suggestion?’

‘We like to call it the Wakandan Accords,’ Nick says with a smile. ‘It’s a similar principle to the Sokovian Accords, but places the team outside of the control of the countries of the world and instead under the leadership of a trio of individuals; certain restrictions will be put in place when it comes to performing missions of course, but it gives the team more freedom than it has now to answer threats.’

‘And more importantly does not leave the team open to abuse from any one or more particular governments,’ T’Challa adds. ‘I will be presenting it to the UN, as a leader of a country who is growing concerned at the amount of control the US government is trying to exert over the team. How long before they start attempting to use the Avengers to further their own interests rather than the interests of the world?’

‘If we time it right with the revelation of Ross’ involvement with HYDRA and Tony’s capture, not to mention if and when we find evidence on other members of the Council, we shouldn’t have too much issue pushing it forwards,’ Nick says.

‘It also means,’ Tony says, looking at Thor and Loki, ‘we’re better able to provide protection and asylum to any Asgardians who need it, rather than having to find ways to hide you away. We’ll also be better able to appoint our own staff, and hopefully be less likely to have moles in our midst. All of this,’ he looks at the rest of the team, ‘will only happen if everyone agrees to it, and only if everyone agrees. One person isn’t happy? We don’t do it.’

‘Why Nick?’ Bruce asks. ‘No offense.’

‘None taken,’ the man responds.

‘Because Nick has done this before, and he’s been better at this than all of us,’ Tony responds.

‘HYDRA was still able to infiltrate SHIELD,’ Sam points out.

‘HYDRA was also able to kidnap me from our base,’ he fires back, ‘and we had our own moles here amongst the staff. We’re never going to be certain we’ll keep them away forever, and there will always be the potential for them to worm their way in; but we’ve all learned from the past and we can put safeguards in to prevent a full take over like before.’
‘Who would the three leaders be?’ Bruce asks.

‘Nick would be one,’ he replies, ‘he’s got the most experience building and maintaining an information network, plus he’s dealt with various councils and has experience leading the team before. Steve would be another.’

‘Me?’ Steve asks.

‘Well if the team agreed,’ he says, ‘but you’re our leader in the field anyway and one of the best tacticians alive so it’d be stupid not to. The leadership team is all to be voted by the team, and when or if one steps down then the team will vote to replace them.’

‘I suggested Tony be the third,’ Nick says, ‘but he was adamant the team voted and suggested T’Challa as an alternative.’

‘We’ve lost enough choices recently,’ he explains, ‘the least we can do is choose who leads us. But anyway,’ he waves his hand, ‘we’ve got a couple of days to think about it. Hopefully this’ll make other people more willing to help, even if they don’t officially join the team, when shit hits the fan.’

‘People like me you mean?’ Wade pipes up, from where he’s been disturbingly quiet flanked by Peter and Wanda.

‘And Scott,’ Tony nods, ‘and Clint who officially is retired; and T’Challa who isn’t officially a member of the team.’

‘Wakanda would certainly be more willing, and more able, to help and support the team under the new conditions,’ T’Challa agrees. ‘However with my role as king of Wakanda I do not think it would be a good idea for me to be one of the nominated leaders as there could be a conflict of interests.’

‘You’re suggesting we break with the Accords?’ Wanda’s voice sounds a little scared.

‘I’m suggesting we agree to a better arrangement,’ Tony says.

‘And break with all world governments,’ Natasha looks warily between them all. ‘It could undo everything we’ve worked for the past year and a half. Everything you’ve worked to achieve Tony.’

He sighs and puts his head in his hands. ‘Yeah I know,’ he nods, ‘but I’d rather go back to square one and start from scratch than end up as Ross’ pawn, or worse HYDRA’s.’

‘We should look at the new agreement,’ Sam suggests, ‘take a day or two to look over them and come up with any questions, then we can decide if we’re going to go ahead. It’s not exactly going to be an easy road.’

‘That’s true,’ Nick says, ‘and the main focus for now should be Thanos. You read through and see if you’re happy with everything suggested, let me and T’Challa know if there’s anything you think should be changed or if you have any questions. Then let me worry about getting everything rolling.’

‘There’s already a couple of lawyers at Stark Industries looking into things,’ Tony tells him.

‘We may not be able to use them, Tony,’ Nick warns him, ‘it’ll be the first place Ross would look for anything going on. No matter how much you trust them something could still get leaked.’
‘I know someone you could use,’ Peter pipes up.

‘You what?’ Natasha blinks at him.

‘The law firm from the gala,’ he explains, ‘Nelson and Murdock. They might help you out, and no one would expect you to use a small law firm like that; if they had the odd bit of support from the law team at Stark Industries, then it could be a good option.’

‘I’ll visit them when we’ve agreed on things,’ Nick nods, fixing the teen with one of his infamous one-eyed stares. ‘And I think I might know anyway, but who are you young man?’

‘I’m Peter,’ he says, voice a little shaky under Nick Fury’s stare. ‘Peter Parker.’

‘And what other name do you go by?’

‘I’m…I’m Spider-Man.’

‘Hmm… I thought so. And we’ve also got Wade Wilson.’

‘Yeah… hi Fury. Thought I’d manage to dodge One-Eyed Willy but looks like you caught up with me,’ Deadpool gives a wave.

‘You going to take that ridiculous mask off or am I going to have to do it for you?’ the man demands.

Deadpool freezes. ‘Uh, you’d really rather it stayed covering my face.’

‘I know you’re covered in scars, Wade,’ Nick says, eye unwavering in its stare, ‘I also know how and why you got them. Ain’t no point in trying to hide them for long, you’re not going to make friends by hiding away.’

He notices Peter take hold of one of the merc’s hands and give it a squeeze. ‘It’s really not as bad as you make it out to be, Wade,’ he says quietly.

‘He’s right,’ Wanda says from his other side. ‘It’s really not. I mean after the initial surprise of course.’

Deadpool looks between the two of them, then back at Nick, and finally at Tony; Tony gives him a small nod and the man sighs. ‘Alright, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.’ He pulls the mask off and Tony has to admit he has never seen anything quite so disturbing before in his life. The scars are horrifying, but mainly from the fact that there are so many and they appear to be irritated from the mask rather than because they look disgusting; Wade turns uncertain brown eyes towards him and he tries to cover his shock.

‘Fuck that’s bad,’ Bucky says.

‘Way to be supportive,’ Wanda glares at him.

Beside her Deadpool laughs. ‘Actually I’m much more used to that reaction. Thanks Snowflake that actually makes me feel better.’

‘What did you just call me?’ Bucky demands.

‘Aww I like it!’ Tony laughs. ‘That’s almost better than Elsa.’

‘I would have thought Loki was Elsa?’ Wade asks.
'Yeah well I didn’t know about Loki being an ice princess before I gave that name to Bucky, so unfortunately Bucky is Elsa.'

‘Did he just call me a princess?’ Loki asks from the sofa. Thor laughs behind him.

‘Indeed he did, brother. I think it suits you.’

‘Of course,’ Loki rolls his eyes, ‘remind me when my powers return to turn you into a frog again.’

‘Wait you can do that?’ Peter asks, eyes wide. ‘Can you teach me how to do it?’

‘No!’ Tony, Bucky, Natasha and Wade all chorus at the same time. Peter just pouts and crosses his arms.

‘There’s been a lot to process for all of us,’ Steve cuts in before another argument can start, ‘and we should wait for Clint and Scott to arrive before we try making too many plans for dealing with Thanos. Not to mention Loki is still recovering and T’Challa and Okoye have only just arrived. We should leave things here for tonight, take some time to process, and then meet tomorrow better prepared to tackle everything.’

‘A sensible suggestion,’ Loki says from his seat, ‘I for one am ready to sleep for a full day; but I suspect I shall not be allowed to.’

‘Do you need help to stand brother?’

‘If you touch me you will get frostbite, Thor,’ the dark blue skinned man sighs, ‘so whether you wish to help me or not, I will need to stand on my own.’

‘But-’

‘Oh stop being such a drama queen,’ Wade huffs, walking over to stand in front of Loki and offering his arms, ‘just grab on.’

‘Did you not hear me you fool?’

Wade scoffs. ‘I’ve been eaten by a fucking polar bear, I think I can handle frost bite.’

‘When did you get eaten by a polar bear?’ Peter frowns.

‘Long story, Baby Boy,’ is the quick response, ‘I’ll tell you some other time. Now come on Frosty the Snowman, let’s get you on your feet, I haven’t got all day.’ Loki still looks wary so Wade huffs again. ‘Oh for fuck’s sake.’ He grabs hold of the man’s arms and helps him to stand. ‘There. That wasn’t too difficult was it?’

‘Your arms,’ Loki pulls away from the man as soon as he is standing.

Wade just shrugs and pulls the sleeve of his suit up, revealing the already healing marks. ‘The only plus side to cancer is when you get healing abilities trying to get rid of it.’

Any further conversation is interrupted by a strange fizzing sound, and orange light appears in the room, steadily growing larger into a circle.

‘Not him again,’ Loki groans.

‘Not who?’ Rhodes asks. The question is answered when a dark haired man steps through
the circle of orange light, wearing what looks like blue clothes better suited to a fantasy novel and a red cape that almost has a life of its own.

‘Who the hell are you and what are you doing in our home?’ Tony demands.

‘Tony Stark? My name is Doctor Stephen Strange, I’m the Master of the New York Sanctum and I’d like to know why you have allowed a threat to the world into your home,’ the man responds.

‘Who the hell are you to tell us who we can and cannot invite into our home?’ Tony counters.

‘I keep a watch list of individuals and beings from other realms that may be a threat to this world, as a master of the mystic arts it is my duty to see that they are removed from this world as soon as possible. Loki happens to be on that list and I have already asked Thor to remove him on a previous occasion, I did not think they would be coming back.’

‘We had little choice,’ Thor says, crossing his arms, ‘Asgard was destroyed and as we were making our way here to seek sanctuary we were attacked by Thanos. He is now on his way here.’

‘Who?’ the man frowns in confusion.

‘Seriously?’ Wade says. ‘You just said you kept a list of anyone who is a threat to this world and you don’t fucking know who Thanos is?’

Strange turns to look back at the glowing circle, another man is stood there, face unreadable. ‘In my defence I inherited the list from others.’

‘You mean you haven’t been looking for other potential threats, Stephen?’ the man asks.

‘Strangely enough, Wong,’ the doctor retorts, ‘I’ve been too busy trying to rebuild the mess from Kaecilius; a mess, which I might need to remind you, that was already started before I joined Kamar-Taj. Oh yes and someone keeps stealing my money to buy themselves sandwiches because they never have their own. That does have a tendency to slow repairs.’

‘You are a master of the mystic arts, there are other ways to repair things,’ the man counters.

‘I thought you didn’t approve of using the Time Stone on such matters? Considering you nearly took my head off when I experimented on an apple.’

‘You have the Time Stone?’ Vision interrupts.

‘Yes,’ Strange looks carefully between them all.

‘Thanos is after the Infinity Stones,’ Bruce explains, ‘currently we have the three stones on Earth all in this room at once. At least,’ he looks to Loki, ‘I assume we do?’

‘Why Doctor Banner, it’s as if you don’t trust me,’ Loki smirks, making the Tesseract materialise out of thin air.

‘With good reason,’ Rhodes mutters.

‘Thanos is intending to wipe out half the life in the universe,’ Bruce continues, ‘he’s already got the Power stone, and according to Thor he’ll be going for the Reality stone next.’

‘The Soul Stone has been lost for eons,’ Thor explains, ‘so that at least is safe from him. We have the other three here and we need to make sure he does not get them.’
‘Oh brother you really are a fool at times,’ Loki sighs.

‘What do you mean?’ Strange asks, eyeing the frost giant in distrust.

‘Why do you think he’s moving now? He’s known the Mind and Time Stones have been on Earth for years, not to mention that we’ve had the Tesseract on Asgard; he’s obviously known the location of the Reality Stone for a while since it was left with the Collector, and it wasn’t exactly a secret where the Power Stone was after the tale of Ronan’s defeat swept the galaxy. If he wasn’t interested in obtaining all of them he would have been picking them up one by one as he learned of their locations.’

‘Which means he has to have discovered where the Soul Stone is,’ Strange concludes.

‘That’s why he’s collecting them now; and he appears to have a gauntlet that is able to contain their power,’ Loki finishes.

‘Wong care to explain why this particular individual never made the list?’ Strange rolls his eyes.

‘Why are you blaming me?’

‘Look,’ Steve sighs, rubbing his temples, ‘why don’t you agree to let us watch over Loki for tonight? He nearly died from wounds Thanos inflicted on him earlier today, he isn’t exactly in much shape to be trying to bust out of a bouncy castle, let alone a hospital room; the guy can barely stand by himself. Come back tomorrow around lunch time when the rest of our team should be here and we can all sit down like grown-ups and discuss the best course of action. Agreed?’

Strange and Wong exchange a look, and Wong nods. ‘Alright,’ Strange says, ‘we’ll be here tomorrow at noon. In the meantime we shall see what information the Sanctum and Kamar-Taj possesses on the Infinity Stones.’

‘Well that was weird,’ Tony says as the two wizards disappear into the portal and it closes behind them. ‘He’s not going to keep opening portals in here is he? I’m not sure I can take it.’

‘I suggest we all get some rest,’ T’Challa says, ‘where would be the best place for the General and I to stay?’

‘I’ll show you to your rooms,’ Natasha says. ‘Pete you alright to show Wade to his?’

‘Oh no,’ Bucky says before Peter can even open his mouth. ‘I’ll show him to his room.’

‘I’ll show him,’ Wanda glares at the soldier, ‘because that way he might make it in one piece.’

‘Why does nobody trust me?’ Bucky asks.

‘You threatened to maim high schoolers,’ Tony points out, ‘I dread to think what you’d do to a mercenary given half the chance.’

‘Fine, Wanda and Peter can show Wade to his room,’ Natasha rolls her eyes, ‘Bucky you show Nick to his. No arguments.’
Tony can feel the headache pressing against the back of his eyes by the time he finally makes it to his room and has to resist the urge to fall face first onto his bed, knowing it would only make his chest hurt. Instead he settles for sitting down and then laying on his side, staring out of his window at the night sky and wondering if it could give him any answers.

Just how long did they have until Thanos arrived? Thor and Valkyrie had thought perhaps two weeks, maybe longer if they were lucky.

A knock at his door pulls him from his thoughts. ‘Come in,’ he calls, rolling onto his back so he can see the door without having to get up.

‘Hey honey,’ Steve says, closing the door softly behind him.

‘You alright?’ Tony sits up, worried.

‘I’m fine, you lie down you look like you’re ready to pass out,’ he comes to sit on the bed. ‘I just came to ask you something.’

‘And that would be?’

Steve blushed and he can’t help but feel intrigued. ‘Could I- I mean, would you mind if I stayed here?’

‘In my room?’ Tony clarifies. ‘Tonight? I thought you didn’t want to move too fast,’ he teases the blond.

‘Not just tonight,’ he mumbles, just loud enough to hear, and Tony swears his heart skips a beat.

‘Steve you’re going to have to spell it out for me so I don’t misunderstand something here. Because it sounds like you’re asking to move into my room.’

‘I am,’ the blue eyes turn to face him now, face determined. ‘This- learning Thanos is coming and we’re facing the biggest threat we’ve ever faced, it’s made me think I should be taking all the opportunities I can to be with you, Tony. I don’t care if we don’t do more than sleep in the same bed,’ and there’s that beautiful blush again, ‘I just know I’ll be happier waking up next to you than I will be a couple of rooms away.’

‘I seriously thought this was going to take me months of persuasion to get you agree. If I knew the threat of alien invasion would do it I would have organised one ages ago. Maybe we wouldn’t have danced around each other so long.’

Steve just shakes his head with a small smile. ‘So is that a yes?’

Tony just grins and pulls him in for a kiss. ‘That’s a “what took you so long?” but if you want it be “yes” instead then it can be a yes.’

Steve laughs and kisses him, running a hand down Tony’s side. ‘You are impossible at times, you know that?’

‘It keep things entertaining so I don’t know why you complain.’

Chapter End Notes
A/N: Hey everyone, here's your promised second update of the week. I've now seen End Game...and I'm still emotional. To everyone who has yet to see it: it is incredible and well worth the wait and I hope you enjoy it. To everyone who has seen it: my heart goes out to you.

I'm going to keep the ban on any kind of spoilers in the comments until I've finished posting this story. You can start the discussion in the sequels I promise.

Thank you to those of you who have already commented I hope you enjoy this chapter as well and I will get around to replying to your comments soon I promise. Do let me know what you think about where this story is heading! Do you think they can pull it all off? I'll give you a clue: not everything will be resolved by the end of this story, this is going to take some of the series to get through.

Thank you to everyone who is sticking with this story, and welcome to any new readers! I still feel very honoured when I get a comment from someone who has just found the story and caught up with all the chapters. That's a proper slog!

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

‘So what I really want to know,’ Loki hears Bucky say as he enters the common area, ‘is since when are you gay? I thought you took some girl to Homecoming?’

‘Is the child’s relationship still the main topic of conversation?’ he rolls his eyes as he heads towards the fridge.

‘None of your business,’ Bucky snaps at him, glaring to drive his point home. Loki simply sighs and takes out the carton of orange juice, raising an eyebrow in challenge.

‘I would have thought the imminent invasion was more pressing than the boy’s sexual preferences.’
A Moment of Calm

Chapter Summary

There's a couple of hours of calm before the team have to start their planning. Steve and Tony discuss everything that's happened since their friends returned; Loki and Thor clear the air a bit; and Bucky is still more interested in Peter's choice of boyfriend than the world ending.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tony feels warm. As his brain slowly regains normal function he also realises something else: he feels rested. Blinking he lets his eyes adjust to the dim morning light, it must be just after dawn, and then frowns as the world moves up and down in a steady rhythm.

_Oh yeah_, he looks up from the solid pillow he’s made use of during the night to remember Steve had stayed. Propping himself up on his elbow he takes advantage of the rare opportunity to properly look at the soldier at ease; one of Steve’s arms is wrapped around his waist and it tightens a little in his sleep as Tony moves, and the inventor can’t help but smile when he settles again, face turning to him in his sleep.

‘You really are a sap aren’t you?’ he whisper-chuckles as he brushes a strand of blond hair back from his face; Steve’s been letting it grow a little longer than normal recently and Tony decides he likes it. _Now if only I could convince him to start a beard_, he muses, running a light finger down the smooth cheek and letting it rest on his bottom lip.

‘What are you up to?’ Steve asks, eyes still closed as Tony removes the finger.

‘Just thinking,’ he replies.

Steve chuckles and opens his eyes, smiling up at him. ‘If there is one thing you are never doing, Tony Stark, it is _just_ thinking. There’s too much going on in your brain for that.’

‘Well for once, my dear Captain,’ Tony smiles back, ‘my brain appears to be working slowly enough that I can be _just_ thinking.’

‘And what are you thinking about at,’ Steve pauses to look over at the clock, ‘half past five in the morning?’

He has to take a couple of seconds to process this information. ‘It’s half five?’

‘Unless your clock is wrong,’ Steve raises an eyebrow. ‘You alright?’

‘Yeah I…I slept through the night.’

Steve opens his mouth to reply then frowns and closes it, before saying quietly. ‘So did I.’ They look at each other in surprise for a couple of moments. ‘How long has it been since you slept through?’
Tony shrugs and looks down where he’s resting a palm on Steve’s chest. ‘Probably before MIT. At first it was fitting in with college life, then it was the parties and alcohol, then it was the nightmares…’ He trails off and looks back into blue eyes. ‘What about you?’

‘Not counting the time spent in the ice, it was before I lost Buck.’

‘Did you,’ Tony pauses, then forces himself to carry on, ‘did you have any nightmares last night?’

Steve shakes his head, a look of surprise on his face. ‘No… how did you know?’

‘Because I didn’t either,’ he replies, ‘I didn’t dream I was drowning once.’

‘I don’t feel cold,’ Steve admits, pulling him closer with the arm around his waist, ‘I didn’t feel the ice in my sleep.’ Then he surprises Tony by pulling him down for a kiss. ‘Thank you,’ he whispers against his lips as he pulls away a fraction.

‘What for?’ Tony asks, slightly embarrassed at how breathless that kiss made him.

‘For warming me up from the ice,’ Steve responds, opening his eyes so all Tony can see is bright blue.

‘You pulled me out of the water,’ he replies, ‘I think it should be me thanking you. Either way you know what this means?’

‘I have a feeling you’re going to tell me anyway.’

‘You’re only ever allowed to sleep in my bed from now on.’

Steve laughs and pulls him in for another kiss. ‘I think I can manage that.’

They settle back down, with his head resting on Steve’s chest again, and Tony has to marvel at how happy he is to just lie in bed not doing anything. It doesn’t take his brain long to ruin his newfound peace by reminding him of the situation facing them. ‘Steve? Do you think we’re doing the right thing? Having Wade and Loki here I mean.’

‘I don’t know,’ comes the reply, accompanied by a sigh big enough to lift half of Tony’s torso from the bed. ‘I wish I did. The one thing I will say about Wade is we know he’ll protect Peter, and he’s proven he’ll help us because he knows it’s what Peter would want. If nothing else we can trust that. Though I’m not sure how I feel about their relationship.’

‘You and me both. But Steve when Nat and I were talking to Peter… it scared me how much he feels for Wade. I don’t think he even realises how much he feels for the guy; he did make the good point that Wade has his back in all aspects of his life though, at least he can keep up with both Peter and Spider-Man.’

‘That’s true,’ Steve muses. ‘Do you- you don’t think he loves him do you?’

‘If he doesn’t already,’ he replies, ‘it’s only a matter of time.’

‘Tony the age gap is too big, sure you’re not going to just let them carry on?’

Tony chuckles and looks up at the soldier. ‘As Wanda pointed out yesterday Steve, we can’t exactly comment on age gaps. You’re a good fifty odd years older than me, not to mention you were friends with my father; I think at this stage you’re the definition of a cradle-snatcher.’ He laughs at
Steve’s frown and presses a kiss to his forehead. ‘Don’t worry babe, I’m very glad you are.’

Steve just rolls his eyes. ‘What does that make you then? A grave-robber?’

‘Well that just ruined my mood. You make it sound like you’re a zombie or something, and I’m into a lot of things but necrophilia is not one of them I’m afraid.’

‘Necro-what?’

Tony laughs. ‘That is most definitely a conversation for another time, babe, right now we’re getting side tracked. I don’t think Peter’s in any danger from the relationship side of things with Wade,’ he cocks his head as he thinks, ‘I mean Peter was telling us, well more like moaning, about the rules Wade had put in when they agreed to date. He even went so far as to say they weren’t allowed to kiss before Peter was eighteen.’

‘Seriously?’

‘Yeah but Peter’s convinced him that one needed changing,’ Tony can’t help but chuckle, ‘I need to hear the story I think; but Wade’s not moving on the others. Which makes me feel a little happier if I’m honest; plus if I can make an attempt at holding down a relationship with Captain America I don’t think I can say Deadpool can’t have a chance at holding down one of his own.’

‘With the kid you’ve practically adopted,’ Steve points out.

Tony sighs. ‘Yes I know. But we have to remember Peter has taken on super villains, he’s a superhero in his own right, and he is nearly old enough to be making this decision himself. He’s not stupid and he can look after himself; not to mention he’s got a good enough relationship with several members of the team, and his aunt and Happy, that I’m sure he’ll let someone know if something does go wrong.’

‘You’re right,’ Steve sighs, ‘and we should give Wade a chance to prove himself, he has been making better decisions recently by all accounts. We shouldn’t be making an enemy from someone who could be a valuable ally; and by all accounts wants to be an ally.’ He looks back at Tony. ‘And Loki? You were pretty quick to help him out before we knew he’d been under mind control when we first fought him.’

‘I know,’ he admits, ‘I’m sorry I shouldn’t have jumped to making a decision but… it was the reaction the people he’d grown up with had when they saw what he really was. Even though he’d just apparently been prepared to sacrifice himself to save them they just wanted to let him die because he was something different to what they thought. It wasn’t his actions that were forming their opinion, it was something he couldn’t control. It…it reminded me of how people reacted to Wanda and Bucky when they first came back, and how people used to be about Bruce and the Hulk.’

Steve runs a hand up and down his back. ‘I understand, and I think you made the right decision Tony.’

‘Thank you,’ he presses a kiss to Steve’s lips, a sigh of relief and happiness leaving him. ‘Plus Bruce was happy to support him so I knew something had to have changed; it’s not like Bruce trusts people easily.’

‘We’ve just got to convince Clint of that when he arrives,’ Steve points out.

‘I know,’ he grimaces, ‘we’ll just have to do what we can. Hopefully the big looming threat will help with that. Not that it’s making me any bigger a fan of having to work with Dumbledore and Gandalf.’
‘How about we go get some breakfast,’ Steve suggests, ‘and discuss this more up there? I’d rather keep work out of our bed if you don’t mind.’

‘*Our* bed now is it, Spangles?’ Tony grins, making Steve blush.

‘Yeah well I figured you’d rather me move in here than you move into my room,’ he replies, ‘besides I’ve got less than half the amount of stuff to move than you have Mr Billionaire.’

‘Touché, Captain,’ Tony laughs as he lets Steve escape from bed, watching the man walk across the room to the bathroom. ‘By the way I’m very much enjoying the view! Would be better if you lost the pyjama pants though.’ He laughs as Steve gives him the middle finger over his shoulder before closing the bathroom door behind him.

It’s surprising how quickly he’s become accustomed to the new coolness, in a way it’s comforting, as if he’s been coping with the temperature too high for his whole life without even knowing it could be cooled down. He sighs, resisting the urge to bury into the covers, knowing there is a lot that needs to be accomplished today, and opens his eyes, blinking in the morning light.

‘Shouldn’t you be with the survivors?’ he sighs as he spies the form sitting in the corner.

‘I’m glad to see you awake, brother,’ Thor smiles at him. ‘Brunnhilde is with them and has promised to ask Stark’s newest system to alert me if they require anything. I wanted to ensure you were well.’

‘Did you believe your friends were going to murder me in my sleep? If so it’s a wonder you suggested we come here in the first place,’ Loki rolls his eyes, sitting up.

‘No I…’ Thor trails off and looks through the window, the eyepatch making him look more like Odin than he ever has before. ‘Something inside of me believes that what has happened between us, the trouble between us, only started because I did not make it clear how much I care for you, Loki. I did not want to make the same mistake again,’ he turns back to look at him, and Loki is surprised at the wetness in Thor’s eye. ‘Now that we are on the same side, brother, I do not want to give you reason to doubt again.’

‘Thor I-’ for once Loki is at a loss for words.

‘I’ve lost you before, Loki, but you always came back. This time…it didn’t feel like you would.’

‘Thor,’ Loki knows that, not all too long ago, he would have hated himself for the next words that would come out of his mouth, ‘I will not be able to change my nature overnight, I will always be one for mischief and there may be times you doubt my intentions, but I swear to you that from now on, we will be the brothers we were before.’

Before he can stop him, Thor has crossed the room and brought Loki into a bone-crushing embrace.

‘Thor you great oaf let go of me! I’m hurting you!’ he shouts as he hears the sound of singeing flesh. Thankfully his brother does as he is told and Loki pushes himself to the other side of the bed. ‘Give me a moment,’ he says in response to the crest-fallen expression on the blond’s face,
taking a deep breath and concentrating on the well of magic he can feel restoring at his core. ‘There,’ he says, feeling his Asgardian form snap into place.

‘Are you sure you are recovered enough to be doing that?’ Thor asks warily.

He nods in response. ‘It is a fairly simple spell. Here I should be able to help with the worst of the frost bite too,’ he holds out his hands and Thor places one of his in them without a second thought, an action that Loki will deny warms him.

‘Brother,’ he pauses, then continues, expression unsure, ‘you have not returned to this form because you think that is what I want have you?’

Loki shakes his head. ‘Not entirely; for one I didn’t know I could take on my frost giant form without the Casket, now that I have spent some time in the form I feel I may be able to take it at will. For another I can cause harm to others when I am in it and I’d rather not be giving frost bite to every person who touches me. Until I am better able to control it I think it best I return to the form I am more comfortable in. Besides this is how everyone knows me, and it will stop the annoying nicknames from Stark.’

‘Well,’ Thor chuckles, ‘it will stop some of them. I just didn’t want you to feel that you had to take this form if you did not want to; you are my brother whether you look Asgardian or Jotun.’

‘I-’ Loki is taken aback by the sincere comment. ‘Thank you, brother.’

‘I shall see you upstairs for sustenance,’ the blond says, laying a large hand on his shoulder as he stands and leaves the room. Loki tries not to think too much about their conversation as he prepares himself for the day, but a small part of him feels something dangerously like contentment as he runs the water in the shower and tests the temperature.

‘So what I really want to know,’ Loki hears Bucky say as he enters the common area, ‘is since when are you gay? I thought you took some girl to Homecoming?’

‘Is the child’s relationship still the main topic of conversation?’ he rolls his eyes as he heads towards the fridge.

‘None of your business,’ Bucky snaps at him, glaring to drive his point home. Loki simply sighs and takes out the carton of orange juice, raising an eyebrow in challenge.

‘I would have thought the imminent invasion was more pressing than the boy’s sexual preferences.’

‘I agree!’ Peter huffs, passing him a glass from a cupboard. Loki thanks him and gives him a genuine smile, offering the carton to the boy when he’s finished.

‘Am I not allowed to be genuinely curious? Besides this has just come out of the blue!’ Bucky addresses his statement to Peter, rather than to him and Loki resists the urge to smirk. He needs to not provoke the team if he is to stay here.

‘I’m bi alright?’ Peter sighs.
‘Since when?’

‘Since like forever,’ the boy rolls his eyes at Loki and he tries not to laugh, taking a swig from his glass.

‘Bucky why is this suddenly so important?’ Steve asks with a sigh from where he and Tony are sat on a sofa; Thor is in a chair opposite them and Sam is in another, the aforementioned soldier is the other side of the breakfast bar to him and Peter.

‘I’m curious!’ the dark haired man answers. ‘And how come you never mentioned it before?’

‘You never asked?’ Peter responds.

‘I’m curious now though,’ Sam pipes up. ‘You said you’ve known you’ve been bi for a while, so I take it you’ve either had a boyfriend or had a crush on a boy before right?’

‘Is this the wrong time for me to be walking in?’ Wade looks between the occupants as he makes his way to the kitchenette; at the glare Bucky sends him he spins on his heel and goes to the sofas.

‘Orange juice?’ Loki offers, and if he’s being friendly to the mercenary just to irritate Bucky then no one needs to know.

‘Err… yeah?’ Loki tries not to smirk at Bucky as Peter passes him another glass, he really does. He fails miserably.

‘If I answer the question do you promise to stop interrogating me on my love life?’ Peter asks as Loki takes the glass to Wade, who gives him a soft thank you. He notices his brother’s eye roll and knows Thor has worked out his kindness has an ulterior motive.

‘Yes they do,’ Tony’s tone is firm and Bucky puts his hands up in surrender.

‘Fine,’ Peter huffs, crossing his arms over his chest, ‘I had a crush on my childhood friend before I even met Liz, but I knew I found girls attractive as well so… yeah.’

‘Childhood friend as in Ned?’ Wade asks.

‘What? No!’ Peter laughs. ‘I knew Harry way before I met Ned, but he and his family moved away a few years ago and we fell out of contact; I haven’t seen him since I was like twelve.’

‘No more questions!’ Tony interrupts before anyone else can say anything. ‘We’ve got other things that we need to talk about.’

‘Tony,’ T’Challa enters as Loki takes a seat on the sofa on one side of Wade, Peter taking a seat on the other; Loki notices Bucky’s frown and grins, raising his glass at the soldier, which only earns him a glare. ‘I wanted to propose something.’

‘As flattering as the proposition is I’m not on the market for marriage I’m afraid,’ Tony quips, ignoring his partner’s frown.

T’Challa chuckles and shakes his head. ‘I was going to suggest we ask Shuri to come and see if there is anything she can do to help you remove the arc reactor if that was something you still wanted to do?’

‘What?’ the inventor looks up in surprise. ‘But the doctor’s said it was impossible, that my
chest would likely collapse if the reactor is removed; it’s basically holding me together in more ways than one.’

‘Wakandian technology is more advanced than most places,’ the king responds, ‘including in medicine. Shuri may be able to do something, even if it is just to strengthen your chest cavity.’

‘I- thank you,’ Tony says. ‘I could get FRIDAY to send over the scans?’

‘If you are happy to do that,’ the king nods.

‘Loki is there anything that might be able to help the process?’ Thor asks him.

‘Excuse me?’ Bucky demands. ‘How is the mind controlling maniac going to be of any use with healing?’

‘Thor sit down,’ Steve sighs, ‘and Buck, back off.’ Then the soldier turns to look at his brother. ‘What do you mean, Thor?’

‘My brother is referring to the time I spent in the healing chambers when I was learning magic with our mother,’ Loki responds. ‘She insisted I learned some form of healing magic as it was a good way to learn intricate control; Thor teased me mercilessly at the time as healing was usually seen as women’s work. He soon swallowed his words when we were out on quests and my small knowledge came in useful on more than one occasion.’

‘I was young and stupid,’ Thor mumbles, face red, ‘and I was jealous that mother had given you magic and said I didn’t have the patience for it.’

‘Wait, what?’ Loki blinks, taken by surprise. Thor had been jealous of him?

‘So you could help to heal Tony’s chest?’ Steve asks.

‘I am by no means a great healer,’ he responds, trying to shake himself from his shock, ‘but I may be able to work with the technology you speak of to increase the healing benefit. However my magic is returning slowly after my injury, the amount required for this sort of spell would be greater than what I could safely perform now.’

‘Please tell me we’re not-’

‘Thank you,’ Tony cuts off whatever Bucky was going to say. ‘Whether you can help or not, I appreciate the offer.’

Loki is about to respond to thank the man for housing them when the sound of sparks interrupts him and a portal opens in the room. ‘Oh good, my favourite person is arriving.’

‘I thought we said we’d meet at midday,’ Tony raises an eyebrow as Strange walks through the open portal. ‘Some of the team are still not up.’

‘Wong is at Kamar-Taj doing some more research and I am unsure how long he will be, I’ve put some spells up around the Sanctum that will alert me if anything enters and decided it would be better for me to be here so at least one of us will be on time.’

‘So you arrived early,’ Loki raises an eyebrow at the wizard, having not forgiven him yet for their last meeting.

‘Remind me why I shouldn’t put you in a pocket of reality away from me again?’ Strange
‘I would not recommend that course of action,’ Thor growls.

‘Alright all of you stop!’ Tony snaps.

‘Is it just me,’ Nick Fury says, entering the room, ‘or are we still more interested in fighting each other rather than planning how we will be defending ourselves against the bastard that intends to wipe out half the universe? Now I suggest you all pipe down and sit your arses down so we can start talking. Any objections?’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: I'm a terrible human being I totally forgot I hadn't updated this week! I'm so sorry! I hope you enjoyed this chapter, although it is a little bit of character bonding rather than pushing the story forwards.

Thank you to everyone who continues to leave comments and kudos on this story, I really do appreciate them all. I'm sorry I haven't had chance to respond to them yet, it's been a bit of a crazy week. I will do it by the end of the weekend though.

Do let me know what you think of this chapter, I'm really interested to hear what you think of some of the interactions. Hope you all continue to enjoy this story!

L x

So there's two sneak peeks this week because I honestly couldn't choose between them: ‘Want to avoid this Wilson?’ Clint growls, picking another knife from the block on the side. Before he can even lift his arm to throw it, the archer's flying side-ways to land in a heap by the windows. ‘What the hell just happened?’ he groans, then his eyes go wide as he sees his attacker.

‘Try it again and I'll put you through the window,’ Peter’s arm are crossed over his chest. ‘Now is anyone else going to try and kill someone or can we get back to working out how to save the universe?’

‘Steven Grant Rogers I swear to God if you say you are not going to fuck me through that mattress because I’m still recovering I am going to-’

‘Do you have to be so crude?’ he interrupts him with a frown.

‘Fine,’ Tony rolls his eyes. ‘If you don’t make sweet love to me until neither of us can walk straight I’m going to kick you out of the bedroom for a month.’ At Steve’s raised eyebrow he adds. ‘Ok a week. I wouldn’t last a month. I’d last a week.’
New Directions

Chapter Summary

The team discuss the Wakandan Accords; there's debate over pizza; and Steve and Tony take another step in their relationship.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Tony can feel a headache coming on by the time they break in the early afternoon; they moved to the briefing room and he’d gotten FRIDAY to get the others to join them when they were ready. Scott and Clint had just arrived so they’d agreed a break was in order and they would catch the other two up on what they’d agreed so far.

Thor and Valkyrie would travel to replace Mjolnir once Loki was healed enough to help transport them, the trickster would remain with them, the Space Stone still in his possession, to continue to heal and lead the remaining Asgardians; Bruce, Tony and Loki were all going to study the Mind Stone with Vision in an attempt to see if they could understand the stones better and how they might be combated, T’Challa had offered to send Shuri to help, and to open her lab to them. Strange is taking the time to set up a permanent portal between the facility and the Sanctum, and one between the Sanctum and Wakanda so they can move between the locations much quicker; he’d only agreed to do it if the Sanctum was the focal point as it was easier to ensure unwanted visitors stayed out.

‘What the hell is he doing here?’ Clint demands, grabbing a knife from the breakfast bar and pointing the tip towards Loki.

‘Clint stand down and let us explain,’ Steve says, putting his hands up.

‘Sorry, Cap, but I’m not going to trust he’s not up to his usual mind tricks,’ the archer growls, Scott’s looking between him and Loki like he’s watching a tennis match.

‘Clint just let us explain,’ the blond tries again. Before he can add anything else there’s a twick and Clint’s lost the knife in his hand to Peter.

‘I find people talk better without weapons involved,’ he shrugs, walking past the adults to the fridge. ‘Anyone want a Coke?’

Tony can hear Wade sniggering behind him and sends him a look. ‘This is your influence.’

‘You can’t tell me you didn’t enjoy the sass just then,’ Wade grins, and Tony can’t help the answering tug at the corner of his mouth.

‘Clint come with me,’ Natasha says, ‘let me explain outside.’ He looks ready to argue again, but she grabs his arm, twisting it behind his back in a lock, and all but shoves him outside.

‘You sure it’s not her influence?’ Wade asks, looking impressed.

‘Maybe a bit of both,’ he admits, then introduces Scott to the people he doesn’t know.
When Clint and Natasha re-enter Clint is looking much calmer, but he’s still challenging Bucky for top place in the glaring competition; Loki, Tony notices, just takes it in his stride, almost accepting it. Clint does get fired up again when he realises exactly who Wade is. ‘Oh no hang on, first Loki and now Deadpool. Have you all gone insane?’

‘We’re facing the biggest threat any of us could imagine, Barton,’ Nick interrupts, ‘we need to make friends where we can.’

‘Still sore that I made you miss?’ Wade jokes. ‘Come on Hawkeye, we all have performance issues sometimes.’ Tony tries to hold back his groan. Of course Wade had to choose that moment to open his mouth.

‘Want to avoid this Wilson?’ Clint growls, picking another knife from the block on the side. Before he can even lift his arm to throw it, the archer’s flying side-ways to land in a heap by the windows. ‘What the hell just happened?’ he groans, then his eyes go wide as he sees his attacker.

‘Try it again and I’ll put you through the window,’ Peter’s arm are crossed over his chest. ‘Now is anyone else going to try and kill someone or can we get back to working out how to save the universe?’

‘You really need to stop teaching this kid,’ Clint tells Natasha.

‘I don’t know he finally seems to have knocked some sense into you,’ she retorts. ‘Besides he went easy on you.’

‘He nearly put me through the window!’

‘You don’t have any broken bones. He went easy on you,’ Natasha’s tone leaves no room for argument.

‘Briefing room people,’ Nick says, ‘and anyone else threatens anyone I’m giving Peter full permission to kick your arse. You got that kid?’

‘Yes Mr Fury sir.’

Thankfully no one tries to kill each other for the rest of the discussion; personally Tony thinks it’s a combination of Fury’s and Steve’s infamous stares, and a couple of Natasha’s pointed looks towards Peter that kept everyone in line. He’s actually proud of the kid for having made people wary of him after taking out Clint.

They’ve come up with several strategies for when Thanos attacks, including sites to hold a battle should it come to that; though no one has breached the subject of what they should do if Thanos were to obtain all the Infinity Stones, and Tony doesn’t really want to be the one to broach that subject.

‘I suggest,’ T’Challa speaks up as the discussion surround Thanos comes to a close, ‘that we briefly discuss the proposed new Accords. Whilst we have everyone around the same table it seems a shame to waste the opportunity, besides if we can move them into completion before Thanos’ arrival we may be fighting from a stronger position.’
‘I agree,’ Steve adds, ‘even if we don’t make a firm decision we should at least explore some options.’

‘Can I at least get FRIDAY to order in pizza?’ Tony asks. ‘I’m starving.’

‘Me too!’ Peter adds. ‘Can we get pepperoni?’

‘Hawaiian!’ Wade pipes up from his spot next to the teen.

‘Why would you want pineapple on pizza?’ Peter asks.

‘Because it’s amazing.’

‘No it’s a travesty.’

‘Boys!’ Natasha interrupts with an eye roll. ‘Not the discussion we need to be having.’

‘Alright FRIDAY get us one of each flavour,’ Tony says, ‘and a couple of sides.’

‘And cookies?’ Peter gives him his puppy dog eyes.

Tony sighs. ‘And a shit ton of cookies, FRI.’

‘Already ordered, boss,’ his AI replies, ‘I also took the liberty of adding some drinks to the order as well. It should be here in forty five minutes, I’ll let you know when they reach the gate.’

‘Thanks, FRI.’

‘These new Accords,’ Wong starts, ‘would you want a sorcerer from Kamar-Taj to sign?’

‘Not as such,’ Nick explains, ‘the majority of the Accords will apply solely to official team members; others, such as yourselves and Scott, who only help during certain scenarios would only have certain sections apply. There would also be safeguards in place for your identities should you want them to be applied.’

‘For example,’ T’Challa interjects, ‘we would have the name “Black Panther” on the roster, however it would not necessarily be myself that would be involved but anyone from Wakanda who we nominate as being most useful to the situation. Shuri may be the one if it is technological or scientific in nature; Nakia could be nominated in matters of espionage; myself or the General in terms of fighting ability. It would not necessarily always be me.’

‘But the name would stay on the official mission reports to keep the identities secret, even from the majority of individuals working alongside the team,’ Tony explains. ‘The only ones who would really know any of this would be official team members, and certain individuals outside of the team, such as Nick or Hill.’

‘It’s protecting us but also making sure, if you need our skills, we can come and help,’ Scott nods.

‘Because HYDRA managed to infiltrate SHIELD? That’s why these safeguards are in place?’ Steve asks.

Nick nods. ‘We’ll also ensure not one single person has access to all the information within the organisation, hence the suggestion for a leadership team.’

‘And you’d be happy not knowing everything?’ Clint’s voice betrays his doubt.
‘While I’d prefer to have a handle on everything,’ Nick admits, ‘I appreciate the extra level of security this adds. Each member of the leadership team would oversee a different area of the organisation, obviously information will be shared as necessary.’

‘But it stops one person being able to spill all the secrets, or if their security and clearance is compromised it’s only one section of the organisation that is compromised with them,’ Bucky finishes, with a nod. ‘Perhaps not a perfect solution, but it is a solution at least.’

‘I also suggested,’ T’Challa picks up the lead again, ‘that we approach different countries for permission to have bases established there, making it easier to perform missions out of those areas; they may be more willing to co-operate if we agree to employ local people in them as well, and funding research within the facility from local talent.’

‘It also means not all of the information is stored in one place,’ Nick adds, ‘even though it could be accessed from every base, if one is compromised its ability to access information stored in the others is automatically shut down.’

‘We could have certain bases specialising in research,’ Bruce sounds a little excited at this proposition. ‘And have them based in the countries where the leading experts are.’

‘Each base would have to be able to run independently should the need arise,’ Rhodes points out. ‘Let’s say the organisation is compromised like SHIELD was before, every base would then be shut down unable to access the others. Fail safes would have to be in place so they could continue running and be able to keep information out of enemy hands until the team were able to contact them.’

‘This is all what we’d have to build up gradually and would vary on each site,’ Nick agrees. ‘Some bases could be combat centres, others research, and even others focussing mainly on intelligence and each one would need a slight variation on protocol should the worst happen.’

‘Wakanda would be the first to make a facility available to you,’ T’Challa assures them, ‘I think we’d make a lot of leaps forward in technology along with the minds we could put together.’

‘What if we needed help from you?’ Strange asks, an eyebrow raised in challenge. ‘As unlikely as that would be, at the moment everything seems very much geared towards the Avengers.’

‘That would all be included in those parts of the Accords relevant to you I mentioned earlier,’ Nick reassures him. ‘Should you need help you will be able to contact the team and we can arrange for a part, or even the whole, of the Avengers to be with you to help. Any of the other resources at our disposal would also be available to you.’

‘Provided it does not intend to cause harm,’ T’Challa adds.

‘It might be something to consider,’ Wong says to Strange. ‘With the Ancient One gone we still have no Sorcerer Supreme, and our numbers are still low after Kaecilius’ attack; I am not sure what Mordo has planned either, but I do not think he’s a friend of Kamar-Taj at present.’

‘Trouble at home Dumbledore?’ Tony asks.

‘Nothing you need concern yourself with, Stark,’ Strange’s stare is hard. ‘And you need not worry we will be able to help defend against Thanos.’

‘This leadership team,’ Clint asks, ‘just who are you suggesting for it?’

‘I suggested Nick is one,’ Tony says before Nick can open his mouth, ‘he’s already got
experience dealing with this kind of thing, and mistakes made in the past can hopefully be avoided again. He’s got the spy connections and he’s used to dealing with politicians; not to mention he seems to know where to find “enhanced individuals” before they even make themselves public.’

‘He did found the Avengers,’ Vision points out, ‘and experience in things going wrong is often the best experience to have.’

‘I’m not sure if that was supposed to be a compliment or not,’ Nick raises an eyebrow.

‘So if we were to go ahead with this new proposal,’ Natasha says, ‘and this is only an “if” for now, raise your hand if you are happy for Nick to be one of the three leadership team.’ The majority of the table raise their hands, only Strange, Wong and Loki don’t.

‘You want us to vote?’ Wong asks as everyone turns to look at them.

‘No we want you to do a rain dance,’ Tony rolls his eyes. ‘You may be affected by this in the future, so yes we want you to vote.’

Wong shrugs and looks at Strange before raising his hand, the other sorcerer does the same, albeit a little grudgingly.

‘What’s your excuse Reindeer Games?’

‘You aren’t seriously expecting me to vote? Besides the majority has it,’ Loki raises an eyebrow at him. ‘And my objection comes more from the fact the man put me in a cell.’

‘Moving on,’ Natasha interrupts. ‘Who were the suggestions for the other two? Steve was mentioned yesterday.’

‘As combat leader yes,’ Nick nods, ‘you all follow him in the field as it is, he has proven track record, and is one of the best tacticians on the planet.’

‘He’s still a punk,’ Bucky pipes up and grins as he dodges the ball of paper Steve throws at him.

‘All those in favour?’ Natasha asks. The table is unanimous.

‘Don’t I get a say in this?’ Steve asks.

‘Nope,’ Tony grins at him. ‘And we all know you’re terrible at following orders in the field if you don’t agree with them. This way we skip the arguments.’

‘Alright children,’ Nick stops them before they can start arguing. ‘I suggested Tony was the third member of the team: we need someone who can head up research and is able to actually understand what the hell scientists are talking about and Tony has that experience from Stark Industries.’

‘Nuh uh,’ Steve says, clamping a hand over Tony’s mouth. ‘If I’m not allowed to have a say neither are you.’

He frowns and pushes the hand away. ‘Mine is a valid point rather than me being overly modest,’ he ignores Steve’s eye roll and continues. ‘Yes I can keep up with science and technology, but we’re moving into a time where you need someone who can keep up with and understand magic and multiple universes as well and that’s not something my brain is geared to manage. If anything Brucie may be a better candidate seeing as he now has experience with space travel and magic.’
'Yeah how about no?' Bruce says. 'I just want to be left alone to do what I do best and not upset Hulk any more than I already have.'

'What do you mean?' Natasha asks.

'Well Hulk and I have this *thing* going on,' the scientist admits.

'What do you mean you have a “thing” going on?' Rhodes asks.

'Banner and the Beast have had a slight disagreement and now the Hulk is not always appearing,' Loki explains.

'Hulk doesn’t want to come out?' Steve looks at Bruce in surprise.

'He was being temperamental before,' Bruce admits, giving Loki a dark look, ‘but ever since we fought Thanos on the ship he’s completely refusing to come out.’

'Thanos was able to best him in combat,' Thor explains, ‘and I believe it has rattled Hulk.’ That statement is met with quiet dread. If Hulk isn’t playing ball they’re down their biggest metaphorical gun.

‘That is something we need to work on later,’ Nick interrupts again. ‘For now let’s take a vote on Tony’s role.’ When the vote is unanimous Tony opens his mouth to argue. ‘No one is expecting you to be an expert in everything,’ the one-eyed man tells him, ‘get someone to help you with the magic and dimensional side of things who’ll be sticking around.’

‘Fine,’ Tony tries his best not to smirk at how much he’s going to inflame the situation, ‘then Loki has to be the one to help me.’

Ok so he wasn’t expecting *quite* so much yelling.

‘You just *had* to go there didn’t you?’ Steve groans from next to him, not even attempting to get the room to calm down.

Thankfully, as far as Tony is concerned at any rate, they agree to leave the invasion and Accord related discussions in the briefing room and avoid talking about it when they leave to get the pizza that has finally arrived. Peter and Wade ran ahead earlier to go collect it, and Tony resists the urge to roll his eyes at the scowl Bucky sends the mercenary’s way.

‘You keep that up your face is going to get stuck like that,’ he jokes as he passes the Winter Soldier.

‘Very funny. You’re seriously alright with this?’

‘No, but I’m not going to risk pushing Peter away by making my feelings as clear as you are. Nat and I spoke to him and got his side of things. And let’s be honest here Elsa: if he can take you out I’m sure he can take out Deadpool if needs be.’

‘I’m not living that down for a while am I?’

‘Nope,’ Steve laughs from behind him.
'Come on Petey give me my ham and pineapple!' he hears the mercenary’s voice floating along the corridor.

‘It’s not just yours, Wade,’ the teen’s exasperated reply comes not long after. ‘We’re sharing all of the flavours.’

‘But you said pineapple on pizza is a travesty so I’m not sharing it with you.’

‘I don’t want it anywhere near me,’ Peter retorts, ‘now put the boxes down!’

‘Not until you give me the Hawaiian. I’m holding your pepperoni hostage.’

‘Wade give me the pizza.’

‘Give me mine.’

‘Sorry are we interrupting?’ Wanda laughs as she walks in ahead of Tony.

‘Wanda help me convince Peter that pineapple on pizza is heaven,’ Wade turns to the young woman. ‘He won’t see sense and now he’s holding my Hawaiian hostage.’

‘You’re holding my pepperoni hostage!’ Peter protests, putting his pile of boxes down on the breakfast bar.

‘I thought you said we were sharing them all?’ Wade points out with a grin.

‘You are one sentence away from me dangling you from the side of the building,’ Peter grumbles, then his face lights up as the pepperoni pizza floats in front of his face. ‘I love you Wanda!’

‘I can’t cope if they’re going to be like this all the time,’ Bucky grumbles, heading towards the piles of pizza and pulling out a slice.

‘He’s not the only one,’ Sam agrees.

‘Oh come on they’re no worse than Steve and Tony used to be,’ Natasha grins at the two of them as she passes.

‘We weren’t that bad were we?’ Tony asks the soldier.

Before Steve can answer Rhodes raises an eyebrow at them. ‘Really? I’m going to pretend you didn’t ask that.’

‘I take it we were,’ Steve shrugs.

It isn’t until three-quarters of the pizza have been destroyed that Tony manages to catch Wade in the kitchenette going for more drinks. ‘Is this where you threaten me or something?’ the mercenary asks, offering him a can of coke.

‘Normally yes,’ he replies, taking the offered can, ‘but something tells me you’ve already had several death threats over the past twenty-four hours.’

‘You a mind-reader now or something?’

‘No I’ve just seen the looks Bucky’s been giving you. Plus I know how much this team cares about Peter.’
'No kidding.'

'I would join them, but I’ve seen how happy he is with you around. So all I’m going to say is: don’t screw this up, keep him happy and keep him safe and I might be able to come to terms with this.'

'You-wait, what?' Wade’s eyes are wide.

'Look I’m not saying I’m happy about this in the slightest,’ Tony reassures him, fixing him with one of the stares he’s perfected on Peter, ‘and it’s going to take a while for me to even start heading that way.’ He shrugs. ‘Like I said you make him happy. You’ve got a lot of baggage and I’m concerned who might come after him from your mercenary background, but to be honest you can get that from his life as Spider-Man. And he can look after himself, I know that, but I’m still going to worry. If you promise to keep him safe, I’ll give you a chance.'

‘Nothing is happening to him if I can help it,’ Wade growls, eyes going unfocussed as he grips a fork tightly in his hand. ‘And if anyone thinks about hurting him I’ll stab them so many times the four distinct hole marks will be unnoticeable after I’m done with them, and them apart until even you won’t be able to work out how to put them back together.'

‘Drastic, but sort of puts my mind at ease,’ Tony admits, ‘I’m not sure if I should be worried about that or not. Sure it says something about my mental state.’

Wade sighs. ‘I lost Vanessa, if I lost Peter in the same way it’d…it’d break me.’ At Tony’s questioning eyebrow Wade briefly tells him the story of Vanessa, from leaving her to sign up to the Weapon-X programme, to finding her again and her death just as they decide to start a family.

‘I’m sorry, Wade,’ he says honestly.

‘Yeah so am I, Tin Can. But nothing is happening to my Baby Boy while I can do something about it.’ They both turn to look at the brown haired teen, currently laughing with Loki whilst Thor looks between them exasperated. ‘I think he’s purposefully making friends with people you’d rather he didn’t.’

‘Really? What gave you that idea?’ Tony rolls his eyes. ‘I’m not sure if he’s trying to wind up Bucky more just for the hell of it, or whether it’s just an added bonus to the people he’s naturally drawn to.’

‘Maybe it’s a bit of both,’ the mercenary laughs as he goes to join the trio. Tony watches as Peter all but lights up when he catches sight of the man and almost subconsciously leans into his side when he starts talking to Loki again. He also notices how Wade relaxes slightly after a few minutes of conversation, obviously coming to the conclusion that the gods are no threat to the teenager.

So maybe the merc wasn’t that bad after all.

‘You know sometimes I think you pick arguments just for the hell of it,’ Steve grumbles as they enter their room, Tony pushes the door closed behind them and leans back against it, arms crossed over his chest.

‘Sometimes yeah,’ he admits, ‘but you’ve got to admit it is funny seeing Fury nearly burst a
blood vessel.’

‘We are not having you and Peter and Loki in this facility for more than forty eight hours at a
time.’

‘Now you’re just spoiling my fun. We wouldn’t get up to that much trouble; and it might
solve Brucie’s problem with the Hulk not wanting to come out.’

‘I’m going to pretend you didn’t say that last bit,’ Steve gives him a warning look. ‘Now are
you coming to bed or am I going to have to drag you there?’

‘My, my, Captain America I never would have thought it,’ Tony teases him, ‘I expected to be
wined and dined before such a proposition, now I just feel cheated and cheap.’

‘You. Are. Impossible,’ Steve groans, but comes back over to him, framing his face in his
large hands and pressing a kiss to his lips.

‘At least you know how to keep me quiet,’ he grins as the soldier pulls away.

‘Not for long enough apparently,’ there’s a small answering smile on the soldier’s lips as he
leans back down.

‘I can think of some other ways you could keep me quiet. Or at least preoccupied,’ he says,
raising a suggestive eyebrow.

‘Tony you’re still healing, we shouldn’t be—’

‘Steven Grant Rogers I swear to God if you say you are not going to fuck me through that
mattress because I’m still recovering I am going to—’

‘Do you have to be so crude?’ he interrupts him with a frown.

‘Fine,’ Tony rolls his eyes. ‘If you don’t make sweet love to me until neither of us can walk
straight I’m going to kick you out of the bedroom for a month.’ At Steve’s raised eyebrow he adds.
‘Ok a week. I wouldn’t last a month. I’d last a week.’

Steve laughs. ‘Well now I can’t have that can I?’ Then his expression turns unsure. ‘Tony are
you sure—’

He cuts him off by pressing a kiss to his lips. ‘Steve, we could have the mother of all armies
arrive on our doorstep tomorrow. No more waiting around and putting off what we want, alright?
I’m ready for this, I’m pretty sure you’re ready for this. We can go as slow or as fast as we want, but
I want you and I’m not going to wait until the world ends to do something about it.’

‘You’re absolutely sure?’

Tony lets his hands travel up Steve’s arms to link around his neck, pulling his head down so
he can rest his forehead against Steve’s. ‘I’ve never been too sure about most things in my life, but
when it comes to you? I don’t doubt a single thing. And that kind of scares me if I’m honest.’

‘Well then,’ Steve’s voice is quiet and the kiss he presses to his lips is soft. Then he catches
Tony unawares by lifting him up and pinning him against the wall with his body, Tony wrapping his
legs around his waist to keep himself in place.

‘Well, well, who knew Captain America could be so demanding?’ he teases, voice breathless
as Steve starts placing kisses against his throat, the blond’s hands going under his shirt to lift it over his head and throw it to the floor.

‘Tony I swear you keep this up and I might be tempted to gag you,’ he groans.

‘Ooo kinky,’ he laughs, ‘might I suggest you find some other use for my mouth then, my dear Captain?’ He can’t deny the heat that spreads through his body at Steve’s sharp intake of breath, and before he can register the fact they’re moving he’s on his back on the bed and Steve is leaning over him. ‘Nuh uh,’ he says, flipping Steve onto his back.

‘Tony, what-’

‘You just lay back for a minute, babe,’ Tony says, letting the soldier sit up enough for him to pull the shirt off of him, throwing it behind him to land on the floor. ‘I need to start learning what drives you crazy.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. So I hope you enjoyed this chapter, I tried to break up some of the more serious (and possibly more boring!) talk about the new Accords with some more interesting interactions. Tony and Wade finally having a chat about Peter for one!

So I am going to say I was about halfway through writing the smut scene with Steve and Tony, and then it just didn't feel right having it in this story. I don't know why it just didn't seem to fit. Sorry I know some of you have probably been waiting to get around to it. Maybe there'll be some in future instalments of the series, but not yet. To be fair I feel that smut, like torture, scenes are better when they're left more to your imagination. I'm sure you can fill in the blanks with something much more satisfying than if I just gave it to you!

Do let me know what you think. Thank you so much to everyone who has left comments and kudos! I will make sure I get round to finishing all my replies to comments this weekend. Sorry my weeks are just super full at the moment so weekends are about the only chance I get to respond.

Only two more chapters to go before we reach the end of the first instalment. I hope you're still enjoying the journey and are intending to continue through the series!

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:
‘Tony are you alright?’ Peter frowns as he watches the inventor walk to the kitchenette.
‘You’re walking funny.’
Steve tries not to blush as he follows Tony to the kitchenette and takes two mugs out of the cupboard; he can feel Bucky’s grin blazing into his back as he goes.
‘I’m fine, Pete,’ the inventor replies.
‘Really? Because you really don’t look like you are. You haven’t been over-working yourself have you? Because the doctors said you haven’t recovered enough yet and you don’t want to-’
‘Please find his off button,’ Steve mutters to him.
Chapter Summary

Peter’s curiosity causes embarrassing times for Steve, and Natasha and Bruce reconnect

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tony winces as awareness creeps in the next morning, muscles he is sure never existed before are aching and he can’t help the satisfied smile that creeps onto his face; there’s a firm weight wrapping around his back and holding him in place, and if he’s honest he’s not entirely sure where his body ends and the next one starts.

He sighs happily and snuggles back into the warmth as Steve presses a light kiss to his shoulder. ‘Good morning,’ Steve murmurs into his ear.

Opening his eyes he moves just enough to be able to look at the soldier. ‘Good morning,’ he presses a kiss to the man’s lips, slipping an arm out from between them to keep his head close.

‘I think I should wake you up with a kiss every morning,’ Steve laughs as they pull apart, ‘you definitely wake up quicker.’

‘I’m not complaining,’ he chuckles in response, then he notices Steve’s frown as the man looks down. ‘What’s wrong?’

‘I,’ he clears his throat and a faint blush colours his cheeks, ‘I, uh, may have left some, uh, bruises last night.’

Tony just laughs and pulls the covers down more to take a look. ‘Oh good.’

‘Good?’ Steve looks like he’s not entirely sure what’s going on. ‘But-’

‘Oh babe,’ he laughs never be sorry for giving me bruises in bed. Just tell me if I need to wear a high neck.’

‘What- but-’

Tony kisses the soldier to shut him up. ‘Though I will say, Steve,’ he grins as he pulls away, ‘no one is ever allowed to call you innocent again after last night.’

He gets an eye roll in response. ‘It’s not like it was my first time, Tony; you make it sound like I was raised in a monastery or something.’

‘Wait you’d had sex with someone before?’ Tony leans up on one elbow. ‘I mean I did wonder considering how good you were last night, no virgin is that good,’ he grins at the blush getting deeper on Steve’s face. ‘So some on, spill. Who was it?’

‘Tony do we really have to talk about this in bed?’ Steve groans.
‘Oh god,’ his eyes go wide, ‘it’s not Bucky is it? Please tell me it’s not Bucky.’

‘What?’ Steve bursts out laughing. ‘No! Where on earth did that come from? Of course it’s not Bucky; that’d be like sleeping with my brother. It was, uh, it was one of the guys from the crew when we were touring with the shows; I never did find out what happened to him.’

‘Oh good, I’m not sure I could have looked Bucky in the eye again if it’d been him,’ he breathes a sigh of relief.

‘Why did you think Buck? Wait,’ Steve looks almost worried, ‘Tony you two didn’t…before I got back?’

Tony bursts out laughing. ‘No! Why would you think that?’

‘Well he told me about your kiss and I just wondered…’

‘Then he also told you I’d told him I liked you,’ he presses a kiss to Steve’s lips, feeling the man relax under him again. ‘You do realise we’ve just made Bucky sound like the biggest slut out there right?’

Steve laughs and wraps his arms around Tony’s waist as he settles himself on the soldier’s lap. ‘I won’t tell him if you don’t.’

‘I’m not entirely sure how that would come up in conversation in the first place,’ he rolls his eyes, sighing happily as Steve runs his hands up his sides and down his back. He winces a little as some of the muscles in his lower back protest at his movement.

‘You alright?’ Steve sits up, one arm around his waist to keep him steady at the movement.

He nods, resting his forehead against Steve’s. ‘Just a little sore. Been a while since I’d met someone with the stamina to beat mine in bed,’ he chuckles.

‘Here,’ the soldier’s voice is soft as he lays Tony back on the bed and starts to work at the muscles in his back; he gives a groan of appreciation as knots that had formed years ago in the workshop are finally worked free.

‘God your hands are miracles,’ he moans as Steve presses a kiss to his shoulder and lays down next to him with a chuckle.

‘Shall I run you a bath?’ he offers. ‘I feel like I need to make it better seeing as it’s my fault.’

‘Only if you join me,’ Tony says, turning his head to face him and running a hand down the golden body in front of him.

‘Will you behave yourself if I do?’ comes the challenge with a raised eyebrow and a grin.

‘No promises,’ he grins and laughs as Steve sweeps him up and carries him to their bathroom.

Peter’s about to knock on the door when he hears talking from inside.
‘What if we can’t stop him?’ Wanda’s voice is quiet, but his hearing can still pick it up. ‘He’ll come for your stone, Vis; can you even survive without it?’

‘It’s a distinct possibility,’ the humanoid reassures her, ‘but may require some work and for now it’s better if it stays where it is so I am better able to study it. I’m hoping we can find another solution, but I do wonder if destroying it might be the best answer.’

‘That would kill you,’ her voice chokes off.

‘If we have no other option it is better for one to pay the price than countless millions.’

‘Vis no!’ Wanda protests, and Peter starts to back away from the door, not wanting to intrude on their conversation. He wants to run in and promise them both that Thanos isn’t going to get hold of Vision or the Mind Stone, and that they’ve nothing to worry about. But he can’t lie to them.

‘Hey! There you are!’ he looks up as Wade hurries towards him down the corridor. ‘I was wondering where you’d scurried off to Spidey.’

‘Wade—’ he starts, but can’t speak past the lump in his throat.

‘What’s wrong, Baby Boy?’ the mercenary comes up to him, holding his shoulders in gentle hands.

‘We’re going to win, right? We’ll all be alright?’

Wade pulls him into a tight hug and Peter buries his face in the man’s hoodie, he feels the scarred cheek rest against the top of his head. ‘I wish I could promise you the world, Baby Boy,’ he answers quietly, ‘but all I can do is promise to do everything I can to keep you safe and make sure you’ve got your team by the end of all this shit.’

Peter smiles and turns to look up at him. ‘As long as you’ve got my back, Wade,’ he tells him, running a hand up to cup his cheek, ‘we can take on anything.’

‘Just don’t go anywhere I can’t follow?’

‘I’ll do my best,’ Peter promises, pressing a soft, quick kiss to Wade’s lips and pulling away before anyone can stumble across them.

Steve walks in to the common area and immediately regrets the decision as a cackling Peter dodges around him, just out of Bucky’s grasp; then proceeds to disappear.

‘Stop doing that!’ the dark haired man roars, glaring at the smirking god of mischief sitting at the breakfast bar. ‘He’s bad enough as it is without you encouraging him!’

‘What on Earth?’ Steve asks out loud.

‘Peter and Loki have joined forces,’ Sam sighs from the sofa, ‘and are taking great delight in playing pranks on Bucky.’

‘I hope you weren’t the one to start this,’ Steve raises an eyebrow at the god.
‘No that was me,’ Peter reappears in front of Steve, making him jump back in fright, he’s dangling upside down from the ceiling from one of his webs. ‘Mr Loki was explaining how he keeps the Tesseract hidden and I asked if it was possible to make someone invisible and then… well, I may have got a little carried away. But you’ve got to hear some of the stuff he can do, it’s amazing! And have you heard the story about when he turned Mr Thor into a toad?’

‘Pete please I need something to drink and some form of breakfast before we start on this,’ Steve pleads, rubbing his temples. ‘And please stop pranking Bucky, he comes and moans to me.’

‘Hey!’ Bucky tries to tackle him, but Steve’s too quick and dances out of the way.

‘Alright children,’ Tony says as he enters, ‘settle down please, I haven’t had my morning coffee.’

‘Tony are you alright?’ Peter frowns as he watches the inventor walk to the kitchenette. ‘You’re walking funny.’

Steve tries not to blush as he follows Tony to the kitchenette and takes two mugs out of the cupboard; he can feel Bucky’s grin blazing into his back as he goes.

‘I’m fine, Pete,’ the inventor replies.

‘Really? Because you really don’t look like you are. You haven’t been over-working yourself have you? Because the doctors said you haven’t recovered enough yet and you don’t want to-’

‘Please find his off button,’ Steve mutters to him.

‘-set back your recovery because you know how impatient you get with doctors and-’

‘Alright, Baby Boy,’ Wade laughs, standing from his chair and grabbing hold of the webslinger and throwing him over his shoulder, ‘you and me are going for some sparring.’

‘Wade put me down!’ Peter protests as the laughing mercenary carries him out of the room. ‘Wade!’

‘Oh thank god for Deadpool,’ Steve sighs.

Tony chuckles next to him. ‘Bet you’d never thought you’d say that.’

‘So Steve,’ Sam laughs, ‘how does it feel to be outed by a teenager?’

Steve just groans and tries to ignore his two friends laughing at him. Tony puts an arm around his waist and offers him a freshly brewed mug of coffee. ‘Look on the bright side, babe,’ he says, grinning up at him, ‘at least they know you didn’t disappoint.’

‘Seriously?’ Steve just rolls his eyes, unable to keep the small smile from his face as he pulls Tony against his side.

‘Alright I do not want to hear anymore!’ Sam protests. ‘Has no one realised that Deadpool just carried Peter out and no one stopped him?’

Steve just laughs as Bucky’s eyes go wide and he leaps after the pair. He sees Loki shake his head and sigh. ‘I don’t think I shall ever fully understand mortals.’
‘Come in,’ Natasha calls, not looking up from her tablet as she scans some of the information Strange and Wong had brought over; Tony had gotten FRIDAY to scan all the books and upload them to the facility’s framework so they could read it in their own time.

‘Uh, hi,’ Bruce says, pushing the door closed behind him. ‘I can come back if you’re busy?’

‘Just reading over some of the information Strange brought with him,’ she replies, setting the tablet down on her table. ‘You alright?’

‘I-uh,’ Bruce looks uncomfortable, fidgeting and not looking straight at her, ‘I just wanted to talk to you. We haven’t really had chance since I got back.’

‘There’s been plenty of talking going on,’ she replies, raising an eyebrow, ‘and I’m pretty sure we’ve both been involved.’

‘I mean I want to talk to you about some things that are just between us,’ he tries again, finally looking up at her.

‘Is there anything to discuss about us, Bruce?’ she asks, defensive as old feelings were fighting their way to the surface. ‘Last I remember you and Hulk decided you were better off alone.’

‘I’m sorry,’ he looks like he means it. ‘You deserve better than me, Natasha, better than a man who turns into a monster, even Hulk agreed which is why he took us away after Sokovia. But every time I came back into my right mind I’d think of you, and I couldn’t stop-’

‘So you thought you’d just walk back in and expect to pick up from when you ran off?’

‘No,’ he shakes his head, ‘no I don’t expect anything from you, Natasha. I came to ask for a chance.’

Natasha blinks, trying to hold back her emotions just as she’d been taught all those years ago. It’s a rare occasion she’s glad for her training.

‘Natasha?’

‘Maybe,’ she replies, looking back down at her tablet.

‘I-I honestly didn’t expect that much,’ he admits. ‘Do you, uh, do you want me to leave?’

‘Have you looked through any of the texts Strange brought over yet?’

‘Uh, no, I was going to do that today. Been trying to get my head around everything else that’s been happening. Not to mention the fact that Tony and Steve are apparently now an item and the team seems to have adopted a teenager that’s half spider with a preference for nutcases.’

‘Grab the chair and see if you can help me understand some of this,’ she says, gesturing to the spare chair in her room. ‘I’m wondering if the stones produce some form of radiation when their power is used.’

‘If they did it could give us an idea of how they’re powered,’ he replies, dragging over the piece of furniture. ‘We may be able to find a way to neutralise it and possibly destroy one of the stones; then Thanos wouldn’t be able to collect them all and complete his plan.’
‘But couldn’t that be potentially dangerous?’

‘Well, that all depends,’ he says, and she sees the second he slips into his scientist mode and gets comfortable.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. I hope you enjoyed this chapter, it's the penultimate one of this story and then I'll be starting to post the sequels. Thank you so much to everyone who has stuck with this story, and I hope it's proving worth the time to read it.

Do let me know what you think in the comments. Thank you so much to everyone who has left comments and kudos, I really do appreciate your feedback. I know there's a couple I still need to respond to so keep an eye out for those replies soon.

Love to you all,

L x

As always here's your sneak peek:

Thor turns to his brother. ‘Try not to get up to too much mischief while I’m gone.’
‘No promises,’ Loki grins, ‘I seem to have an accomplice who enjoys tricks as much as I do.’
‘Yes that’s what I’m afraid of,’ Thor sighs, glancing over at Peter who at least looks sheepish. ‘Take care, brother.’
‘I told you,’ Loki responds, placing a hand on the taller man’s shoulder, ‘that the sun will shine on us again, Thor.’
‘Perhaps it already has,’ the blond responds, copying the gesture.
The next morning Loki announces he feels recovered enough to be able to transport Thor and Valkyrie to a location where they would be able to get a ship and travel the rest of the way to Nidir-whatever the place where the cool stuff was made was called. Honestly Tony’s head hurts enough recently without trying to remember all the weird and wonderful names for places Thor comes out with.

‘How long will you need to get things in order here?’ Steve asks the god of thunder.

‘A couple of hours at most,’ Thor replies, ‘and we will need supplies for the trip.’

‘I’ll get someone on it,’ Tony says, typing some commands into his watch. ‘Is there anything we can do while you go off on your epic quest?’

‘We already promised to protect your people,’ Steve reminds him, ‘and we will continue to do so. The same goes for Loki.’

‘There is nothing more I can ask of you, my friends,’ Thor sighs, ‘nor indeed is there anything more I need from you. I only ask that you ensure you are waiting for us on our return.’

‘Way to get morbid Point Break,’ he rolls his eyes.

‘Only so that we may vanquish our foe together,’ Thor reassures him with a smile. ‘I would hate to miss out on the fun because you have taken victory without me.’

‘Nice save,’ Rhodey laughs from his chair.

‘I shall have to speak to my people before I leave,’ Thor says, then turns to his brother. ‘Loki, if you are willing, I will tell the people that you are to lead them in my absence.’

The dark haired god laughs bitterly. ‘Asgardians are hardly going to follow a Jotun, Thor.’

‘They will follow Odin’s son, brother,’ Thor’s voice is determined, ‘and I shall make sure they understand this.’

‘If they don’t follow Loki,’ Tony chimes in, ‘tell them they don’t stay here.’

‘Tony you can’t just leave them without anywhere to go because they won’t-’

‘I never said that,’ he cuts off Rhodes. ‘I’d still give them somewhere to go, but they wouldn’t be here and it’d take longer for us to sort out any problems for them. Whether we fully trust
him or not we know Loki, and I’d rather do diplomacy with someone I know than someone I don’t, my brain’s too fried with everything else.’

‘I thank you for your support of my brother, Tony,’ Thor says, smile big.

‘Yeah we’ll go with that,’ he’s too tired to argue the point, and he’s not entirely sure if he is supporting the other god or not. He just knows he’d rather the devil he knew than the devil he didn’t at this moment in time.

Apparently the Asgardians were not happy with having Loki as their leader, but they had accepted their king’s instructions and agreed to it; Loki had promised to leave them in peace for the majority of the time and ‘check in’ a couple of times a day to ensure everything was alright as a kind of peace offering.

The whole team is gathered on the lawn outside of the facility, as Thor and Valkyrie prepare to leave, Loki is preparing himself for the magic he would need to perform and Tony can see Peter bouncing on the balls of his feet in excitement to see some ‘proper’ magic being performed. A term that, he noted, had slight offended Strange and Wong when he’d first said it during a meeting.

‘I am ready when you are, Thor,’ the dark haired god says, already looking tired.

‘Are you certain you are ready for this?’ Thor asks, looking at his brother worriedly.

Loki nods. ‘Yes but we can’t delay much longer or I won’t be able to sustain it; I’ll be exhausted afterwards, but it’ll be nothing that rest cannot cure. You remember where you will arrive?’

‘Even if he doesn’t I do,’ Valkyrie rolls her eyes, ‘we’ll be fine. Now can we please get this show on the road? Any mushy goodbyes and I might rip someone’s throat out.’

‘Promises, promises,’ Clint mutters and Tony gives him a look which has the archer rolling his eyes.

‘Farewell for now friends,’ Thor turns to them all, ‘and my thanks again for agreeing to protect my people and my brother.’

‘You make me sound like a helpless babe,’ Loki rolls his eyes.

‘You’re welcome, Thor,’ Steve says, clapping the god on the shoulder, ‘keep yourself safe and hurry back.’

‘We shall return with all speed,’ he smiles.

‘Take care of yourself too, Valkyrie,’ Steve smiles at the woman, ‘we’d like to actually get to know you properly at some point. Though I’m not sure how much good you’ll do for Tony’s drinking habits.’

‘Oh come on!’ he protests, crossing his arms. ‘I am so much better than I used to be.’

‘You couldn’t get any worse, Tones,’ Rhodes points out.
‘We shall drink to our hearts’ content on my return Stark,’ the warrior promises him with a smile.

‘I’ll make sure there’s a good bottle of whiskey waiting for you,’ he promises and receives a nod in thanks.

Thor turns to his brother. ‘Try not to get up to too much mischief while I’m gone.’

‘No promises,’ Loki grins, ‘I seem to have an accomplice who enjoys tricks as much as I do.’

‘Yes that’s what I’m afraid of,’ Thor sighs, glancing over at Peter who at least looks sheepish. ‘Take care, brother.’

‘I told you,’ Loki responds, placing a hand on the taller man’s shoulder, ‘that the sun will shine on us again, Thor.’

‘Perhaps it already has,’ the blond responds, copying the gesture.

Loki gives him a small smile. ‘Perhaps it has indeed,’ he agrees. ‘Nevertheless I shall be here when you return.’

‘I’m holding you to that,’ Thor tells him, pulling him into a one armed hug. ‘We should leave before you tire,’ he says, pulling away.

Loki nods and places one hand back on Thor’s shoulder, and one on Valkyrie’s. ‘Good luck,’ he says, and they disappear. No sooner have they gone than Loki collapses, his legs unable to bear his weight.

‘You alright, Reindeer Games?’ Tony asks, kneeling down next to the god.

Loki puts a hand to his head and groans. ‘Perhaps I was not as recovered as I believed,’ he admits, ‘but they will have reached their destination. It just took a little more out of me than I anticipated.’

‘Let’s get you inside,’ Steve says, helping the god to his feet.

‘I’ll take Peter and Wilson back to the city,’ Natasha says, pulling her car keys out of her coat pocket. ‘Want me to fill May in on the situation?’

Tony nods. ‘Yeah I don’t think I would be able to answer questions right now.’ He looks over at Wade as the group starts to head towards the main doors. ‘You should stop by a couple of times, Wilson,’ he suggests, falling into step with the mercenary. ‘Be good for the team to get to know you a little more.’

‘Not sure that’s a good idea, Tin Can,’ the man responds, holding out his hand, ‘but I appreciate the offer and I’ll consider it.’

‘All I ask,’ Tony responds, then goes to give Peter a hug goodbye before waving to the two of them as they follow Natasha to the waiting car. ‘You two off?’ he asks Clint and Scott.

‘Yeah,’ the archer replies. ‘As much as I love being here with you guys, if the world’s going to end I’d rather spend as much time with my family as possible before it does.’

‘Same,’ Scott agrees. ‘That and Hank gets a bit twitchy if his suit’s around a Stark for too long.’ Tony just laughs and says goodbye to the two of them; Clint’s dropping Scott off with one of
the jets and then taking it with him and keeping it at the farm; that way he has a quick method of transport when the shit hits the fan and he can pick up Scott on the way over.

‘I’d better get moving with some of the Accords business,’ Nick says, ‘and apparently I have a law firm to visit.’

‘Keep me updated and let me know if there’s anything you need,’ he reminds the super-spy. ‘I’ve already told the two lawyers at SI on the case to expect a call from you so there shouldn’t be any issues there.’

‘Much appreciated,’ Nick nods, then heads towards his own car with a wave at the others. T’Challa and Okoye had already left that morning to return to Wakanda, the king wanting to ensure that his people were ready for whatever might come their way.

Tony follows the rest of the team inside, noticing that everyone is a little more subdued than normal. It seems Thor and Valkyrie’s departure has driven home just how soon they may be facing Thanos.

Everyone had been so drained from the past couple of days that they called it an early night at the facility. Tony smiles as Steve returns to their bedroom, the last of his possessions from his old room in his arms.

‘We could always convert your old room into an art studio,’ he suggests as the soldier pushes the door closed behind him.

‘How about we think about redecorating after we’ve averted the universe ending crisis?’ Steve suggests with a laugh, walking over to the bed and discarding his shirt along the way.

‘Hmm…sorry what? I was distracted by the show.’

Steve just rolls his eyes and places a kiss to his lips, which Tony chases as Steve pulls away. ‘You look tired, honey,’ he says, running his fingers through Tony’s hair.

‘So do you,’ he replies, scooting over on the bed so Steve has room to lie down next to him. ‘Probably something to do with the possible end of the world.’

‘True,’ Steve chuckles, ‘I bet none of us look our best. What with Thanos, and all the stuff with the new Accords. Tony why didn’t you mention anything before to anyone?’

He sighs and lays on his back, one arm behind his head and the other drumming a beat on the reactor with his fingers. ‘I guess, with everything that happened before, I was worried how some of the team would react.’

Steve takes hold of the hand over the reactor and brings the fingers to his mouth to press a kiss against them, then rests both of their hands over the bright light. ‘Tony, no matter what happens we face it together alright? Whether it’s Thanos, or fighting for the new Accords, or you know dealing with Peter’s new boyfriend,’ he grins at him, ‘we’ll face it all as a team. Whether it’s just you and me, or whether we’ve got the whole team with us. Just…don’t keep feeling you have to do everything alone.’
‘I love you,’ Tony whispers, gripping Steve’s hand tight. Then he realises what he’s said and his eyes go wide, searching Steve’s expression with a knot of unease in his stomach. He’s been biting back those words so much, scared of moving too fast and scaring Steve off. Scared of admitting to how he’s feeling since it’d never gone well in the past. He’s not said those words since he was a child, never said them to Pepper.

Steve’s expression is not what he was expecting. Not that he really knows what he was expecting. Whatever it was, it certainly wasn’t the pure happiness that is currently taking residence there. Before he can open his mouth and ruin the moment, Steve darts forwards and kisses him hard; when the soldier pulls away they’re both breathing heavily.

‘I love you too,’ Steve replies against his lips and kisses him again.

Tony’s terrified of what’s coming for them in the next few weeks, and he knows Steve is just as scared; but as he lets the soldier push him back into the bed and trail kisses down his neck he’s not as worried as he was. As long as Steve’s by his side, and the rest of the team are behind them, he knows they’ve got a chance.

And one chance is all they need.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hi everyone. Well this is it, the end of Restoration. There’s only the epilogue to go!

I’ll go post it now and leave a longer note at the end of there.

L x
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

The Avengers' enemies discuss what they know of their leader's plans

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘Sir?’ The man looks over as the door opens.

‘What is it?’ he snaps, gesturing towards his guest seated on the other side of the desk to make it clear he’s busy.

‘Wilson still refuses to take the job and all the trails are running cold, sir, you asked us to update you every two hours.’

His guest lets out a dark chuckle. ‘I told you Wade Wilson wouldn’t take that bait.’

The man frowns. ‘If you hadn’t lost him in the first place he wouldn’t have had a choice in the matter.’

His guest just smirks and raises an eyebrow. ‘Let’s not start that game when you’re the one who lost our latest project. What about getting hold of Spider-Man since Wilson seems so friendly with him?’

‘No,’ he shakes his head, ‘He has other plans for Spider-Man, we’re not to engage unless we have no choice.’

‘What shall we do sir?’ his worker asks.

He pauses to consider. ‘We wait. It’ll be getting hungry soon, then it’ll be a case of following the bodies. Be patient. It certainly isn’t.’

‘Yes sir,’ the worker nods and leaves him alone with his guest.

‘Has He given you any more ideas as to what His plan is?’ his guest asks after a pause.

‘Only that he wants to tear the Avengers apart,’ he replies, ‘reclaim the two assets they’ve stolen from us, and take his own revenge.’

‘I feel sorry for the poor bastard that did that to him,’ his guest shakes his head. ‘You get a name for who did it yet?’

‘Of course not,’ he scoffs. ‘He’s not that careless.’

‘How does he plan on tearing apart the Avengers? Someone tried before and they’re now stronger than ever.’

‘Everyone has a weak spot. He just has to find each of theirs. If we attack key members first, the rest will fall apart.’
‘And the assets? They’re going to be more than a little difficult to get hold of.’

‘Patience my friend,’ he advises with a smile, ‘He will deliver on his promises.’

‘Let’s hope so,’ his guest grumbles. ‘What of Hammer? You think they got anything out of him yet?’

‘I doubt it. He never revealed His existence to Justin Hammer; the person that man thinks is pulling the strings is Ross.’

‘And Spider-Man? You said he had plans there?’

He smiles. ‘You think to get His plans from me? I barely know anything, same as you. Even if we piece all of our knowledge together we won’t even scrape the surface of His plans. All I know is He is looking at relocating another one of our members in an effort to confirm Spider-Man’s identity and get some leverage on Tony Stark.’

‘You mean he thinks the kid that Stark is interested in is Spider-Man?’ his guest laughs. ‘That kid would go flying off a bridge in a stiff breeze. You not seen the footage?’

‘Appearances can be deceiving,’ he reminds his guest. ‘But even if he is not Spider-Man he knows who he is, and can be used as leverage against Stark. And this member apparently has an ace up his sleeve in order to get information from the boy.’

‘Hmm,’ his guest makes a thoughtful noise as they slip into silence. Sometimes he thinks he has more knowledge than his guest, and other times he wonders just how much this other man is playing him. For now it appears they’re on the same level.

As his guest starts to leave he stands up to show him to the door. ‘Hail HYDRA.’

‘Hail HYDRA.’

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Hello everyone! Thank you so much to everyone who has read this entire story and come on this journey with me. It has been absolutely incredible and I've really enjoyed reading all your comments along the way. Please do let me know what you think of these last two chapters and where you think the series is going to go. Any predictions from this epilogue?

So next up will be a special, but I won't be posting it for a couple of weeks as I've got some really busy weeks coming up. Do keep an eye out though, it's going to be called 'A Spider's Week Long Interview', and then the proper sequel will be uploaded. Check out the special though, because there'll be some hints as to what's happening in the sequel!

I love you all so much and I cannot begin to describe how much all of you wonderful readers have meant to me whilst writing this; getting your comments and kudos notifications always brightens up my day. I hope you can continue to enjoy the journey in the rest of this series.

All my love,
L x
Deadpool Adds

Chapter Summary

Deadpool gives us an update in his own special way

‘Hey guys, your friendly neighbourhood Merc-with-the-mouth here! So Lyri asked me to give you guys an update on what’s happening with the next step in this series. Honestly, writers these days are getting so fucking lazy their characters have got to do their work for them! She says it’s because she’s busy, but I wouldn’t believe her. Oh hang on…’

‘Wade what are you doing? We need to get on with patrol!’

‘Hang on Baby Boy I just gotta update these guys!’ Deadpool turns back and sighs, shaking his head. ‘Teenagers these days just don’t know the meaning of the word patience. Anyhoo where was I? Oh yeah! Doing the author’s job.

‘So we got the first proper special coming up at the end of the week. Yep you heard right. Less than one fucking week people! It’s all focusing on my Baby Boy and him having an “interview” to join the Superhero Squad. Yes I did air quote. Get the fuck over it already. Basically we get to follow that beautiful spandex-clad ass as he does his superhero thing and saves people. Honestly bring the popcorn, anything with that ass in it is going to be awesome!’

‘Wade I can hear you talking about my ass,’ Peter sighs. ‘Can we hurry it up please?’

‘Will you give me a goddamn minute? I’m trying to appreciate perfection here!’

‘Who are you talking to anyway?’ Peter asks, coming into view, mask in his hand. ‘You’re not on your phone.’

‘I’m talking to them!’ Deadpool gestures in front of him.

‘There’s no one there,’ the teenager sighs and puts his mask on. ‘Will you hurry up? I’m hungry.’

‘But I still need to tell them about the special!’

‘You know what? I don’t want to know. We’re leaving.’

‘But’ Peter cuts off Deadpool’s argument by webbing him and dragging him away. ‘Sorry guys got to go! Have a look at the sneak peeks below for more an idea. I’ve got a hormonal teenager to deal with!’

‘I swear to god, Wade Wilson, one day I am going to leave you webbed halfway up the Empire State Building and I’m not even going to be sorry when I come back to get you a week later.’
‘You mean you’ll actually become part of the team?’ Ned asks as they finish up in class and head towards their lockers.

‘Technically I won’t be on the Avengers roster,’ Peter replies, voice equally as quiet, ‘I’ll be on the separate one with all the people they’ll call in if something big happens, eventually I’ll be allowed to join the team but Tony wants me to finish up school and everything first.’

‘Well I was thinking I could go be her chaperone, and you could do one of your wonderful talks on respecting people’s choices in the style of those videos they make us watch at school.’

‘Yes thank you for that reminder,’ Steve sighs. ‘I’ll see you down there. I take it you aren’t going to wait for me?’

‘Nope,’ he says, stepping off the side of the building. Really, with that kind of exit, he supposes he’s spending too much time with Wade.

In all honesty Peter has stopped being surprised that everything apparently blows up around Wade. Though he must admit this is the first time they’ve dealt with a fire in a block of flats. He swings down to land next to the firefighter who is co-ordinating the team, jets of water soaking the building in front of them, but not making much ground with stopping the flames.

‘Is everyone out?’ he asks, as Wade runs up behind him.

The man turns to look at him, a brief flicker of relief crossing his face as he realises who is speaking to him. It quickly fades as he shakes his head. ‘The fire started half way up the building, there’s people trapped above but we can’t get through to help them and the buildings nearby aren’t taller than the fire for us to get someone across safely, they’d be scorched just trying to get in.’

‘Ok so I’ll hear from you soon. Oh my name’s Lisa by the way; can’t wait for our date Spider-Man,’ she says as she walks off, waving when she gets to the entrance of the alleyway.

‘What just happened?’ he asks as Natasha doubles over with laughter.

‘How did you and Wade end up together when you are that bad in those situations?’ she asks, wiping away a tear from her eye.
‘Hey, calm down,’ his mentor says, ‘take all the time you need, kid, nothing important happening this end.’ There’s a muffled voice on the other side that sounds like Bucky. ‘Screw you, Barnes, you and your Game of Thrones obsession is not important.’

‘Oh god who introduced him to that?’

‘Wanda,’ he can hear the eye roll in Tony’s voice, ‘and now he’s insisting Loki is one of the White Walkers. Now stop avoiding the reason you asked me to call.’

‘Get down!’ Bucky tackles him and they go sliding behind the counter, he notices the two hostages have run through the back where they came from.

‘Come on out Spider-Man!’ one of them taunts. ‘Not even the Winter Soldier’s arm can withstand these beauties. They were made to take out Luke Cage, they can take you down in no time at all.’

‘Well,’ he lowers his voice for the next part, ‘I was wondering if you wanted to come and play games at Wade’s tonight and, you know, meet him properly?’

Ned’s eyes go comically wide. ‘Dude are you serious?’

‘You were the one that was so adamant you had to meet him,’ Peter points out.

‘Any particular reason you wanted us to meet you in the shittiest part of town?’ Wanda asks as her and Vision arrive at the spot Matt had told him to meet at. They’re a little earlier than he’d said to Matt, but he wants to have time to explain to the others first.

‘According to house prices Hell’s Kitchen isn’t the worst place in the city to live,’ Vision points out, ‘and the crime rates have gone down since Daredevil started his vigilante duties.’

‘Still a shit hole,’ she says.

‘I agree,’ Wade pipes up and Peter resists the urge to roll his eyes. ‘If this your idea of date night, Baby Boy, I got to say it sucks.’

‘You insisted on coming!’

‘If you’re all finished insulting my part of the city?’ Matt says from behind Wade.
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