Peter's New Home

by AllThingsGeeky

Summary

Essentially a group of Omo-centric IronDad-SpideySon oneshots, loosely linked together with a running plot.

This is my first fanfiction I’ve ever posted and my first time using this site (since the great tumblr crash XD), so please be gentle with me! Any thoughts or constructive criticism is greatly appreciated!

Notes

So these first couple chapters are super short until I get into the swing of things and establish backstory, plot, character dynamics blah, blah, blah..
A rough beginning

It had been three months since Peter had started living full time with the Avengers; When aunt May got sick it had been hard, Tony was already trying to keep the kid occupied, running errands and assisting him in the labs on the days he didn’t have to accompany his aunt to her various hospital appointments. But when May had to go into residential care there was no way he was going to let the Peter live alone, godforbid foster care neither he or May would hear of it (despite Peter insisting he could take care of himself). He’d been through enough and Tony knew how it felt to be alone all too well.

Three months in and Peter was finally starting to settle in. Sure, he still got starstruck now and then (he nearly fainted when Steve was fussing at Thor for leaving his hammer on the dinner table), but he was starting to slot into the team dynamic and for the first time he felt as though he had a full family; he tried to push these feelings down knowing this was all only temporary, just until his aunt got better and she would, but why not enjoy it while it was happening?

Most of the Avengers were gone, off doing their various tasks for that day, Bruce was in his lab, Tony in some meeting Peter was glad he hadn’t been dragged along to. It wasn’t often he had free time around the tower, which was mostly down to the fact that Tony didn’t trust him not to get into trouble. Usually Peter would’ve tried to do just that, but he’d woken up that morning feeling as though he hadn’t slept at all. He ached all over and he just couldn’t get warm enough. He shivered burying into the blankets.

“Hey, JARVIS?” He called out quietly.

“Good Morning Mr Parker, what can I help you with?”

“Can you turn the heat up a little, please?” His teeth chattered slightly.

“I would advise against that Mr Parker, the room is at twenty four degrees per your earlier request to increase the temperature of your room, despite it being eighty four point three degrees outside. Are you feeling quite alright?” Peter fought the urge to pout at that but just grumbled in response before dragging himself (and his comforter) into the bathroom with him. The AI, however, didn’t quite get the message and startled Peter into almost breaking his neck in the shower by suddenly asking;

“Should I perform a vitals scan Mr. Parker?” Peter squealed.
“JARVIS! We’ve talked about this- for one call me Peter and two- no sneak attacks! Especially when I’m on a non textured surface! Have you ever seen a spider try to climb out of bathtub?! Come on man.” Despite his powers Peter was still startlingly clumsy.

“My apologies. Peter. But would you like me to perform-”

“No.” Peter cut him off. “Thank you. I’m fine.”

“As you wish.”

Despite what he had told JARVIS, Peter felt anything but fine; but the last thing he needed was JARVIS running off and telling Tony he had a fever like her knew he would. Or worse yet Bruce.

Once he’d stepped out of the warm shower he was immediately struck with what he felt was a wall of ice surrounding him. He shivered in his oversized bathrobe imagining this is what Cap must’ve felt after all those years frozen in ice. He gritted his teeth and got dressed for the day, he had no time to get sick. This was his chance to finally explore the tower without Tony breathing down his neck and he wanted to see if he could get his hands on some parts for a.. Side project that Tony would no doubt disapprove of.

Lately it had seemed Tony disapproved of everything remotely fun. Peter knew he was stressed with some boring background Avengers stuff, the politics he always tried to drown out when he was forced to attend meetings with Tony, but he was still resentful for being treated like a little kid. He’d helped save the world- twice, now! He was sick of being wrapped up in cotton wool, and though it wasn’t exactly his intention to cause any mischief, he certainly wasn’t against bending the rules a little. So, it was the day he was gonna finally have a little fun and get his hands dirty. Or so he thought.

Just as that thought crossed his mind, he suddenly became light headed. He gripped the countertop in front of him and swayed. The room felt as though it was spinning. He closed his eyes and took a few, deep breaths and straightened up again. He was fine, just low blood sugar he assured himself, even though he’d felt off for several days. Then at that moment JARVIS chimed in again.

“Mr- Peter. Captain Rogers is attempting to contact you.”

“Let him through.”
Steve’s voice came through the invisible speakers above his head with a momentary crackle. “So, you are alive! Fancy joining us?” He teased in his usual cheery tone that was not built for sarcasm.

“Yeah, yeah I’m coming.” Peter let out a small chuckle but hoped Steve didn't hear the slight croak in his voice.

“Well, hurry up Sleepyhead before Thor devours all the pancakes-”

He heard Thor yell out with what he assumed was a mouthful of pancakes “THEY SHALL BE MINE!”

“Thor! Manners!”

“SORRY.”

Peter laughed as he heard Steve sigh and he assured him he’d be down in a few minutes. He didn’t feel hungry if anything he was nauseous, but he told himself food would make him feel better..he was wrong.
As soon as he entered the kitchen his stomach lurched violently, the smell of all the various breakfast foods strewn across the counters attacking his nose all at once. He swallowed hard and took a few more deep breaths willing himself to crane a single slice of toast and a glass of orange juice. Steve raised an eyebrow at this.

“What’s up kid, you’re passing up my famous pancakes for partially burnt bread?” He took on another borderline sarcastic tone that didn’t suit him, still smiling.

“Captain I do believe the proper term is toast- it’s actually quite delectable once you look past its plain exterior- you should try some my friend!” Thor said, still with his mouthful, quickly shoveling half a loaf onto his already mountainous pile of food. Despite how queasy he felt Peter managed to laugh along with Steve as he tried to explain ‘the joke’ to which Thor was either not grasping or just simply didn’t find funny before ending the conversation with an eye roll and “mortals” once Steve’s back was turned.

Peter picked at his pitiful meal, listening to the ideal yet comedic conversation glad that his meal choice had been dropped by Steve.

“Young boy, you need more food than that if you’re to keep up with us” Thor frowned slightly before resuming his usual grin.

“You gettin’ sick or somethin’” Natasha chimed in sipping on her coffee. The three men jumped slightly as they hadn’t seen her come in, but at this point they’d all become accustomed to both her and the vision appearing seemingly from nowhere.

“No.” Peter scoffed, obviously unconvincingly as another two pairs of eyes also gazed upon him.

“You do look rather pale come to think of it, young one” A large hand slapped onto Peter’s back in a friendly gesture, though Thor wasn’t known for his ability to control his strength, which didn’t feel good on Peter’s already aching muscles.

“JARVIS run a vitals scan-” Steve started.

“NO! I-I mean no. Please, don’t- okay I’m I’m fine.”

“Very convincing” Nat muttered between another sip.

“Pete just-” Steve again started but Peter wasn’t having it.

“It’s my body and I said no. I get that you’re tryna help and you’re concerned and all but I’m not a baby and I don’t need JARVIS running off and telling Tony I needed a vitals- even though it would find nothing! You know he’d still- ugh just. Just quit it okay? I’m fine.” Peter snapped but quickly
fell into an apologetic tone towards the end. It was obvious all three of the adults wanted to push the issue further but decided against it. It was the first time they’d seen the kid have any type of outburst that wasn’t down to pure excitement.

Steve silently conceded that he would mention it to Tony in private earlier, right before he was the kid turn green. Just as he opened his mouth Peter suddenly pushed his chair back and hurried across the kitchen.

“Kid are you-” With that Peter launched forward, almost folding double to grab the trash can, before violently vomiting.

“Crap, JARVIS can you-”

“Dr Banner has been notified and I have left a message for Mr Stark.”

“Thank you” Steve crouched down to Peter, who was now on his knees, shaking whilst still trying to keep his grip on the trashcan. Steve wrapped his arm around him to support him, holding the trashcan with the other, “Easy, easy son, relax. I’ve got you don’t fight it.”

Peter cried out trying to rush out an apology but he couldn't catch a breath between each heave. The regurgitated orange juice was burning and stinging his throat, which felt as though it was being torn open. He retched loudly with each wave of vomit that came cascading out of him, both into the trashcan and down the front of his shirt. If anyone else had been close enough to hear them they would’ve thought the boy was being attacked. At some point Thor had brought a towel to wipe the child’s mouth whilst Natasha brought over a glass of water. Just as she reached the other side of the room she saw the mess.

“It’s okay buddy, you’re okay Bruce will be here real soon.” Steve shushed him gently.

Peter trembled still muttering apologies and Steve could’ve sworn he heard ‘I want my dad’ amongst all the words and sick that was coming out of Peter’s mouth.

“I know, I know, it’s alright” He wiped Peter’s slick, sweat soaked hair out of his face as he suddenly bent forward again letting out what seemed an impossibly long and violent stream of vomit out. Steve couldn’t understand how a boy so small could have that much in his stomach. That was when he heard Natasha gasp.

“Oh god, is that blood..?”
Tony had always had a rule against using his suit inside, especially in enclosed spaces. But he made an exception.

He burst through the medical bay doors, ripping both off of their hinges.

“WHERE-”

“It’s okay, it’s okay! He’s alright he’s just-” Natasha stepped in front of him, both hands raised.

“What the fuck happened?!”

“If you’d let me-”

“No! You let me through- BANNER!”

“Calm the fuck down, okay metal man?! The kids fine- Bruce said it’s just a torn oesophagus, he will be OKAY. We freaked out when he started puking blood.”

“Puking blood?! No one came to get me sooner?! That’s the last time I leave him alone for christ sakes-” Tony continued raging down the hallway, lead by Nat to the room where Peter was still expelling the contents of his stomach. His face immediately softened, “Christ, Petey.” he sighed as his slipped into his room.

“Stomach virus,” Bruce announced not looking from the screen he was hunched over. “Nothing that can’t be fixed. I’ve already administered some intravenous anti sickness medication-”

“Well it’s not--HRRGH-- w-workin’” Peter moaned pittifully before ducking his head back into the bowl, he wasn’t bringing up any actual vomit now, just mouthfuls of watery red bile.

Bruce briefly glanced up to give Peter a sympathetic smile. “Give it a minute, bud.”

Tony stood beside Peter to gently rub his back in an attempt to comfort the wailing boy. He had never seemed more like a child than he did right now. The fact that Peter, the boy who made Tony turn around every time he changed or leave the room to he could blow his nose was sprawled, half naked across the bed whilst simultaneously accepting comfort; this alone told Tony something was very wrong.
“E-e-everything h-h-hurts,” he sniffed wetly leaning into Tony’s touch trying to swallow to discourage his stomach from heaving anymore. His insides burned as they spasmed, he couldn’t get any relief from the constant contractions of pain both in his chest and his abdomen. “M-m’sorry I m-made a mess-!” He sobbed harding his entire body wracking with the waves of pain.

“Shh, shh, shh hey. It’s okay Petey, it’s okay no ones mad about the mess. We’ll make hawk clean it up when he gets home it’s fine.” His attempt to make Pete laugh only resulted in the kid crying harder. Tony sighed and got into bed beside him pulling him close, whispering comforting things to him every so often. Eventually, after an hour or so, they both fell into an uneasy sleep, Tony thinking about the moments leading up to this and how it lead him to realise the true extent of how much he loved this kid.

During his meeting one of his agents had stepped in.

“Mr Stark?” All eyes fell on him. Not that it was unusual for grave matters of urgency to occur during a meeting that required his immediate summoning (not to brag), but the agents face didn’t have the usual scared expression.

“Yes?” He replied calmly.

“It’s Peter, he-”

“What’s that kid gotten into now?” He was immediately out of his seat his heart was already pounding. Something told him Peter hadn’t just broken something in the lab or snuck out his bedroom window.

“Bruce is with him now sir but he-“

Tony didn’t even think. He was already suited up, blasting his way through the window and up to the 70th floor, where Bruce’s lab and the medical bay was. He felt numb.

He knew fear. He knew it well, but this? This was something Tony had never felt before. His mind was entirely blank and it was as though some physical force was pulling him along, something inside of him. ‘Just please be okay..please..’

Tony shook a little from the adrenaline that recent memory caused, whilst sighing from how much he had overreacted. The boy laying next to him stirred a little, burrowing into Tony’s side. He smiled to himself knowing once the boy felt better he’d get a kick out of how scared everyone had been. ‘Always causing trouble’, Tony thought. ‘Just like his old man-‘

He stopped. He wasn’t startled by this realisation he just hadn’t thought it would happen so quickly. He actually loved this kid. For so long Tony has tried so hard to convince himself he was incapable of loving another person. Then Pepper changed all that. Of course this was different, in comparison to this romantic love felt so easy. He wasn’t responsible for Pepper’s actions the way he was Peter. To an extent yes he had to keep her safe, but not from herself. He didn’t have to help her make life decisions or teach her how to tie a tie or help pick what College to go to.

He didn’t have to for Peter. He wanted to. He wanted to be this kids dad, wanted it more than anything. As much as he hated seeing Peter in so much pain, the kid wanted him, needed him, was able to find comfort in him. He wondered what May would have to say about their developing relationship, what if she found it inappropriate or thought that he had some untoward intentions?

‘May. Shit.’
“JARVIS? Call May Parker.” Tony managed to break out of Peter’s sleepy deathgrip on his shirt and slip quietly into the hall without waking the feverish boy up.

Tony explained the entire sequence of events, to a relatively calm sounding May. He expected her to flip as much as he had, to demand he was out of his care as he was clearly incapable for being a guardian for the young boy.

“Oh yeah, that’s happened before.” She said somewhat nonchalantly.

“What?”

“Yeah, Pete’s a violent puker. He got sick after his first sip of wine at communion in church and I swear half the people thought he was possessed. One old lady fainted.” She chuckled at the memory before sighing. “How long did he go without saying this time?”

“Excuse me?” Tony was still getting over the fact that no one had thought to mention this to him, not specifically Peter’s brief exorcism, but that he got violently ill and by the sounds of it often.

“I mean how long has he been sick? Did he say?”

“No..” Tony prompted.

May sighed again. “Come on Mr Stark, surely you’ve noticed he’s not very good at expressing his needs?” He had, from the day he’d met Peter the kid hadn’t asked for anything that wasn’t technologically related. He recalled an incident first day Pete moved into the tower; he’d been too afraid to ask for the bathroom until Tony had to physically try and drag him there and it had been too late, in fact that had happened several times without the boy losing control. He’d gotten better in the past few months, now he realised he didn’t have to ask for permission for food, the restroom etc. He still wouldn’t directly admit to needing anything but it was still very much a work in progress.

Tony’s silent moment of contemplation had given May her answer. “Exactly. His first week of middle school he caught a bug, if he didn’t sound like an old man screaming swahili when he puked I wouldn’t have know. I just found him trying to clean it out of the carpet himself. Same with every scraped knee or wet bed every since I’ve known him. Which, you know has been his entire life so-“

“I get it. I need to keep a better eye on him.” Tony sighed.

Her tone softened. “He’s been through a lot Tony. He’s going through a lot. And he’s a frickin teenager- they’re not exactly forthcoming at the best of times” they both chuckled at that “and I don’t mean to say you’re not doing a good job, you know how grateful I am for everything you’re doing for him..” she sniffed and Tony heard movement on the other end of the telephone. A sad smile had crept onto his face before she coughed and continued. “So grateful, and you’re obviously doing an amazing job. Honestly? I’d expected something like this a lot sooner, Pete being how he is. Teenagers are difficult and complex, and he’s a difficult and complex teenager- like a Rubix cube!”

Tony laughed “Every time you figure out one side there's another one around the corner you’ve got another one to solve.”
“Yup-" She was cut off by a deep raspy cough rumbling through her chest. Tony cringed.

“How are you doing, Ms Parker?”

With a smile on her face but some sadness in her voice “Nothing I can’t handle, Mr Stark. Take care of our boy won’t ya?”

“I will.” Tony didn’t know why but he had a tear running down his face. He went to hang up as the conversation felt as though it had concluded.

“Oh shoot- wait!”

“What? What is it?”

“Bring him his bear.”

“...huh?”

“It’s on his bed, he’s not gonna sleep well without it.”

Tony smiled. “Noted.”
Peter has an accident and JARVIS is as unhelpful as always

Omorashi in this chapter so...if that makes you uncomfortable maybe skip this one!

Meanwhile, Peter woke up shortly after Tony went to call his aunt unbeknownst to him. He ached all over but his stomach and back were agony. All that vomiting had strained his muscles, it wasn’t a feeling he was unused to, not that that made it easier. Peter realised that he was now alone but that wasn’t what had woken him. He felt a strong pressure in his lower abdomen due to, he realised, the several IV bags that had been draining into him while he slept.

“Good evening Mr Parker,” JARVIS spoke softer than usual. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m” Peter rasped out before attempting to clear his throat. It was futile his voice was near enough inaudible. “I’m okay...where’s Tony?”

“You do should know not to lie to me Mr Parker, especially considering the events that transpired this morning when you would not allow me to assist you.” Tony has instructed JARVIS not to tell Peter he was speaking to May, as he knew Peter would go through the same train of thought he had as well as feeling guilty for disturbing the sick woman. “As for Mr Stark, he will be joining you shortly.”

Peter shifted on his bed “How shortly?” He asked in a small voice.

“I am not certain.”

He shifted again. This wasn’t good. Peter was always desperate to pee when he first woke up, always. If not he was already wet, which to his surprise, he wasn’t yet. Though he did make note he had been changed out of his clothes since he lost consciousness, which he prayed had been done by some machine.

A strong urge hit him and he leant forward, stuffing a hand between his legs. He squirmed constantly until the wave passed him, crossing his legs tightly under the covers.

“Mr Parker do I need to alert Dr Banner that you are in need of medical assistance?”

“N-n-no!” Peter said as loud as he could. “Please, don’t!”

“Then may I perform a vitals scan on you to determine the nature of your discomfort?”

“God, JARVIS, I just- I gotta- ooh!” He moaned leaning forward as he felt a leak escape him. He blinked away tears of embarrassment and pain before trying again. He couldn’t even admit his
need to a piece of AI software how on earth could he to a human who came to help him? Unless
JARVIS told them for him. As he came to that conclusion JARVIS, seemingly once again to have
read his mind (something Peter frequently questioned Tony about just to be met with no answer),
chimed in.

“Your bladder capacity is at seventy-three percent, Peter. Shall I notify someone that you are in
need of-“

“P-please don’t..j-just wait until Tony comes back okay..?” Peter sniffled still furiously squirming.

“Sir, I don’t believe you will be able to remain in control of your bodily functions until Mr Stark is
available.”

Peter didn’t answer, he just did everything he could to hold it in. He felt as though he had been
holding it for hours though it had only been five minutes since he woke up. He was in physical
pain, he couldn’t remember the last time, of any, he had waited this long to go since waking up. Let
alone with three IV bags of extra fluid needing to be filtered out of his system.

Not two minutes later his bladders resolve began to fail. Peter was just thankful that JARVIS didn’t
give him a ‘involuntary urination’ countdown. He was leaking steadily despite all of his efforts. He
looked around for another option, he couldn’t see anything he could use as an impromptu potty.
Even if he did he had too many wires sticking out of him to be able to take care of it on his own.

Peter sobbed silently as his muscles weakened and eventually gave out, releasing his overfull
bladder, flooding the sheets. The mattress protector offered no absorption so the puddle beneath
him spread and seeped into his clothes, soaking the poor feverish boy from groin to knees.

To add to the boys torment, five minutes after he’d finished soiling himself, Tony walked in.

“Mr Stark, Mr Parker has-“ Before JARVIS could continue his statement Tony caught sight of
Peter’s tear stained face and rushed forward.

“Kid?! What’s wrong?!!”

“I-I-I’m s-so s-s-s-o-“ Peter’s horse voice ended in a squeak as his stuttering became
unintelligible.

“Mr Parker has wet his bed sir.” JARVIS stated for him.

Tony breathed a sigh of relief, thanking whatever deities are out there that it wasn’t something
more serious. The relief quickly faded once he realised the situation he was now in.

“Pete..Petey, c’mere’” he soothed. Peter’s sobs had somehow managed to escalate since JARVIS’s
statement. Tony sat gingerly on the edge of the bed, knowing if his clothes got wet too the child
would be mortified (he was thankful Peter didn’t seem to remember vomiting over him a few hours
ago) and wrapped an arm around him; he shook him gently. “It’s just sheets. They can be washed.
You’re sick and you crashed pretty hard, we had to pump you full of stuff and you were asleep it
could happen to anyone. Hell, when I-“

“I w-wasn’t...I wasn’t...”

“Wasn’t what, bud?”

“I wasn’t asleep!” Peter cried out. “I woke up and I had to go so bad- so bad Mr Stark! B-but I tried
to hold it b-but I couldn’t a-and I couldn’t get up and no-no one was here so I-I-I didn’t mean to I-
I’m sorry please don’t hate me! Please don’t send me away!”
An Uncomfortable Experience

Chapter Summary

Two desperation experiences and one wetting wowee.
Peter remembers an unfortunate mishap during a car ride with Tony.

“Peter. Don’t even go there.” Tony cupped his streaked face with both hands. “Never. Never gonna happen. I told you your first week here that some wet clothes are never gonna make me love you any less.”

Peter thought back to that mortifying experience on the final drive up to the tower and cringed.

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It was the first day Tony had had off in a while. He was still dealing with the aftermath of one of the Avengers latest fights in a busy city and the clean up process had been a nightmare. It had been one thing after another for the past three months so he’d been really looking forward to this day. It was also extremely hot so he was even more glad to the excuse to wear something other than a suit.

Peter was excited. Up until that morning he hadn’t allowed himself to look forward to the move at all, only allowing himself to worry about his aunt, despite how much she was trying to reassure him. But now it all hit at once and he was bouncing off the walls.

Aunt May had left the previous evening to go to the facility she would be receiving her treatment in, so Peter had been alone that night. Both he and his Aunt were sad that she hadn’t been there to see him off, but in a way Peter was relieved. The night had been rough and he’d spent most of it crying, so the fact that May didn’t have to see that was good or he knew she would’ve called the entire thing off. He didn’t want her to know how scared he was, she didn’t need him being difficult on top of everything else. This morning however it was like all the bad feelings decided to give him the day off as he woke up bright and early already with a smile on his face.

‘This is it. I’m really going to live with Tony Stark.’ It was still so surreal, though he’d been mentored by the man for over year now. He grinned once more before hurrying to the bathroom to get ready.

Though Tony could’ve paid to have the entire kids housed packed up and shipped straight to the tower within the hour, he decided against it. He figured the kid would probably have a lot of mixed emotions right now, and as much as it made Tony uncomfortable to think about, maybe a bit of time alone bonding over something that wasn't strictly work related would do him some good. It was a good 4 hour drive from Peter’s small apartment back to Stark Tower (traffic forgiving), so Tony was praying they wouldn’t run out of things to talk about. Though with Peter he highly doubted that would be a problem.

Tony arrived just before noon in a large family car (probably his idea of being less conspicuous but it was still clearly too expensive to be in that area of town) dressed in a white shirt and jeans. Peter ran out to greet him but stopped abruptly and looked tony up and down.

“What?” Tony questioned, concerned about what on earth was gonna come out of the child’s
mouth this time.

“You just look so...normal.”

“Well, gee thanks and a good morning to you to.” Tony said sarcastically but smiled nonetheless.

It didn’t take them a quarter of an hour to get the contents of Peter’s room into the back of the people carrier.

“Aaaaaaand- that’s the last of it.” Pete grunted out after insisting on carrying one of the heaviest boxes by himself. “All set!”

“Aren’t you forgetting something?”

He paused looking perplexed before Tony jingled his pocket.

“OH! Keys!” Tony laughed as the boy quickly jumped over a wall and ran up to steps to the building to put his house keys under the mat for the landlord to find.

“Hold up kid, do you need to use the bathroom before we leave?” Tony ignored Peter’s blush and continued. “Go on, it’s a long drive up there.”

Peter didn’t argue, mostly because his bladder twinges at the mention of lack of bathroom opportunities, but also because he wanted this conversation to end as quickly as possible.

They set off soon after Peter chattering about his latest lego project him and Ned had been working on and Tony relaxed. He had half expected Peter to be in a much worse mood considering the circumstances, he was so relieved he actually found himself enjoying the idle conversation which through Tony’s promoting had quickly progressed onto a series of equations he’d been working on whilst looking a the structural integrity of his latest project. Peter was giving his thoughts on the problems when he was suddenly interrupted by his stomach loudly growling.

“Jesus,” Tony laughed. “Guess it’s time for lunch.”

Peter blushed but laughed along, he hadn’t realised how famished he was. He found himself drinking more of his water to silence his stomach temporarily.

“Forget to eat breakfast again?” Peter paused before nodding reddening slightly, yet again. “Oh Cap with have that kicked out of you in a week, he’s a stickler for it.”

“Tell me about it, they showed one of his PSA’s in homeroom last week.” Peter laughed and they both began quoting the ad with equally bad impressions of the Captain. His laughter made Peter realise that his bladder was starting to fill again.

“Are there any places to stop soon?” He tried to keep the sheepish tone out of his voice.

“Don’t worry kid we’ll get you some food soon.”

Peter settled in, listening to Tony talk for a while and avoiding drinking any more from his bottle. He got progressively more quiet as the minutes ticked by trying to focus all of his energy on his rapidly increasing desperation, the 8 oz of water he drank on an empty stomach making its way through is system. He shifted in his seat and took a deep breath through his nose. ‘Calm down Peter, we’re not even on the highway yet and Tony said we’ll stop soon you can hold it.’

“You alright, P?” Tony asked worriedly. He’d notice the child grow quieter and seen him stiffen
and close his eyes. Now he was breathing heavy.

“Uh huh.” ‘why of all things to call me right now, Pee’ he thought grouchily before realising he should probably give some kind of explanation as to why he was acting strangely. He couldn't think quick enough but fortunately Tony gave him one.

“You tired?” Peter quickly nodded. “I bet you were up late, huh?” Another nod.

Tony turned the radio down and pressed a button on the console that laid Peter’s chair down slightly; which Peter was thankful for as it gave his squashed bladder some more room. “You can close your eyes for a bit, I’ll let you know when we’re coming up to a place.”

Peter was grateful for the out and even more so for the fact that he could now fully focus on controlling himself without trying to stay present in the conversation too. He did however have to make sure not to squirm too much and give his cover away. Little did he know Tony was totally clued in on the situation but thought it best to avoid it until it was absolutely necessary.

After so long of working closely with a teenager, who gets very involved in projects to the point he ignores both his surroundings and his own needs, Tony he’s become used to Peter’s potty dance. He’d never draw attention to it, both as not to embarrass the kid and because he’s never been good at approaching potentially sensitive subjects. Peter had always tried to impress Tony and never said if he needed anything. He’d never asked for breaks or water or even where pieces of equipment were (he’d usually wait until Tony also needed it so he’d see where it was kept or until the man questioned him as to why he’d stopped working). Up until this point Tony had never run into this problem with the boy, as he’d always had JARVIS or Karen to tell Tony beforehand and he’s never been in a place without readily available restrooms nearby.

Although, it did occur to Tony that perhaps this was an opportunity to help the kid break free of his habit of not voicing his needs.

Internally Peter was beginning to panic. He knew he wouldn’t be able to wait much longer and now he had to feign sleep and refrain from squirming it was near impossible to keep from leaking. With his eyes shut he couldn't see whether or not they were coming up to a place to stop and he could feel every tiny movement of the car. Lucky for him Tony was pulling into a fast food parking lot not even a minute later.

Tony shook him gently. “Up and at ‘em kid.”

Pretending, badly, to wake up from a deep sleep by dramatically yawning and stretching (which was a bad idea as it put more strain on his already overfilled bladder).

“Drive through or eat in?” This was Tony’s way of giving the boy a chance to voice his need and luckily Peter took it.

“Eat in!” He blushed. “Uh, please.”

Breathing a sigh of relief, Tony put the car in park and got out, pretending not to see the young teen grab himself when he thought he was out of Tony’s line of sight. He was glad he wouldn’t have to press further to get the kid to chose the latter. Had Peter said drive through though he know he would have had to say something to avoid the kid peeing in his seat. He was grateful that awkward conversation didn't have to happen for both his sake and the child’s.

They walked inside, Peter walking slightly behind Tony so he had the opportunity to grab himself as he needed, and they were met with a small cue to the counter. Tony decided it was best not to
push the kid anymore that day.

“What do you want? I’ll order you can go grab us a table.” Tony waited a second for an answer before turning around to see the boy struggling to get his wallet out of his pocket whilst still squirming. “What are you doing?”

“Ge-getting my money out?” Peter breathed out still struggling. Tony just sighed and shook his head in response.

“Go to the bathroom, we can worry about that later.” He pinched the bridge of his nose, that way he could avoid Peter arguing with him and the kid would be saved the embarrassment of his mentor seeing him dash to the bathroom (not that that was an uncommon occurrence). He sighed again whilst checking over the menu. He’d given the boy a perfect out to use the bathroom without having to say anything and he still found a way to make things difficult. Though at this point he didn’t expect any less.

It had been close. Peter managed to get his pants undone just in the nick of time, making it out with only a small damp patch on them. He cringed while washing his hands, both at the uncomfortable wetness in his underwear and the fact his attempts to be surreptitious about his potty emergency had clearly failed. Well at least he’d made it and he hadn’t had to make himself admit it out right. Still on his first day of living with the man and they hadn’t even made it home yet...he shook the thought from his head as his stomach growled again and Peter suddenly realised how good food smelled right now.

Tony was already sitting at a booth by the window with two meals in front of him. Apparently being famous gets you to the front of the line, which Peter had never been more grateful for.

“Better?” Peter blushed and Tony smirked. “I got you the kids meal with carrot sticks.”

Peter frowned indignantly for a second before recognising the mans tone then sat down. “Ha ha, very funny. I could’ve paid you know.”

Tony simply rolled his eyes in response as he wasn’t about to have that conversation again. Peter grumbled before tucking in to his burger and letting the recent memory of his near accident leave his mind.

They were back on the road again within the hour (Tony had suggested Peter use the restroom again before they left which he did) and this time Peter really was feeling tired. Full stomach combined with the steady motion of the car and the gentle breeze of the AC, soon had him yawning. Tony decided to give up trying to make conversation as once again the boy became quieter. He lowered the radio but gently hummed along letting the over excited teenager drift off without drawing attention to it.

They still had a good 2 and a half hours before they got to the tower, in which Tony was content to let the boy sleep. He hoped in vain that this would help avoid anymore incidents but knowing Peter he knew he had little chance of that happening.

However, Peter slept through the entire rest of the journey, even through an extra half an hour traffic jam. This worried the man slightly as they passed several rest stops before they’d arrived and he had been unsure as whether or not to wake the kid up. He decided against it ultimately as he couldn't see any outward signs of discomfort.

As he pulled into his underground garage he tapped Peter on the shoulder and to his surprise the boy immediately sat bolt upright, almost garroting himself with his seat belt.
“I’m up!” He blinked groggily. He looked around the dimly lit cement room then back at Tony. “Hi.”

“Hi.” Tony laughed. “You were out like a light there, kiddo.” He felt a strange urge to ruffle the kids hair but fought against it instead reaching over to undo the boys belt before his own the stepping out of the van.

Peter shook himself awake and went to step out of the car also but he was jolted by a familiar sense of urgency in his abdomen. He let out a small yelp before clamping his legs together tightly. He sat still for a moment in the car, begging the wave of desperation to pass long enough for him to stand up before Tony realised there was something wrong.

“You coming or am I carrying these boxes myself?” Tony had appeared next to his open door with two boxes stacked under one arm. Peter cringed but quickly stepped out. As soon as his feet hit the concrete he felt another intense wave travel up his legs and back down his spine making him bend in two.

“What’s the matter?” Tony put the boxes on the roof of the vehicle. “You gonna puke?”

Peter whined and shook his head before burying his hands in his crotch.

“Shit,” Tony muttered. “It’s okay come on we’ll get you to a bathroom there’s one a couple floors up.”

Tony was unsure where to touch him without jarring him so he just gently placed a hand on Peter’s back in an attempt to lead him but he didn’t budge.

“Mmm..” Peter whined again. This couldn’t be happening, he’d managed not to have one accident today it couldn’t be happening again. He could feel tears welling up in his eyes and struggled to blink them away. The pressure in his bladder was excruciating. “Can’t.”

“I know, but you have to move, kid. Come on, it’s not far.” Tony stated awkwardly. What the hell was he supposed to do now, he wished Steve had been the one to deal with this he had no idea how to comfort someone who clearly was not going to make it to the restroom. As many close calls he’s had with Peter it had never been this close.

While Tony was having an internal debate on how to deal with the situation Peter’s bladder was starting to lose it’s resolve for the second time that day. His underwear was quickly becoming saturated again and this time he felt some trail down his leg. He whimpered and tightened his grip before stumbling forward in the direction Tony was gently pulling him. Tears had started readily falling down his hot cheeks without his permission but he didn’t have the time or energy to deal with them. His only focus was getting to the restroom without fully disgracing himself in front of the man who had literally just taken him in.

“You can do it, Pete. Almost there.” That was a lie, they weren’t even ten steps away from the car, but he was trying his best to be some kind of comfort for the poor desperate teenager that was moments away from losing it.

“M-Mr Stark, Sir, I-I can’t, I-I’m so sorry it’s- it’s I can’t-  ugh!” Another stream made its way down Peter’s leg, now visibly dampening his jeans.

“Breathe. It’s okay. It’s alright.” Tony had no idea what to say other than try and assure Peter that he wasn’t angry with him (as he was sure that would be the boys first thought when this was all over). The two of them remained in relative silence, other than Peter’s moans and hisses of pain.
Part of Tony wanted to tell him just to let go but he knew that Peter would never let go deliberately nor did he feel that was an appropriate thing to say to a fragile 15 year old boy.

But it didn’t take long for the inevitable to happen. They hadn’t moved another five steps before the dam broke. Peter felt as his bladder gave way to the torrent of urine he’d been barely keeping at bay as it cascaded down his legs, audibly hissing as it splashed against the cement. Tony removed his hand from his back and looked away as though to give him some semblance of privacy as he finished emptying his bladder all over the garage floor. After around 30 seconds the hissing stopped and the silence was broken by a heart shattering sob. Tony waited for a stream of ‘I’m sorry’s to come out of Peter’s mouth, but instead he stood their gawking at the mess he’d made, seemingly in shock.

His knees shook and Tony put his hand back on Peter’s shoulder to steady him.

“It’s alright. It’s alright come on.”

“I..I’m so..” Peter choked on his words and tears started falling freely down his face once again, which he furiously wiped away. Not only had he just wet himself like a baby now he was crying like one, right in front of Mr. Stark.

“Shh, I know, okay? I know. Don’t worry about it. Everyone has to go when they first wake up.”

“Y-yeah,” Peter sniffed still angrily rubbing his eyes. “And everyone else can hold it like an adult.”

“Nope. Shut it. Not going down that road of self deprecation. It was an accident, it’s over, it’s not your fault, it happens.” Tony listed off all of the usually phrases he thought would apply to this situation. “I’ll text happy to leave some clothes in the elevator. This won’t leave this room.” The Tony did something Peter had never expected in a million years. He held up his pinky.

“Really?” Peter chuckled slightly still sniffling.

“Oh, but of course. A pinky promise is the highest level of unbreakable word. I'm pretty sure it's still highly regarded as a legally binding contract in the court of law.” Tony said wiggling the digit ‘at least I got the kid to smile,’. Peter grasped Tony’s pinky with his and laughed again, maybe he hadn’t messed this up.

“No another word about it okay?” Peter nodded. “Good- now let’s get these boxes moved.”

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“B-but that was different- and you said you’d never- wait..” Tony’s words suddenly hit him like a freight train. “Did you just say you love me..?”

“Of course I do. Maybe I should’ve said it earlier but of course I do. I wouldn’t give you so many rules or make sure you eat and drink regularly and I certainly wouldn’t have gone and grabbed a bear for a 15 year old sick kid to sleep with if I didn’t love him. So, now that’s out of the way, let’s get you cleaned up, kid.” Tony quickly cleared his throat, despite his emotions at that moment he still didn’t find that overt expression of affection particularly comfortable.

Peter let himself smile, that was the first time he heard the man openly express his feelings, well any feelings really. That smile dropped when the realisation hit him that May must’ve told the man about his stuffed animal.

“If you tell anyone I swear to god-”

“I already updated a selfie with it to twitter-”
“NOT FUNNY!”
Over the next few weeks Tony wouldn’t let Peter out of his sight and the boy was starting to feel the strain. The first three days while he was recovering had been rather nice and he’d relished in the attention he was getting. But once he’d started to feel better he was finding the man’s constant presence rather suffocating. Two weeks later and Peter was going insane. Everyone had noticed Peter’s decline in enthusiasm but Tony felt it was necessary to give the boy more boundaries despite his darkening mood. Bruce still hadn’t cleared him to continue his training, insisting his oesophagus needed time to fully repair itself. At that point he was feeling completely fine so he was becoming increasingly frustrated by following doctors orders.

It seemed everyone was against him as even Thor had prevented Peter from entering the gym early one morning.

“I’m sorry young one, I can’t allow you to enter in your current state.”

“I’m fine! Do I look sick to you?!?” Peter pouted. He knew how childish he sounded but he didn’t care. After weeks of being forced to do nothing and being under constant surveillance, he’d built up so much pent up energy that he was just bursting to run some of it off. “You’ve seen kids my age attack each other with battle axes- but I can’t go on a freakin’ treadmill?!”

“What I did in my youth does not compare to your situation, young mortal. And mind your language before Steve hears you. I will not be held responsible.” Thor laughed before turning Peter in the other direction. “I’m sure you’ll be fit and ready for battle again soon.”

Peter didn’t answer and simply stormed off to his room, passing Tony in the hall.

“Where were yo-”

“Nowhere.” Peter grunted.

“Oh dear.” Tony suppressed a chuckle.

“What?!” Peter snapped staring sulkily at the man.

“Nothing, kiddo.” He ruffled his hair deliberately annoying the boy further, making his frown deepen. Peter huffed loudly and continued stomping down the hallway into his room and flopped dramatically on his bed (since he couldn’t slam his sliding door).

“Breakfast in twenty minutes sunshine!” Tony cheerily called down the hallways before making his way to the kitchen, smiling to himself. He poured himself a cup of coffee greeting Steve as he sat down. “Mornin’ Cap.”

“Good morning. What’re you smiling about?” Steve eyed him suspiciously. He always got an uneasy feeling when Tony had that mischievous look in his eye.
“Our little boy is turning into a grouchy teenager that’s all.” He grinned again. “I can feel a full blown temper tantrum coming on.”

“Don’t tease the boy,” Steve frowned slightly but kept his tone light. “I’d be ready to have a hissy fit if I had you breathing down my neck for a fortnight.”

“I know, I know I don’t blame him. It’s just a little entertaining to be on the other side of teenage angst.”

“Cut him some slack.” Steve rolled his eyes. He knew Tony too well to think he wouldn’t antagonise the boy a little.

“I’m not gonna do anything mean!” Tony said still smirking. “Scout’s honour. I’ll give him a little more space and see what he’ll do with it.”

Peter was still curled up on his bed sulking, scrolling absentmindedly through his phone. This was so unfair, even May hadn’t babied him this much and she still cut his pancakes into fun shapes. Though admittedly the chocolate chip Millennium Falcon had been pretty cool. He rolled over again sighing. He just wanted some time to do what he wanted. If he had to sit in the lab for 8 hours straight he should at least be able to do something fun. Since he’d gotten sick Tony wouldn’t even so much as let him touch his suit in case he got any ‘smart ideas’. Wasn’t that the whole point of a mentee? To have smart ideas?

He ignored the first two times he was called for breakfast. He knew he wasn’t going to get out of eating, but he wanted to be as difficult as possible. However, he felt a pang of guilt when Steve came to his door, instead of having JARVIS send him to the kitchen.

“Hey Buddy, you up?” Steve called softly through the door. His tone made Peter want to drop his attitude as he knew Steve wasn’t responsible to the choices Tony had been making for him. But the thought of being forced to sit through another meal, then straight into another day of being Tony’s shadow (not even the fun kind that gets to do stuff) helped keep his mood freshly soured.

“No.” He mumbled into his pillow. Steve sighed gently.

“Can I come in?”

Peter sat up hugging the pillow to his chest. “I guess.”

Steve came in and lent against the wall nearest the door. “What’s up?”

Peter just shrugged. He knew he was being a brat and he should just admit to Steve, as well as Tony, why he was in such a bad mood. But the thought of being forced to sit through another meal, then straight into another day of being Tony’s shadow (not even the fun kind that gets to do stuff) helped keep his mood freshly soured.

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Peter just shrugged. He knew he was being a brat and he should just admit to Steve, as well as Tony, why he was in such a bad mood. But he was so frustrated, he didn’t want anyone to understand and at that moment he didn’t feel as though he deserved anyone being nice to him, he just wanted to be left alone. Was that so much to ask for?

Steve smiled sadly before sitting at the edge of the bed next to Peter. “I know it’s been a lot lately kid. But we’re not the enemy we’re just trying to help you.”

“There’s nothing wrong with me.” Peter snapped coldly. All the guilty feelings were quickly being washed away with new, hot anger towards Steve himself. He didn’t understand, he didn’t know what Peter was going through because he hadn’t told him. Why should he sit here and be patronised?

“I didn’t mean it like that.” Steve’s face softened and he looked sad. “I’m sorry. Just know that whatever it feels like, you’re not on your own here, okay? You can talk to us.”
Peter kept his mouth shut, not wanting to say anything he’d regret. As angry as he felt right now, he knew better than to lash out and hurt people. He nodded in reply.

“Come get something to eat.” Steve patted his arm and stood up, waiting for Peter to stand also before walking out. Another pang of guilt rang through the boy. The man was being so patient with him, he knew he didn’t deserve it. Steve was probably just being nice to him because he felt sorry for him anyways.

Everyone was deep in conversation by the time Peter had joined them. He sat down between Natasha and Bruce. Bruce quickly slided him a plate that already had strawberries on it.

“Figured I’d save you some before the human garbage disposal absorbed them all,” He gestured pointedly at Thor who had his mouthful as per usual. This managed to get a snort of laughter from Peter, which he noticed immediately made Steve smile.

“So what’re your plans today?”

Pete’s face fell a little and he shrugged. “I don’t know whatever Tony has in store for me today. What about you?”

“Just some research into antibodies, nothing interesting.”

“Can’t I come shadow you for once?”

Bruce smiled at that. “I don’t think you’d have much fun sitting in my lab all day Peter.”

“I don’t have much fun with Mr. Stark either,” He muttered picking at the food on his plate. Peter drifted out of the various conversations around him and sat quietly until he realised his name was being called.

“Peter? Peter. Peeeeter. Peter!” Tony was chorusing in various different tones. “Oh you’re back with us! How was your trip? I said, do you have any plans for tonight after work?”

Peter sighed. Great not only did he have to spend all day being bored he got to spend the little free time he did get being bored too!

“No, sir.”

Tony decided against pulling him up on the ‘sir’ business at that particular moment. “Well, there’s a theatre downtown that doing a rerun of the old planet of the apes movies if you wanted to go.”

“Really?!” That was the last thing Peter had been expecting (which showed clearly on his face much to Tony’s satisfaction). He immediately felt even worse about his recent behaviour, storming around the place like a typical ungrateful teenager. He knew his aunt would be deeply disappointed in him had she known.

“No I thought I’d-”

“Don’t ruin this with sarcasm.” Peter grinned.

“There is one condition.”

“Ugh. What is it?” His face fell instantly, he had a feeling he knew what was coming.

“We have a meeting this afternoon.”

“Uuuumuuugh- fine. But I’m not wearing a tie!” Even with that knowledge it didn’t dampen his
mood and he found himself enjoying Tony’s company once again that day.

Despite how Tony reacted initially to Peter’s attitude that morning, he’d overheard the boy’s conversation with Bruce and he too felt a pang of guilt. He hadn’t intentionally meant to bore the boy he was just trying to be extra cautious to ensure he didn’t miss something important again. In hindsight he could see how his young apprentice had been bored out of his mind, when he was that age he would’ve acted out far before that and much worse than Peter had. With a shiver he realised how his own father must’ve found provoking him entertaining, with the amount of arguments and restrictions he had in his youth, and he was determined not to do the same with Peter. Finding the occasional tantrum endearing was one thing but deliberately causing them was another.

Tony hadn’t spent any quality time with the boy, despite two weeks worth of opportunities. They had spent their days in the lab in relative silence (which Tony now knew was down to the boy resenting him rather than him being intensely focused or still feeling unwell). Their dynamic had shifted since Tony had told Peter he loved him and this worried the man. Had he scared Peter? Was is inappropriate of him to have said that, both at the time and in general? He had tried not to dwell on it but now he had arranged to do a fun activity with the kid he couldn’t stop mulling it over.

Peter was much less anxious about the day than Tony. He was excited to spend some time outside of the tower and watching old movies was one of his favourite pastimes. He hadn’t felt weird about the man telling him he loved him (though he was anxious that Tony hadn’t meant it as the subject wasn’t mentioned again). He felt relieved that his feelings were reciprocated and that he hadn’t been the first one to say it; he’d almost slipped up several times. It had dawned on him after that he hadn’t said it back, he just hoped Tony knew.

Their work day was pretty productive, much more than it had been as Peter was actually contributing. The morning flew by quickly and before long they grabbed a quick lunch and head to their rooms to change in preparation for the meeting. Every time Pete grumbled Tony said;

“Just focus on the task at hand. One hour- two max, then me and you in the movie theatre. Gorging ourselves on all the candy Steve won’t keep in the house and watching a bunch of badly made up chimps take over the world.”
An Awkward Meeting

Chapter Summary

Soooooo long time no see. Sorry about that! Anyway, this chapter was really rushed because I'd forgotten where I had left off and already had ideas for a couple new chapters; basically I just wanted to get his one out of the way so I'm sorry if it's not the best...
Spiderling swears a bit in this one- so be warned!

But it wasn’t two hours, it was coming up to three hours when the meeting finally began. One of the representatives had been stuck in traffic or something- not that Peter cared. He was already tired of sitting down for so long and Tony kept chastising him for slumping in his seat.

“You could at least make it look like you want to be here,” he murmured in a hushed tone through the side of his mouth, deliberately not looking at the boy.

“Well I don’t.” Peter hissed back, getting more irritated by the lack of eye contact.

Tony decided against replying, he could feel anger rising in his chest and he knew better than to snap at the kid. Instead he chose to ignore him for a while, in hopes he could avoid exacerbating the situation.

Peter pouted, but sat up straight in his chair. A tall man, with a long dark trench coat ‘like those guys outta the matrix’ and an eye patch was the last man to silently stroll into the room and take a seat at the far corner of the room, as opposed to around the table with the rest of the men in suits. Peter found himself sitting a little straighter when the man’s eye scanned the room, resting on him for a moment. Though his gaze wasn’t threatening, it certainly felt intimidating.

Tony stood suddenly, making Peter jump a bit, and tapped a stack of papers on the table. “Fury! Well, thank you for gracing us with your presence!”

The man didn’t smile, or respond at all really, but Tony didn’t seem phased. He began addressing the room about what needed to be done in regards to rebuilding part of downtown and the clean up and refurb and something about recovery of alien tech and...and Peter zoned out.

Despite his attitude he had tried to focus and retain the information, but it was so boring! They kept using trade terms that Peter didn’t understand and he had very little regard to architecture beyond the point of ‘wow that building is pretty- I bet I could scale that easily’. And it was going on forever. He had nothing to occupy himself with. He’d been idly deconstructing a pen before putting it back together, but he stopped after a piece had been flicked off of the table and rolled under the man, who he now knew only as ‘Fury’’s, seat. The whole room had briefly stopped and looked at him, at that feeling made Peter want to crawl in a hole and die. So, he’d resigned to keeping his hands in his lap and staring at various items on the table. He dared not glance at the clock.

Tony still hadn’t addressed the boy, not that Peter had expected him to in the middle on the meeting; but sitting with nothing but your thoughts had a way of wearing on you, and Peter was becoming increasingly anxious that Tony was angry with him. He started to bite his lip anxiously and he shifted in his seat. ‘Damn, not now..’
He looked up at the clock noting that the meeting itself had been going on for an hour now, but Tony was still talking. Nobody else in the room had presented their ideas yet. He shifted again, he didn’t have to go that bad, right? He’d had only just felt it, surely it was just his anxiety tricking him.

Over the next fifteen minutes later, Peter realised his brain was not in fact playing tricks on him and his bladder seemed to be filling more rapidly than usual. During that time Tony had finally sat down. Peter had barely noticed until he felt a tap on his arm jolting him.

“What’s up?” Tony whispered, looking pointedly at him over his glasses he wore to make him look more sophisticated. He’d felt Peter’s mood change from bored to anxious rather rapidly.

“Nothing, Mr. Stark, I’m fine.”

“You sure?”

“Yes, Sir.” Tony cringed a little at Peter’s last reply but didn’t press further. He figured he’d been wrong and the kid was still mad at him for dragging him to the meeting, or that he was simply being formal for the sake of the company they were in. He pulled away from Peter, returning his focus to the vendor who currently had the floor and Peter’s heart sank.

Maybe he really was mad at him for being a brat. Usually he wouldn’t have dropped the subject so easily, maybe this was his punishment. Peter felt his cheeks getting red and his eyes getting hot. ‘Stop it, Peter, get a hold of yourself. Man up. You’re not a little kid, act your age,’ with that thought he took a deep breath and attempted to straighten up in his chair again. He felt his bladder twinge at the sudden movement, making him bend forward quickly. He felt eyes on him again, but didn’t look up. Instead he reached down, pretending to mess with his sock or something. When he finally looked up again, no one was looking at him. No one, except the man in the corner.

Peter made eye contact with him, but looked away red in the face. Once again Peter tried to distract himself with the conversations around the room, but it wouldn’t work, his bladder kept coming to the forefront of his mind. It was getting increasingly difficult to ignore and it was getting uncomfortable; as was the man watching him. Every time he dared to look, his eyes would meet the man’s piercing stare. He didn’t understand why and that on top of his bladder screaming at him was only making the anxiety in his chest build and build. Whilst Fury was staring at him, Peter didn’t dare to squirm. He continuously tensed and untensed his thighs but that would only help for so long before he’d have to cross his legs.

He didn’t know what to do. He wasn’t sure about what could be socially appropriate in this setting. Should he raise his hand- ‘no, Peter, don’t be stupid, this isn’t school’. He was still worried about embarrassing Tony and he wasn’t sure if the man was still mad at him. Maybe he should just walk out, if anyone questioned him he’d just excuse himself to the restroom, surely he wouldn’t get in trouble for that..

Tony had felt the boy throwing himself around in the seat, but again chalked it up to him being restless. Almost four hours in one room would drive any kid insane, let alone one with Peter’s attention span. He was proud of him for sticking it out as long as he had. He happen to glance back at Nick Fury and was somewhat surprised to see him staring at his young ward. He then looked at Peter, only to see him bright red and practically shaking.

“Pete. What’s going on?” The boy nearly jumped out of his skin.

“Huh? N-n-nothin’ M-Mr. Stark. S-sorry,” Stammering and hyperventilating, shit that wasn’t good.
The government official who had been speaking noticed he’d lost Tony’s attention and paused clearing his throat, before his eyes fell on the boy beside him. “Uh, Mr Stark, Sir?”

Just as Tony opened his mouth, not knowing entirely what to say, Fury stood up from the corner of the room. “Gentlemen,” the entire room turned to look at him. “I’m afraid we’ve run out of time today, I need Mr. Stark to accompany me on some urgent business. So, we’re gonna have to reschedule this meeting for another time.” He gestured to door with one hand, leaving no room for argument. Some of the men looked as though they wanted to argue, but ultimately decided against it for obvious reasons. They all gathered their things quickly before filing out of the room looking disgruntled.

During all this Peter sat there shaking silently. What the men didn’t realise was Tony startling Peter had set of a chain reaction in the child’s body. He put his head down on the desk, covering his face with his arms as his bladder betrayed him, steadily wetting himself.

“Pete? Pete, look at me. What’s the matter?” Tony gently shook the boy, who was now silently sobbing, still having no idea what had brought on the sudden panic attack. He looked up at Fury, who was still standing at the end of the table opposite the pair. Nick looked back at him silently for a moment, before gesturing once again, this time to beneath the table. Once Tony laid eyes on the small puddle beneath Peter’s chair he cursed himself. “Ah, shit Peter—”

“I’m sorry, I’m so sorry, I can’t believe this is happening again, Mr Stark I- this wasn’t on purpose I swear, I just Oh my god—” Peter was back sitting upright pulling away from the man, having once again mistaken Tony’s tone for frustration towards him. He turned and attempted to get out of the chair, but the man’s arm kept him firmly in place.

“No, no Peter, Peter. We’re not doing this again, remember? I’m not mad, just sit down. Sit, there, breathe. Look at me! Breathe. It’s okay,” Tony pulled Peter’s chair so that the boy was facing him. “You’re okay, Pete, you’re not in trouble, I promise. You just gotta calm down for me bud, okay?”

Peter nodded sniffing wetly, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand.

“Good, that’s good. Everything’s fine, no one saw.” He look up at Nick for a second to see the man on his phone before exiting the room, silently. “What happened?”

“I’m s-so stupid!” Peter’s embarrassment quickly turned to anger. “I should’ve just asked b-but I couldn’t! I didn’t know when was the right time, and I thought you were mad and for fuck sake I’m too old to be pissing my pants cause I’m too afraid to ask!”

Tony sat back for a second, mostly out of shock from Peter’s cursing. “Okay, well A you’re not stupid, I wouldn’t have a stupid person as my apprentice. B, that’s called social anxiety kid and a lot of people suffer from it and that’s okay, we can work on it together. C, everyone has accidents, yeah, don’t look at me like that, I know it’s a line people tell their kids but it’s true. And D, watch. Your damn. Mouth. Got it? I might swear like a sailor but I don’t want to hear it from you. Besides, Steve would have a heart attack if he heard you drop an F-bomb. Now come on, the coast should be clear by now.”

Peter blinked a couple times, nodding to show he acknowledged what the man had said, before standing up to follow him out of the room. He hesitated, glancing back at the mess he’d made. “Shouldn’t I—”

“Don’t worry, come on, we still have time to get dinner before the first showing if we hurry.”

Peter blinked again, confused as to what the man was talking about. “Wha- oh! Wait, we’re still
“Well, yeah. Unless you don’t feel up to it?”

“N-no, no I do-” He cut himself off.

“If you want to go, we’re going, no punishing yourself today. I’m sure you feel bad enough already so, come on.”

After Peter cleaned, the two got in one of Tony’s cars and headed out. Tony himself was happy not to mention the incident, not wanting to embarrass the teen further. Though he knew he’d have to keep a better eye on the boy from now on. Ignoring the pangs of guilt in favour of cheering the boy up, Tony made a mental note to thank Fury later, and resigned himself to listening to the endless fact Pete was spouting about the Planet of the apes franchise.

“Oh, and Tony?” Tony zoned back into what he was saying. “Thank you. For earlier I mean.”

“You’re welcome, Kid. Don’t worry about it, just know for next time, you can get up and leave. No one’s gonna stop you.”

“Yeah..I guess I shoulda figured that out though, huh?”

“Not necessarily. It was your first time in that kind of environment. It’s scary.”

“Yeah. So, what was with the pirate dude?”

Tony nearly spat coffee everywhere. “Did you just refer to Nick Fury as ‘the pirate dude’?!”

“Well, yeah but I didn’t- I didn’t mean it in an offensive way! I just- oh, you know what I mean!” Peter huffed before laughing too. “But seriously, what was up with him? He was just staring at me the whole time.”

“You don’t think your potty dance got his attention?” Tony smirked.

“Well, you didn’t notice.”

Tony’s smirk dropped. “He was just looking out for you kid. He’s been pretty vocal about his opinion on a teenager working with us.”

Peter pouted. “Oh, cause I’m a kid I’m not as good as everyone else?”

“Off your high-horse there, bud. He just doesn’t think it’s the right environment for a child and I agree.”

With that Peter scowled and muttered under his breath. “You weren’t saying that in Germany..”

“I’m sorry what was that?” Tony was bemused rather than angry. Though he didn’t want to push Peter’s buttons today.

“Nothing...I’m sorry.”

“Better. No more attitude sassy-pants.”

“Do not call me that.” Peter laughed.

The rest of their day went without incident. Peter’s enthusiasm was infectious, so even Tony ended up thoroughly enjoying the marathon. Throughout each film, Tony had his own director’s narration
going on, Peter whispering fun facts in a hushed voice in his ear every time the boy remembered something interesting. Had anyone else talked through a movie the way Pete did, he would’ve ended up screaming at them (like he had so often done with Thor) but Peter’s excitement was so endearing the man found himself enjoying the movie even more with Peter’s added content. Naturally, Tony kept a very close eye on Peter’s liquid consumption for the rest of the evening, having to prompt the boy to go during the movies several times.

“But this is the best part!” Peter hissed, rocking in his seat.

“You’ve said that four times. How many times have you seen this movie?”

“That’s not the point!” He whined, getting up anyway.

“Bring me back some popcorn.”

“Getcha own dang popcorn!”
School started up again the following week, so it took some time for everyone to settle into their new routines. Peter had been insistent on taking the bus, then walking to and from school everyday, which Tony had reluctantly agreed to. He wanted the boy to keep some semblance of normality, but he did have Happy follow the boys route everyday and keep his schedule open to if Peter ever changed his mind and wanted a ride. Peter had been happy to start school again, he’d missed seeing Ned and MJ everyday, now that he couldn’t have his friends over to his house.

Peter’s days followed a strict pattern for the most part; get up, go to school, come home, nap for a couple hours, eat dinner, work in the lab and then back to sleep to do it all over again. It was friday and Peter was in his last period of the day, Physics. He always found it boring since the material was no challenge for him, so he sat at the back of the class, yawning; both out of boredom and the fact that he hadn’t gotten much sleep the night before. He scribbled designs for a new kind of arc reactor in his notebook while staring at the clock with heavy lids.

He felt his phone buzz in his pocket, so he sneaked it out under the table. It was a text from Happy.

Happy: Change of plans. I’m picking you up, bring anything you need for homework this weekend.

Peter thought this was odd so quickly replied.

Peter: What’s going on?

Happy: You shouldn’t have your phone out in class.

Peter: You shouldn’t text me in class?

No response. Peter chuckled to himself until he got another text.

Mr. Stark: Don’t sass Happy.

He pouted a little but slid his phone back into his jeans and waited for the bell. He gathered a few textbooks from his locker before using the bathroom and heading outside. He got in the passenger side of Happy’s car.

“How was sch-”

“What’s going on? Where we going? Are those my bags?”

Happy sighed. “Tony wants you to join them on a recon mission in-”

“A mission?! Really?!”

“Yes.”

“Woah! Oh my god! Where?! What’s the mission-“
“Look, kid you’ll get briefed when we get there, okay? I don’t have much information either.” That was a lie, but Happy would give anything not to be bombarded with anymore questions. He knew what the kid was like whilst travelling. Besides if he told Peter everything he was pretty sure he’d explode before he even set foot in the compound.

“Oh, right, yeah yeah. So, where are we going?”

“To one of S.H.E.I.L.D’s bases, a couple hours away. You’ve been to the bathroom right?”

Peter blushed a little but indignantly said yes.

“Good, I don’t plan on stopping. We’re on a tight schedule, Tony did suggest taking a helicopter but I sai-“

“No way! A helicopter?! Can you fly one of those?!”

Happy gritted his teeth. He was trying his best not to snap, he didn’t wanna spoil the kids mood when he was this excited, but it’s hard not to get irritated when someone is cutting you off every ten seconds. He let Peter interrogate him for a few more minutes before saying. “Look, kid. It’s a long drive, isn’t it around the time you take a nap now anyways?”

Peters expression soured slightly and Happy was taken aback by his resemblance to Tony in that moment. “I’m not a little kid. I don’t need an afternoon nap.”

“I wasn’t saying it like that. Mr. Stark just mentioned you get pretty tired in the afternoons, that’s all. I know you have to get up early to take the bus.”

“I’ll be fine, I’m not tired I’m pumped!” His first actual mission as an avenger! Officially! There was no way he could even think about sleep now!

The drive for Peter was a long one, though not nearly as long as it was for Happy. They pulled up to a giant glass building- nothing like what Peter had been expecting.

“What exactly were you expecting?” Happy grumbled.

“Well, you know- for it to be more old looking! Like a hidden in plain sight kind of thing. No one expects the old military base to still be functioning. Oh! Or like it looks like a port-a-potty or a phone booth- then you put in a code and it beams us underground all like-“

“Sorry to disappoint there Underoos, but we ain’t the men in black.” Tony chuckled.

“Oh, hey Mr. Stark! No, no this place is awesome!” Peter whipped himself around, not having realised his mentor was there, beaming.

“I’m glad you like it,” Tony strolled casually, putting his arm over Peter’s shoulder, leading him inside. He pointed past what Peter assumed was a reception area, though no one sat behind the large white desk. “Speaking of port-a-potties, bathrooms just through there.”

Peter blushed lightly, quickly dashing to the restroom. He hadn’t noticed but his bouncing hadn’t been entirely down to his excitement. By the time he exited the restroom, the rest of the team had gathered in the lounge area.

“Hey guys!”

A chorus of greetings and pet names resounded amongst the group. Once all their bags had been
taken, Tony led them into an adjacent room, not dissimilar to the one where Peter had joined for Tony’s meeting. Everyone took their respective seats which, much to Peter’s momentary distress, all seemed to be pre decided. Peter stood awkwardly for a second not knowing where to sit but Clint whistled and pulled out a seat between him and Natasha, beckoning Peter to join them. He breathed a sigh of relief settling ion waiting for Tony to debrief them.

Much to his surprise, Steve stood up. Tony and Fury were moving things around behind the monitor, what looked to be cases of armour and other machinery. Steve cleared his throat. Peter sat anxiously in his seat, ready to hear about this important mission-

“Before we start does anyone want anything? Coffee?” Steve asked with a smile.

Peter crumpled down in his seat a little disappointed, trying to keep the pout off of his face. Happy had said that they were on a tight schedule! This was meant to be a matter of grave importance! Wasn’t time meant to be of the essence or something like that? Then it occurred to him that maybe Happy had just said that to avoid Peter asking to stop.

“Thor? Nat? Kid?” Steve had made his way around the room asking for people’s beverage choices. “Kid?”

“What- who, um, sorry what was that?” The group snickered fondly.

“Want anything to drink? A snack or anything?”

“Oh, um, coffee sounds good.” He said hopefully.

“No it doesn’t.” Tony chimed in walking behind him. “The kid’ll have apple juice.” He said directly to Steve, slapping Peter on both shoulders before continuing down the room to search through what Peter could only assume was another case of tech.

“What? No! So I can come on a mission but I can’t drink coffee?!” Peter’s face was that of complete offence as he glanced round the room looking for some kind of back-up. The adults simply smiled at him or averted their gaze.

“Sorry, kiddo.” Steve chuckled. “Bruce, what about you?”

“I think I’ll have apple juice too. You know how caffeine gets me.” He winked at Peter who briefly smiled back before he resumed pouting.

“Okay with that out of the way we can get down to business.” With that the boy perked up again. Both Tony and Nick took their seats; Nick being opposite Peter, much the the child’s mortification. He avoided eye contact but once again he met his gaze when glancing up at the man, who offered him a small smile before turning his eye towards Steve. That somewhat calmed Peter a bit and he also looked back to the captain.

“Okay, so as stated in the previous brief, we’ve decided to go with plan c, simple and effective. Clint, Thor, Peter, I know neither of you were here for that but hopefully you’ll understand more as I explain your roles. It’s a pretty straight forward recon mission. A few of our guys were gathering intelligence out on Elanis on the orders of Captain Marvel, when they were ambushed. We believe that a small group of rouge Kree were taking them back to Hala, though we aren’t sure under whose authority. They were intercepted and our people were brought home but they left behind some drives with important information on them.”

“What kind of information?” Thor asked.
“A lot of important intel. But what we’re most concerned about are some Blueprints for some kind of device that can harvest-” Unbeknown to the youngest in the room Tony shot a look at Steve, warning him against giving the gory details in front of Peter. He cleared his throat before continuing.

“A weapon. A weapon that could be used to end a lot of innocent lives. Especially if the Kree get a hold of it.” Thor seemed satisfied with this answer.

“Wait...So who are the Kree? Are they like Russian terrorists or something?” Peter asked, bewildered. “No offence.” He added quickly when Natasha raised a brow at him.

Steve went to answer but Tony interjected. “You think we’re still at war with Russia?”

“No, I guess not it’s just, well, I don’t know, are we?” Everyone stifled their laughter causing Peter to resume pouting. “Haven’t they taught you about the cold war yet, son?” Fury chuckled. Peter gave what can be only described as a junior version of one of Tony’s death glares, causing Fury to laugh again holding his hands up.

“Seriously, who are they? And where is Hal-Hala? And that other place? I’ve never heard of them?”

“Oh my god-”

“What?”

“Happy didn’t tell you-”

“What?!“

“Pete. This mission isn’t exactly in our neighborhood.”

“Wait, so, like overseas? Cause I still haven’t got my passport Mr. Strak. And Aunt May still isn’t happy about the last time I-“

“No peter. Think more about where he’s from.” Tony pointed his gaze towards Thor, who smiled in slight confusion. Peter’s jaw dropped.

“No..Wait a minute..”

“I was wondering why you-“

“WE’RE GOING TO SPACE?!“
Chapter Summary

Spider-boy's first trip to space! This chapter didn't end up how I wanted it to, but I'm working on 0 hours sleep and three cups of coffee so hey- :p

The next hour flew by for Peter. He was in such a state of shock and excitement that he could barely comprehend the rest of the brief. He hadn’t realised that they’d be leaving immediately either, which spurred another burst of energetic enthusiasm that he’s become infamous for at this point. He drove everyone crazy asking questions, double checking he had all of his things and that everyone had theirs (which came in handy actually because Thor hadn’t brought a toothbrush).

“Uh..Tony?” He quietly pulled the man aside. “Who uh, who packed my bag?”

“Happy. Why did he forget something?”

“No, uh, I mean..It doesn’t matter. Sorry I know you’re busy, I’ll just-” Tony grabbed the boy’s shoulder as he began to back away.

“Uh uh. Spill.” He adopted a warm, but firm tone, one Peter wasn’t used to having grown up without a dad.

“’It’s stupid..” Peter looked at his feet and shuffled.

“If you mentioned it, it’s important to you which makes it important to me. So, spit it out.” He tilted Peter’s chin so they made eye contact again. “You can tell me.”

“My...my bear’s not there.” Peter croaked, barely audible.

“That’s because he’s in mine. Our little secret remember.” Tony touched a finger to his nose and winked before carrying on with what he was doing. Peter had never been more grateful to Tony in his life. Okay, well maybe he had...but this was definitely up there.

The time came for them to load up into the jet and get strapped in for take off. For the first time since finding out their destination, Peter began to get nervous. Having sensed the teens sudden change in mood Thor gave the boy some words of comfort.

“Don’t worry Spiderling, you most likely won’t die!”

“Wow, Thor. Thanks.” Peter deadpanned. Thor gave a hearty laugh and slapped Peter on the back, nearly knocking him over.

Everyone took their seats and strapped in (Peter needing a bit of help from Steve and Clint with that last part).


He made eye contact with Peter with that last question who gave him a glare in response. “Okay!
Ascent in Five. Four.”

‘I thought it was a countdowns were meant to be from 10?! Oh god oh god-’ Peter’s mind raced.

“Three. Two.”

‘I’m gonna die. I’m gonna die. Oh god I’m gonna-’

“One.”

“FUCK!” Peter screamed audibly as the engines sent them shooting through the air. The cabin was filled with the deafening roar, as the ship cut through the air. Peter had stopped screaming at this point, clenching his jaw impossibly tight, as well as squeezing his eyes shut and gripping his arm rest. Well, what he thought to be his arm rest. He couldn’t move as gravity forced his head back against the chair. All the muscles in his face felt as though they were being ripped from his skull, but it wasn’t necessarily painful, just incredibly uncomfortable. He felt as though he wanted to rip his face off just to get the feeling over with. Just as suddenly as it had began, he felt the ship jerk, like a stalling car, forwards and back. Everyone was slammed into their seat with the motion, when they abruptly went from being horizontal to upright again.

“Stabilisers engaged.” Tony muttered flipping a few switches on the ceiling above his head. He unbuckled himself and turned around in his seat. “And excuse me, Mr. Parker-Pottymouth.”

Peter, didn’t even respond. He felt a sickening wave of instant nausea as he sat forward, as though his stomach had just caught up with what happened. He groaned under his breath. As he looked around at the others, he was relieved to see that he wasn’t the only one looking worse for wear. Everyone accept Natasha and Thor, who both looked completely unphased, had the colour drained from their face.

“The sickness will pass in a couple minutes don’t worry.” Tony said reassuringly before turning his focus back to the dashboard.

“You okay, kiddo?” Clint asked rising from his own seat and moving to help Peter out of his own. He dared not open his mouth, not fully trusting his stomach to not betray him. He nodded very gently, moving his head made the vertigo worse.

“I got ya, you wanna let go of Steve’s arm there, buddy?” He chuckled lightly. Peter looked at his hand. Sure enough he had the Captain’s arm in a vice grip.

“Oh my god! I’m so sorry Captain Steve Sir!” He promptly released the man who smiled at him.

“Peter it’s fine, don’t worry.”

Peter felt guilt looking at the reddish bruises that were already appearing on the man’s wrist.

“Some grip you got there, son.” Steve pulled his sleeve down a little. Nat snorted.

“You sound like such an old man, Steve, Jesus.”

“Kid.” Tony called from the front of the ship. “When you grow your sea legs come up here.”

“I-I think I’m gonna sit for a minute longer, M-Mr. Stark.” Peter only heard a chuckle in reply.

After a few minutes he stood, somewhat wobbly, and made his way up to the front of the ship.

“What’s up Mr- Woah…” He stared out over the control panel, through the glass dome that made
up the front of the cockpit. The blackness, filled with stars, planets, clouds of every colour that covered the entirety of his vision. He gazed as far into the distance as he could, seeing the blinking of stars that died thousands of years before he was born, and thriving new suns that would be burning thousands of years after he died. All he could do was stand there with his mouth agape for what felt like hours, but was really a few matters.

“Beautiful isn’t it?” Pete nodded.

“Wow, for someone who’d seen Star Wars as many times as you I would’ve thought you’d be a little more prepared for this moment.”

“Don’t ruin this for me,” Peter said calmly in a hushed tone. He sat down on the floor, contently admiring the view for the next hour. He was only disturbed again when he started to doze off and slumped against Tony’s leg.

“Alright, Mr. Skywalker. You’re way overdue a nap. Go lay down on your bunk for a while, we’ll come get you when dinners ready.”

“I’m okay, really,” he insisted badly attempting to stifle a yawn.

“Nope, come on. You can have an existential crisis later, space ain’t going anywhere.” He pulled the teen by his armpits to his feet. “Up we get.”

Peter stood shakily for a moment, rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand, making his body twist and sway. Tony held his arm out to steady him. “Easy.”

With that Peter dramatically yawned and stretched. “If I sleep now, I won’t sleep later.”

Tony hummed in response. He knew that he was right but he also didn’t want to have to deal with a grumpy teenager, in a confined space. “At least go explore the ship or something, stretch your legs.”

Peter got the hint and snooping around a little did sound fun. He set off back to the main part of the ship.

“Pete!”

“Yeah?”

“Don’t go touching anything you shouldn’t,”

“How am I meant to know what I should or shouldn’t touch?” He asked cheekily.

“Okay. Look down. What do you see?”

“Uh...the floor?”

“You can touch that and your own stuff.”

With that Peter stormed off huffily.
Don't skip naptime

Chapter Summary

A lot of angst and Peter swearing in this one- hurt, comfort and fluff at the end though. This chapter drags a bit and I apologise for that- but the next one is gonna be a bit more uplifting...hopefully.

Peter had thought the ship would be a lot more interesting to him that it was, but it was essentially just a smaller version of their home. Any of the rooms that even hinted at any intrigue were heavily ‘Peter-proofed’ with intricate passwords he had no hope of guessing. It didn’t even really look ‘spacey’. Sure, it was modern, but Peter had become so accustomed to touch screens everywhere and sliding doors he was desensitised. Had it not been for that breathtaking view Peter wouldn’t have known he was even in space. ‘Ugh, curse you Tony. You’re ruining my syfy experience.’

The lack of mischief had put Peter in such a sour mood, he found himself stomping back to the common area when Steve had summoned him for dinner over the tannoy. As he was nearing the entry way he could hear Bruce and Tony talking about him."

“I’m surprised he sat still for that long, honestly. I would’ve thought he’d had been bouncing off the walls.” Bruce chuckled.

“Yeah, that wasn’t the reaction I was expecting either.” Tony replied. “If I’d known that’s all it took to get him to sit quietly for a few hours I woulda taken him to space months ago.”

Peter scowled. He stormed into the room and sat himself the furthest away from the two men as he could, opposite Steve and Clint.

“Hey bud. Sorry it’s nothing fancy, we can’t exactly rustle up much in that kitchen.” Steve said cheerily.

“This is fine.” Pete said glumly in return, making it clear he wasn’t up for conversation. Clint and Steve exchanged confused glances. This grumpy teenager was the polar opposite to the wonderstruck little boy they’d seen less than two hours before.

“So, what did you get up to this afternoon?” Clint asked nonchalantly, trying to coax what was bugging the kid out of him.

“Nothing. Just staying out of the way.” Peter didn’t look up from his plate, which contents he was idly poking with his fork. The two men exchanged concerned glances again. Before they got the chance to question the boy further, Mjolnir came soaring past their heads as Thor entered the room. Peter jumped up shooting web fluid at the hammer, hit body reacting before his mind did. Obviously the webbing did nothing to slow the weapon. All it accomplished was mildly irking the god that wielded it.

“Ew, it’s sticky!” He picked at the substance that immediately stuck to him. He frowned at Peter, making the teen shrink down in his chair sheepishly.

“Sorry Thor..It startled me..”
“Well, that’s what you get for using it inside. I don’t know how many times we’ve had to tell you-” Steve nagged.

“Yes, yes, that’s all bloody well and good thank you Mother.” Thor rolled his eyes before slamming Mjolnir down on the table and collapsing into his seat. “Spiderling, I rather fear the answer, but where does this fluid of yours come from?”

Tony opened his mouth but Steve was quicker. “Tony don’t be inappropriate."

“I don’t know, I can shoot it from my wrists sometimes..but not always. Most of the time I have to use synthetic stuff.”

“Only sometimes?” Natasha chimed in, once again having appeared, as though out of mid air at the table, making everyone but Clint jump slightly.

“Yeah..Like if I get scared or..yeah..” Peter didn’t like being the center of attention about this kind of stuff. It took him back to being poked and prodded by doctors after the bite. Luckily for him the adults in the room could sense the boys discomfort and the conversation quickly died down. They continued discussions that Peter didn’t care much to listen to he zoned out completely at one point, staring into his spaghetti (that he had yet to take a mouthful of) for a full minute before Bruce jostled him gently.

“Peter, are you alright?”

“Hm? Yeah.” He replied sharply. He was embarrassed to be caught spacing out like that which made him defensive.

“I told you to take a nap.” Tony said between mouthfuls of food.

Through gritted teeth Peter retorted “If you’d let me have coffee earlier instead of treating me like a child I wouldn’t be tired.”

Not sensing the bite in Peter’s tone, or not taking it particularly seriously Tony continued teasing the boy, all in jest but not realising how irked the teen was actually getting. “Oh yeah, and then we’d be dealing with you coming down off of a caffeine rush, as if you aren’t hyper enough.”

“Well, I’m sorry I’m such a fucking inconvenience- I didn’t ask you to take me in the first place!”

The room fell silent.

“Where the hell did that come from?!” Tony gawked.

‘Oh my god. Where did that come from?’ Peter thought to himself.

“I don’t- I didn’t, god Mr. Stark I-”

“Other room. Now.” Peter didn’t argue he just rushed out of the room. Tony lent his head on his hand, muttering. “What the fuck..what just happened?”

“Well, to say that escalated quickly would be an understatement.” Natasha commented. “Teen angst is a wonderful thing.”

“God, now I’ve got to go do the whole parenting thing, Jesus Christ. Am I angry or concerned?”

“Both,” Clint and Steve chorused. Steve was too busy being in absolute shock at Peter’s choice of language to contribute to the conversation.
“Great.” Still bewildered as to what in the hell just happened Tony decided he’d deal with his charge after dinner, to give them both some time to reflect and calm down. He knew from both experience with Peter and his own father, that nothing constructive ever came from going in all guns blazing.

Peter sat on one of the couches, having that existential crisis Tony had mentioned earlier. He was trying not to build himself up into hysteria but his brain kept replaying the moment Tony’s face had dropped over and over. His breathing picked up pace and he could feel himself slipping into a full blown panic attack. The usual culprits came up once again, all the thoughts about Tony rejecting him, kicking him out and hating him were raging once more, but this time the felt truly justified. He couldn’t figure out what had made him snap so easily and all he wanted right then was to see Aunt May, for her to give him a hug, tell him what an idiot he had been. To tell him what to do and that it would be okay. Then it dawned on him how far away he was from home and that was when he lost his fight against the tears. He curled into a ball on the chair and cried quietly to himself, the sobs wracking his body.

Tony walked in expecting to see a furious teen giving him the silent treatment, but instead he was met with a distraught little boy. He knew he shouldn’t be surprised by the curveballs Peter threw at him, but this one had really taken the cake. He’d seen almost every single emotion from the boy today. He resisted the urge to immediately comfort the boy, which was heartbreaking, but he knew despite his newfound paternal feelings, that he had to deal with the situation from a neutral standpoint to begin with. He agreed with Steve and Clint, he had to be balanced in his approach; let the boy know that his actions wouldn’t be tolerated, but find out what had caused him to explode like that in the first place.

“Peter…” Tony said apprehensively. He slid his way into the small space between Peter and the rest of the couch. “Sit up for me. Come on.”

He did the opposite, the boy curled into his side still hugging himself protectively. He was muttering apologies at a rapid rate at a barely audible level.

“Petey, come on. You need to sit up properly and calm down.” Tony set to work sitting the boy up and helping him come down from the panic attack. He rubbed his back gently whilst helping him slow his breathing down, repeating the numbers Bruce had told him. It worried him that Peter’s panic attacks appeared to be getting more frequent, maybe it was time to see someone...that could be dealt with later.

As the boy’s breathing slowed, he started to return to his senses. Both physically and mentally. He pulled himself away from Tony and sat up straight, wiping his face.

“I’m so sorry Tony...I don’t know why I said that. I don’t know what got me in such a bad mood-today’s been one of the best days of my life and I should be g-grateful for the opportunity...you finally trusted me to come on the mission with you and- and I act up like this. I’m just so sorry but I-I’ll go along with whatever you to d-do now. I just want you to know I’m sorry for being and ungrateful stupid brat.”

“Okay, okay enough Peter.” Tony was willing to let the boy say his piece before he said his, but he wasn’t gonna let the boy slip into his self deprecating patterns. That was a cycle they’d both been working too hard to break. He gently brushed the boys hair out of his face. “Enough name calling.”

Peter nodded. He was doing his best to be mature now, even though he knew that ship had sailed as soon as he cussed Tony out in front of their teammates. He was gonna take whatever punishment Tony was about to give him on the chin in the hopes he could restore the man’s faith in him.
“What do you think I should do now?”

Peter hadn’t been expecting that question. “Uh..well I..”

His eyes started to fill with tears again, but he furiously blinked them away. “I would..uhm..send me home...Sir.”

“And what would that achieve, Peter?” Tony stayed firm in his questioning, but broken look on the boys face was threatening to weaken his resolve completely.

“I-I’d learn my lesson.”

“What lesson would that be?”

“I-I don’t know, s-sir.” But Tony didn’t accept that answer, he waited for Peter to continue. “Not to yell at you..Or curse..Or act like a b-baby and embarrass you-”

“You didn’t embarrass me, Pete. As for the other things, don’t you know those already?”

“Y-yeah..”

“So, all sending you home would achieve would be damaging your already fragile self esteem, have you miss out on not only a life changing experience but a great learning opportunity and leave our team without one of our best assets? Right?”

Peter perked up at the last part, but remained downtrodden. “I don’t see it like that sir..”

“Well, I do. And I know you don’t, hence my first point.”

“Tony you can’t keep letting me get away with acting like a spoiled brat.” Peter sniffled.

“Don’t tell me what I can and can’t do. Besides, you’re not getting away with it, that’s why we’re having this conversation. I get emotional outbursts, I was a teen once too. But something’s telling me this isn’t just a hormonal mood swing. I chalk some of it up to the fact you’re exhausted, and you had a lot of excitement today- but that melt down felt more personal. Now I want you to be honest and tell my why you said what you did.”

“I-I don’t know..”

“Think. When did you start getting angry with me?”

“When you kicked me out of the control room..”

“Okay.” Tony frowned on the inside, but made a concerted effort to keep his face expressionless. “Keep going.”

“I just felt like I was annoying you, I know I got over excited earlier, it just felt like no one wanted me around..then- then I heard you and Bruce talking about me.” Peter’s tone changed at the end “When you were saying how you wished you would’ve figured out how to make me be quiet sooner. I know I can be annoying but I didn’t think I was being that bad I was just-”

“Honey no, no.” Tony suddenly wrapped his arms around Peter, much to the boys shock. Did Tony-motherfreaking-Stark just call him honey? Was this real life or had he hyperventilated to the point of hallucination? He resisted the urge to pinch his own arm. “I’m sorry it came across that way okay? But I didn’t mean for it to, I was only teasing. I should’ve realised you weren’t in the mood, especially at dinner. And what you overheard was not me being serious, me and Bruce were
only joking-

“I know, I know, I just. I just didn’t find it funny right then and there. I know I’m over sensitive when I’m tired. And my anxiety has been so bad. I don’t know why. This whole thing is so stupid— I’m sorry Mr. Stark.” The man was being so understanding, Peter felt fresh tears filling his eyes. “I’ll try to do better controlling it, I really will. I’ll tell you when— when it’s not a joke anymore or when— I’m just so tired Tony!”

“It’s alright, buddy. Come on, I know you’re tired, yeah? Just relax.” The man pulled him close. Much like he had when the boy was sick, he coaxed the boy into falling asleep against him. He sat there alone with the sleeping child in a comfortable silence. He felt rather accomplished, he’d managed to confront the situation but comfort Peter at the same time. Double Dad points to him. Maybe he was cut out for this parenting thing after all, cause god knows if any other kid swore at him like that he would’ve blown his stack. That is a habit he’d have to tackle quickly, lest Steve take to washing the kid’s mouth out with soap. Maybe he could sit down with the other man, maybe even the rest of the team and establish some definitive rules. After all Peter it seemed was finally starting to accept his role in both their professional and family dynamics. His recent minor behavioural problems might have been Peter’s way of testing boundaries, so why not give him some? That was something to consider.

Not long after Tony had drawn to that conclusion, Bruce stuck his head round the corner.

“Is it safe to come in now?” He asked in a hushed tone.

“Yeah, just keep quiet. I don’t want him waking up just yet.” The other man nodded, before relaying the information to the others and quietly entering the room.

“Oh, thank god,” Clint sighed grabbing the TV remote and throwing himself onto a couch. “Steve and Thor were driving me insane.” Natasha threw Clint’s legs off of the couch and sat down in their place.

Tony could hear the two bickering though the now open door and chuckled. They sat quietly watching the TV when the last two men joined them. It looked as though they were about to continue their quarrel but everyone shushed them gesturing towards the sleeping ball of Peter.

“Aw,” Steve cooed before sitting on the floor next to Tony’s couch.

“Did you figure out what was ailing the Spiderling, Stark?” Thor ‘whispered’.

Tony simply shrugged. “He just needed a nap.”
Peter manages to avoid two accidents in this chapter. 
Also- if any of you have any ideas or requests for future chapter, please feel free to let me know! :)

Peter only slept for an hour or so, but he woke up feeling immensely better. He was warm and cuddled against someone. That someone smelled nice so he burrowed in a little deeper, breathing in their cologne before he realised what he was doing. Who was he- oh, Mr. Stark! Why was he snuggling Mr- oh. The memories from that day came flooding back and so did the guilt for a moment until all of his brain was taken up by the pulsing sensation in his abdomen. He sat up abruptly.

“Hi there,” Tony smiled. “Nice nap?”

“Gotta pee.” Pete murmured still half asleep.

“Go on then,” Tony moved his arm to let the boy get up. Peter rose quickly stumbling towards the doorway and down towards the engine room. Tony could’ve sworn his eyes were still closed.

“Tony, he’s not-” Nat started.

“Right.” The man jumped up and ran after Peter before he ended up peeing on something expensive. The rest of the group laughed fondly at the sleepy teen.

“Uh uh, Petey, wrong way.”

“Mmm. Bathroom moved?” Peter opened his eyes more, fully taking in the unfamiliar surroundings. He crossed his legs and whined, rubbing his eyes furiously.

“That’s right buddy. Bathroom moved. Come on.” Recognising the urgent movements he ushered the boy in the right direction and into the restroom.

“Gotta go~”

“I know, I know just hold on two seconds.” Tony practically carried him the last five steps to the bathroom before shoving him inside. “Go, go.”

Peter listened this time, already pulling his pants down before Tony got a chance to shut the door. He laughed, shaking his head. Assuming Peter could handle it from there, he walked back into the living room.

“Remind me to never let him drink alcohol.” He laughed breathlessly.

After relieving himself and washing his hands, Peter managed to wake himself up fully, not having any conscious memory of what had just happened. He walked back into the living room, where the rest of the adults seemed to be stifling laughter.
“Hi,” he plonked himself back onto the couch next to Tony (though not quite as close as he once was).

“Hey, bud.” Steve’s face cracked into a large smile.

“What’s so funny?” He asked suspiciously, squinting his eyes around the room.

“Nothing. Just,” Bruce gestured vaguely to the television screen “this dumb movie.”

“Oh.” The boy breathed a sigh of relief, he’d thought he’d done something stupid. “Whatcha watching?”

“Some old western movie Steve picked out, you can put something on if you want.” With that Peter’s eyes lit up and Tony sighed, knowing what was about to come, as the boy practically flew to the DVD case.

They spent the rest of the evening watching an array of Superhero movies, all being subjected to Peter’s fact file on each one. No one minded, so long as they didn’t see a reappearance of the sullen, cranky teen from dinner. It got to around what would have been one in the morning when someone finally mentioned going to bed.

“Yeah, it’s pretty late, you should’ve been in bed hours ago.” Steve pointed at Peter, rising from his seat to shake Clint awake. The man sat up from his sprawled position on the couch and looked around dreamily before attempting to roll over and go back to sleep. “Come on, Clint, let’s get you in a bed, huh?”

The team snickered when Clint finally opened his eyes and stood up groggily. “Yeah, yeah.”

“But I’m not tired!” Peter pouted. He was having too much fun to want to sleep. Besides it felt like he’d only just woken up from his nap, despite having done so over five hours ago.

“Don’t start, we’ve got a long day tomorrow. You need your sleep, as we found out today.” Tony held his hand out to pull the boy up, which he accepted, blushing at the man’s statement. He just huffed in response but ultimately decided against arguing further.

Everyone took their respective turn in the bathroom before heading down stairs to the bunk room; one of the rooms Tony had blocked off with a code, so Peter had yet to enter it. The man tapped a sequence of numbers and letters into the keypad, quicker than the boy could memorise, opening the door to the room. It was a fairly large room that had nothing in the centre of it, bar from some cases (the same ones Tony and Fury had been fiddling with). The four walls lining the room, however, had 8 beds built into them, one stacked on top of another, like bunk beds. Each bottom bunk looked to be a double bed while the ones above were singles. Before Peter got a chance to take it in Clint and Thor were already pushing through the doorway desperately trying to get the the same pod.

“Move you son of a-“

“No! You got that one last time I want to be nearest the ventilation system!”

Ignoring the other two men, the rest of them each claimed a bunk. Natasha opting for a single bed whilst Steve, Bruce and Tony went for the larger option.

“Wait, we’re all sleeping in the same room?” Peter questioned somewhat apprehensively.

“Yeah, sport, this ships a little pushed for space. What’s wrong?” Steve responded.
“But...but Nat’s a girl.” Peter said in a hushed tone, but that didn’t stop the rest of the group hearing him. They all snickered, except Thor who had sulkily ‘burritoed’ himself in a blanket having lost the battle of the bed.

“Well, observed.” Steve laughed. “It’s not a big deal kiddo, it’s something you’ll get used to.”

Peter blushed, having realised how childish he sounded. “Wait, so this is like one big sleepover!”

“Yes, Peter. Just minus the party games and jelly and ice cream.” Tony deadpanned.

“Well I saw ice cream in the freezer.”

“If you touch my Hunka-Hulkin’-Burnin’-Fudge you’re dead.” Thor piped in.

“Huh, I thought it was Nat’s.” Peter quipped, cheekily, adopting an innocent tone. That remark was met with a quiet chorus of ‘ooo’s and snickers from the men on the team, but a glare from Natasha herself.

“Okay. Sleep before you get yourself in trouble kid, come on.” Tony said seriously, though inside he was rather proud of the boys quick thinking. He liked to think his witty sense of humour was rubbing off on him.

Peter sighed “fine,” before clambering into the single bunk above Tony’s. The room quickly fell silent as it’s occupants one by one drifted off to sleep. Clearly they’d all become accustomed to falling asleep quickly and in unfamiliar environments, but Peter was very much wide awake. He tossed and turned uncomfortably, unable to find a position where he didn’t feel exposed or claustrophobic. He couldn't figure out just what it was that was bugging him. Just as he was working his way up into a panic the bed beneath him creaked and the man he’d thought was asleep underneath him appeared at his bedside at almost eye level. Before Peter had a chance to apologise for his fidgeting, Tony reached a hand up from below Peter’s bunk and placed an object in front of the boy: his well loved stuffed bear.

Peter quickly seized it, burrowing it under the covers before mouthing “thank you,” hoping the man could see it in the darkness. Tony patted Peter’s arm twice in acknowledgement before disappearing back to his own bed. The boy sighed in contentment, finally feeling his body relax into a comfortable position as his mind slowed. He closed his eyes embracing the sleep he was adamant he didn’t need not half an hour earlier. Once the boys movements stilled, Tony also relaxed and allowed himself to sleep.

*************

A few hours later Peter was awoken by his bladder not-so-gently nudging him, startling him awake with a groan. He acclimated to his surroundings a lot quicker than he had previously that evening, but he was still a little disoriented being in the dark. He jumped down from his bunk, which his bladder protested greatly; the jolt from his feet hitting the floor caused a wave of desperation to grip his abdomen. Grabbing his crotch he shuffled to the door, spamming the panel without paying attention to the display. When the door didn’t immediately open Peter read the message that popped up with each smack off the button.

‘Access code required.’

“What?” He thought. ‘To get OUT of the room? How does that make any sense?’

He bounced on his feet, trying the button a few more times for good measure. Maybe Tony had done this to prevent him snooping around the ship after hours, but bathroom was down the hall
surely he would have considered that? He knew about Peter’s toileting habits, Tony would’ve known better than to lock Peter in a room for 8 hours, day or night.

He started to feel panic wash over him. His bladder wasn’t being very patient, especially when Peter stood still. The muscles in his abdomen clenched and he was forced to grab himself once again to remain in control. Biting his lip he shuffled back okay to his bunk and gently shook Tony’s arm. As embarrassed as he was to have to do it, he’d much rather wake the man up while desperate than have him wake up to a puddle.

“M-Mr. Stark...Sir…” Peter shook him a few times but he didn’t budge. “Mr. Stark...Tony..”

The man groaned and attempted to roll over but Peter’s arm stopped him. Breathing in sharply through his nose he opened his eyes only to be met by the youngest Avenger, staring at him red faced and wild eyed. “Tony..please.”

“Kid? What’s wrong?”

“I need to go, sir.” Peter whispered desperately, refraining from holding his crotch as best he could in the man’s presence.

“Go? Why, what’s going on?” The man sat up fully pressing his eyes with his hands for a second before blinking hard. He watched as Peter twisted his body, unable to stand still for a second. ‘Ah’ he realised.

“N-no, sir I mean I need to-“

“It’s okay.” Tony cut him off, sparing the boy from admitting his need verbally for once. He realised what was wrong but he didn’t know why the boy had woken him up instead of going by himself. Maybe he’d had a nightmare or forgotten where the restroom was again. “Were you spooked by something? Did you want me to come with you?”

“No, no it’s not that, sir. T-the door won’t open.” Peter croaked. He was squirming violently at this point but it wasn’t enough to keep his bladder in check. He felt a spurt shoot out into his underwear and crossed his legs.

“What?” Confused, Tony immediately got out of his bed and went over to the door. “Shit, I must’ve forgot to take the lock off- hold on one second, Pete.”

“Yep. Holdin’ on.” The teen groaned through gritted teeth, squeezing his eyes shut. Holding was the only thing he could do and he was doing so with both hands at this point. Even if Tony magically placed a toilet in front of him at that very moment, he wasn’t sure he’d able to move. He heard the door slide open behind him, but he was too focused on getting through the crippling wave of desperation without having an accident.

Tony knew why Peter wasn’t already running down the hall to the sanctuary of the bathroom. So, he gently wrapped his arm around the boy’s shoulder. “Can’t move yet?”

Peter shook his head.

“Need help.”

Peter hesitated before shaking his head again.

“Are you saying no cause you’re embarrassed or-“
“No I need help just, just please don’t move me yet.” He said hurriedly, both due to the fact he was holding his breath with the effort to keep the flood at bay and the fact that he was mortified to admit he needed help to get to the toilet in time.

“Okay. Just tell me when.” Peter nodded in acknowledgement and stood deathly still for the next thirty seconds.

After half a minute had passed the teenager opened his eyes to look up at the man standing next to him, silently pleading him to hurry. Tony wasted no time leading the boy out of the room. They made it halfway down the hallway before the boy stopped.

“Mm, I can’t, I can’t, I can’t!” Peter felt himself leak once again, this time feeling some gush down his leg. He crossed his legs again but Tony pulled him.

“Come on, almost there.”

“I can’t-“

“Yes you can. We’re almost there but you’re not gonna make it if you keep stopping so move.” Tony shoved him firmly but gently. He knew he was coming across harshly but he also knew that Peter wasn’t going to last much longer and time was running out. “Pull your pants out of the way now so you don’t have to struggle with them.”

Peter did as he was told, finally picking up speed again. As they neared the bathroom, Peter broke away from Tony sprinting the last few steps. Once inside he yanked his pants down fully, but removing his hands from his crotch was to be his undoing. Liquid started gushing from him immediately, before he had the chance to stem the flow or even aim. In a panic he threw himself down on the toilet and let his body relax. He was flooded with relief and a warm feeling. Warm feeling?

“Shit!” He cried. He hadn’t pulled his underwear down and was peeing full force through them. There was no use in trying to stop now, they were already soaked through; besides, he knew he wouldn’t be able to stop the stream at that point anyway. He sighed mentally cursing himself.

Once he’d finally finished peeing, he carefully removed his pants before taking off his underwear and depositing them in the sink. He pushed the humiliation he felt to the side in favour if dealing with the clean up in a timely fashion. He’d become a pro when it came to cleaning up mini-accidents like this as he’d had countless mishaps at school. Not so many full blown accidents but enough to where his underwear wasn’t salvageable. He wiped his legs off and rinsed his underwear in the sink before hiding them in the far corner of the cupboard beneath it, behind several bottles of cleaner. He’d just have to remember to recover them before anyone stumbled across them-

“Pete? You alright bud?”

Shit, he was taking too long. He quickly exited the bathroom his face burning. He was greeted by a concerned looking Tony.

“Hi.” He grinned sheepishly.

“Hi.” Tony said slowly. “Everything okay?”

“Yep. I-I-I made it. Sorry about that.” Peter smiled as normally as he could and luckily for him Tony mistook his nervousness for pure embarrassment.

“No, I’m sorry. If disabled the lock on the door now, I totally forgot, I’m so sorry.”
“Nah- it’s fine,” he started nonchalantly. “It’s not a big deal.”

“It’s not fine, but you did the right thing waking me up. Go on, get back to bed.” Tony patted his shoulder affectionately before turning to enter the bathroom himself.

“W-wait, wait!”

“What?” Tony turned to him with a combination of confusion and mild amusement on his face. Peter really didn’t want him to find his underwear.

“What’re you doing?”

“Uh, well this is a bathroom. I assumed you would have realised that considering you were just in there?” Tony’s expression changed and he looked suspiciously at the boy.

Peter realised he sounded like a total crazy person, plus he doubted that Tony would be looking for cleaning products at three in the morning. “Oh, yeah, right. Well- goodnight Mr. Stark!”

With that he took off running back down the hallways leaving Tony looking after him bewildered.

“Strange kid.” He muttered, before heading into the restroom to use the facilities himself, too tired to try and decipher Peter's behaviour.
The Mission

Chapter Summary

This one may not be for everyone- so feel free to wait or skip along to the next chapter!
It's all basically one long badly written fight scene :p
Also descriptions of injury and violence in this one so be warned, please don't read if you're sensitive to those subjects<3

***for those who wish to skip ahead***
All you miss is Peter go against Tony's orders and almost gets himself killed (or worse, EXPELLED) and IronDad is NOT happy about it; Him s arguing with and punishing Peter will happen in the next chapter

Chapter Notes

This one took me a while to write so it may not be very good :/
It was one of those times where you can see a scene so vividly in your head, in so much detail, that you just can't bring yourself to fully translate that onto paper; so I apologise if the chapter is a little tedious to read, I'm just trying to further the story..

The rest of the night went without incident, bar Thor waking everyone up yelling “FOR ASGARD” in his sleep at around five am. Everyone managed to fall back to sleep other than Clint and Natasha.

“Can’t sleep either?” Natasha asked climbing down from her bunk, having given up on going back to sleep considering they were due to get up at six anyway.

“Nah, I was awake before Thor scared everyone shitless.” Clint replied, he was lazily whittling something with his pocket as he spoke. “Been up for a couple hours now.”

“You okay?” She sat down behind him. The two had always been close and she knew the distance between Clint and his family was probably bothering him.

“Yeah, something happened with the kid earlier I couldn’t go back to sleep after that.” He breathed a laugh smiling fondly.

“What did he do this time?”

Clint relayed what he’d witnessed earlier that evening, with Peter almost watering the bunk room floor.

“Poor kid.” Nat kept her tone light. “Don’t let him know you saw that he’ll be mortified.”

“I won’t, and you won’t let anyone know I told you.”
The two went on to have a conversation about the boy’s influence on Tony. How much the man had changed since having him around and how Peter had started to come out of his shell.

“I was pretty shocked at dinner though,” Nat said. “It’s not like him to lash out like that.”

“It’s the first time I’ve seen him snap. Guess he’s got a lot on his plate. Tony was telling me about how since he’s gone back to school he’s had more panic attacks.” Clint said seriously. Natasha nodded, not having witnessed one herself but hearing about them through Bruce. Tony had confided in the doctor, asking for advice on the best way to help calm the boy down. He gave Tony some breathing exercises to do with him, but ultimately he couldn’t give any in depth advice without talking to Peter himself. But Tony didn’t think Peter was ready to open up just yet, so Bruce hadn’t pushed the subject.

“Did you see Steve’s face?” Clint smirked.

“I thought he was gonna have an aneurysm.” They both laughed at that.

“Why am I having an aneurysm?” Steve said, sitting up.

“Cause Peter said fuck in your presence twice yesterday.” Clint laughed again.

Steve’s face looked stern. “I couldn’t believe it. It’s Tony’s fault- well all of yours to be frank. You shouldn’t use such language in front of an impressionable-“

“Yeah, yeah, save it for one of your PSA’s, Cap.”

“Well sorry that I’ve made a concerted effort to help shape the young minds of America-“

“Don’t make me laugh I don’t want to wake anyone else up!” Natasha spluttered.

The three took their extra time to get some training in, while the others slept in until the alarm blared. Thor groaned loudly.

“Turn that infernal racket off!” He bellowed.

Peter hadn’t actually been awoken by the alarm, but Thor’s scream startled him awake. He sat bolt upright smacking his head into the metal panelling that lined the pod.

“Aww.” He groaned, flopping back against the mattress gripping is head.

“Thor!” Bruce got up and walked over to the kid. “Move your hands, Peter. You alright?”

“Yeah. Yeah I’m fine.” Sitting up again rubbing his forehead.

“No blood. You’ll live.” Bruce smiled, offering his hand to help the boy jump down.

“I guess so.” Peter excepted the hand and leapt from his bunk. He stood for a moment longer still groaning before his bladder had him running down the hallway to take care of his morning duties.

“Sorry, child, I didn’t mean to frighten you!” Thor yelled after him. Bruce and Tony both stared at him disapprovingly. “What? I apologised!”

The team regrouped around the dining table once again, to eat a quick breakfast before engaging in some group training exercises. The whole time Peter was constantly asking questions about the
mission to each of them. Ranging from “what do Kree look like?” to “what do we do if we get hungry during the mission?” They all tried to entertain him, but Tony was starting to worry that maybe the kid wasn’t ready for an actual mission yet. Let alone one so far from home. The worry must’ve shown on his face, because Steve came up to him and planted a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“We’ve got this, Tony. He’s got this. We won’t let anything bad happen to the kid.”

Tony nodded, but Steve’s words did nothing to calm the ball of nerves he could feel growing in his gut. He couldn’t remember a time where he’d been so nervous on a mission. He tried not to let this reflect in his actions though, knowing that if Peter saw his mentor nervous that the boy too would start to get scared.

After running through their plans and tactics a few more times, stopping patiently to answer every one of Peter’s questions (which had become much more sensible, if not still very innocent), the group piled into a pod on the side of the ship; all of them other than Nat. She was the one tasked with staying on the ship, ready to intervene should the plug need to be pulled on the operation at any moment.

Once they’d sat down, Tony piloted the ship and set the coordinates to land on a small desolate planet four hundred klicks away, where they’d anticipated the space pirates to be. Only when their shuttle pulled away from the main body of the ship did Peter feel the first pull of panic.

“Uhm..Mr. Stark?” He said sheepishly, his voice betraying him.

The change in tone worried Tony, so he tried not to let any of the exasperation from being asked a question for the fortieth time that morning, seep into his voice. “Yes, Peter”.

“Am I gonna get that sick feeling again when we land?”

Breathing a silent sigh of relief Tony answered, “No. We’re going in at a slower velocity and we should have a better manipulation of the altitude in this ship.”

Peter nodded and relaxed back into his seat. “Phew, good cause I did not like that.”

“Neither did Steve’s arm.” Clint smirked making the teen blush and shoot an apologetic smile at the superhuman sitting opposite him.

The landing went remarkably smoothly, feeling no worse than a commercial plane. The planet was practically barren, save for the few rocks and caverns that dotted the sandy horizon. Peter had hoped for something a little more mind blowing, like a massive alien city or an untouched jungle filled with unidentifiable glowing blue flora. It kind of felt as though he was visiting the grand canyon (not that he’d ever done so himself) until he turned his attention towards the sky.

Somehow, though the landscape was cast in a warm yellow glow, the skies above them were pitch black. It was as though Peter could see directly into space, but he couldn’t see anything. No stars or planets, the sky was just entirely black. Tony, having seen him staring, explained:

“That up there is just one giant storm cloud, but not the kind we’re used to. It doesn’t make rain it radiates energy, in this case magnetic, which is probably why the Kree decided to do their handover here. Conventional trackers can’t pinpoint anything because the storm messes with their radar.”

Peter nodded showing that he understood. “So where does the light come from?”

“Look down.”
He stares at his feet, and kicked up some of the sandy turf he was standing on, only to realise that the substance beneath him was glowing. “Woah!”

“Yeah, woah.” Tony grinned back at him.

“It’s not like, radioactive or anything, right?”

“I don’t think we have to worry about you mutating anymore Spider-Dork.”

“Hey!”

They didn’t have much time to stand around and admire the scenery. Not five ministers later they were splitting up and assuming their respective positions. Peter was with Clint, their role being the eyes in the sky (“Like a sniper?!” “Yes, P, like a sniper.”).

“Remember, communication is down as the storm messes with our radios. So stick close to your group and meet back here if anything goes wrong, Nat has visuals so she’ll be able to pull you.” Steve called as they parted.

Tony gulped. That was the worst part of this. He understood why Peter had to be with Clint, he’d be the furthest from the action and he’d be able to watch how the rest of them worked. But the idea of the kid not being able to reach him, or vise versa, was making that gnawing in his gut get louder.

“Kid you stick close to Hawk and listen to everything he tells you, understand?”

“I know, I will!” Peter said light heartedly. His mentor looked gravely serious. “I promise!”

Tony shot him one last look before taking off in the other direction. “Good luck kid.”

“You too Mr. Stark!”

“And be safe.” Tony added under his breath as he held Steve’s arm, flying both him and the super soldier into position.

The first part of task at hand was a stake out. It had sounded a lot cooler to Peter before he had to actually do it. Clint led him up the side of mountainous rock range, much to Peter’s surprise the man managed to scale it almost as easily as he had. When they reached the peak Peter could see a steep cliff face that looked out directly above where the other three men had positioned themselves. Out if instinct the kid stood up and waved wildly before Clint pulled him back.

“You tryna get yourself killed?” He barked.

“Sorry..” The boy blushed realising his mistake. Clint’s face softened.

“Just sit down, we’re meant to be incognito here kid.”

“So, how long until the bad guys show up?”

“Not sure exactly. Just know it’ll be at some point today.”

Peter frowned. “So it could be ten minutes and it could be like, ten hours?”

“Yup.” Clint popped the P, to which Peter sighed dramatically and flopped onto his stomach, resting his head in his hands. “It won’t be so bad, you’ve got me for company.”

Peter sighed again before laughing at Clint’s expression of mock horror. “Yeah, I guess. I’m just ready to get out there.”
“You’re staying put with me either way remember? We’re observing today.”

“I know I know, but—”

“No buts. You’re not ready to be in the thick of it yet.” Peter pouted but didn’t say anything.

The two chatted for the next hour, Hawkeye telling stories about all the exciting action he’d seen over the years. The teen ‘ooh’ed and ‘ahh’ed where appropriate. He was so engrossed in Clints stories that he didn’t feel as his bladder started to fill up. Unfortunately for him, Clint noticed his shift in movements before he did.

The older man felt slightly awkward having to approach the subject with a teenager, but his fatherly instincts fought against that. Tony had mentioned the boy had issues admitting when he needed to go and he wanted to avoid any mishaps where possible, not wanting to ruin the boy’s first experience out in the field.

“You can go over there, Pete. No one can see you.” He pointed to a small cave in the side of the cliff.

“Huh?” Peter was genuinely confused. Why did he have to go where no one could see him? Was the fight starting? Clint just continued to look at him pointedly before the realisation hit him. The boy blushed brightly before muttering. “Oh.”

Clint chuckled as the boy scuttled off towards the hidden area. When Peter reemerged the man deliberately chose not to draw any more attention to the matter, hoping to normalise the behaviour that the child would have to get used to. Not making a big deal of things would hopefully be the best way to show him that it was okay to speak up.

“Did I miss anything?”

“ Nope, nothing yet.” The man replied surprising a laugh. The boy’s unwavering enthusiasm was truly remarkable.

Peter didn’t have to wait much longer though as twenty minutes later the hum of an aircraft could be heard in the air.

“Do you hear that?” Peter said quietly, gazing around for the source of the sound.

“Hear what?” Clint murmured distractedly, not taking the kid seriously as he couldn’t hear anything himself.

“That buzzing.” He peered round again. It was faint but he was sure he could hear something. It was then that Clint remembered the kid’s heightened senses, he crouched close to the cliff face and suddenly withdrew his bow and shot a single arrow down towards where the other three men had camouflaged themselves; alerting them that they’d be joined shortly.

Peter crouched next to him and whispered, “how do they know they’ll land right here?”

“Tony managed to tap into their computer system and interfered with their navigation. He managed to pinpoint their coordinates and rerooted them to this location. Barton kept his bow drawn with an arrow held taught in his grasp.

“Are you...are you just gonna stay like that? I mean, we can’t even see anyone yet?” Clint shot the boy a look that made Peter back away holding his hands up. “Okay, hey you do you man.”
The buzzing in Peter’s ears got louder until he was sure Clint could hear it too. It was deafeningly loud for the teenager so much so he had to cover his ears. He figured it was something to do with the frequency since he hadn’t experienced this problem before, to his knowledge at least. Soon the pair saw a large ship cow hurtling towards them; it looked to be an amalgamation or different scrapped parts from other ships, mismatched windows and metals of every colour decorated its surface all of which looked damaged and rusty. It juddered as it made it’s descent puffing out clouds of thick black smoke. The craft landed, sending a plume of that weird glowing sand behind it. A group of seven scavengers dressed in rags filed out of it. Despite their clothing, the weapons they wielded were like nothing Peter had ever seen. One of them held a tomahawk the size of which made Mjolnir look like a babies rattle; it’s metal was so reflective that it too looked to be glowing like the sand beneath it. It’s hilt wasn’t wooden, but was made of sleek black metal and was covered in an array of different buttons and switches, which Peter assumed all had a different deadly function. The rest of them had what looked to be guns but they also were made of the same silvery material as the tomahawk and were equally advanced looking. The bandits had various other weapons strapped all over them whilst the one with the large battle axe held a case. The case they were looking for.

Peter looked towards where he’d just seen Tony, Steve and Bruce only to realise they were gone. The trio had hidden themselves into one of the intricate cave systems imbedded in the side of the cavern. The group of rogue Kree spread out and started to move across the bottom of the valley, scoping around aiming their weapons. Peter’s breathing picked up pace as the building suspense took hold of him.

“Easy kid. They know what they’re doing.” Clint soothed quietly, keeping his aim locked on the burly man at the back who held the briefcase.

As if on cue, Peter watched as the side of the mountain was suddenly blown apart, Tony blasting through the flying rubble allowing Steve and Hulk to come running through after him. The green giant ran straight past the aliens and started smashing their ship to pieces. Steve and Tony were already engaged in combat by the time Peter ripped his eyes away from the pure carnage Hulk was causing; this was the closest he’d ever been to Bruce in that state and it was insane to watch in person. Peter was watching Steve bounce his shield off of one of the enemies head, he realised something.

“Wait- Clint where’s Thor? Wasn’t he meant to be the one grabbing the drive?”

For the first time since the battle began Clint lowered his bow slightly, surveying the whole scene in front of him. The kid was right this wasn’t part of the plan. He shook the thought off in favour of focusing on his part of the task at hand. “I’m sure they’ve got it figure out.”

“But I can’t see him anywhere, surely he would’ve-“ He cut himself off. He felt that prickling sensation on the back of his neck again, like an icy chill going down his spine. “Somethings wrong.”

“What? What’s wrong?” Clint turned to look at him. He usually wouldn’t have broken from his position but something about the change in Peter’s tone got his attention.

“I don’t- I don’t know..” Peter looked off into the distance. Something in his gut was telling him he wasn’t alone. “I think..I think they’re here.”

“What do you mean?”

“The other Kree, I think they got here first. It’s a trap.”
Clint considered this for a moment. How could the kid possibly know that? Before he had a chance to respond Peter had already thrown himself off of the cliff and was swinging his way down into the cavern. “Kid!”

But he didn’t listen. He knew something had to have happened to Thor, and the theory he’d come up with was the only one that made sense. He ran out into the middle of the field desperately trying to grab Tony’s attention.

“Peter what do you think you’re-“ Tony yelled. He couldn’t believe the kid picked now to go against his orders.

“Where’s Thor?!“

“What-“ the man didn’t have a change to answer before he was struck into the wall of the cave by a blast from one of the high tech guns.

“Oo- sorry!“

“Peter, get out of here!” Steve called to him, struggling with one of the Kree.

Peter grunted in frustration before shooting web fluid into the Kree’s face. “You’re not listening! I-“

He felt a hand clap on his shoulder. He turned around expecting to see a familiar face, instead he was met with the smiling face of the giant tomahawk wielding alien, who appeared a lot larger than he did from the cliff.

“Uh..hi?“

The giant roared and lifted Peter up by his neck above his head. Peter tried to grab his hand and loosen his grip on him to no avail. Instead he used all of his strength to raise his leg and kick the brute in his face as hard as he could, then used his face to propel himself backwards, flipping in the air and landing spryly on his feet. The man roared again but Peter didn’t give him time to do much else. He shot his web fluid into his face too, simultaneously swinging around to kick the man in the stomach. By some stroke of luck Peter had managed to grab the case just as the man clutched his stomach.

The boy laughed, not believing he’d managed to actual grab it. His laughter was short lived however because the man recovered impossibly quickly; he yelled again, even louder this time out of pure rage and raised his axe above his head.

“Oh crap-“ Peter sprinted, case still in hand, dodging in between bodies and piles of rubble. He miss timed a few times and ended up slamming into things, only narrowly avoiding being decapitated by a metal door Hulk had hurtled through the air. He didn’t exactly know what to do now, he couldn’t do anything but run but where was he running to? As that thought ran though his he he felt a hand on his shoulder once again. Knowing better than to turn around he tried to pull forward, slinging a web at the dusty wall to his right, attempting to pull himself away from it’s grasp. This didn’t work and he felt his feet lift off of the ground. He struggled violently seeing the ground get further and further away...he hadn’t realised the man was this tall.

“Relax, kid.” He heard Tony’s voice and looked above him to see the ironclad man, lifting him into the air. Though Peter couldn’t see his face the man did not sound happy in the slightest.

“Oh! Uh- hey Mr. Stark!” He giggled nervously. The man gave him no reply and just continued rising from the ground eventually reconvening at the top of the cliff face with Clint, who looked
about as mad as Tony sounded.

The man was now firing arrows wildly, rapidly hitting each target with accuracy Peter didn’t think was possible. “Woah, nice!” He said in awe.

Clint looked at him, still firing effortlessly. “What on earth do you think you’re doing, kid?”

Tony let go of him abruptly instead of lowering him to the ground, making Peter fall directly on his butt. “Hey!”

“Don’t you hey me! Stay down! I’ll deal with you later!” Tony growled before immediately flying off. Peter just sat there, still clutching the case to his chest, pouting. He’d just gotten the very thing they were looking for! How can they be mad at him for that? It’s not like he’d gotten hurt. Well, not badly. Just a few scrapes.

“Are you seriou- Jesus kid, you alright?” Clint lowered his bow momentarily.

“Yeah, I’m fine. He didn’t really need to drop me like that though.” He groaned leaning to rub his tailbone.

“Your suit’s ripped, you hurt?”

Following Clint’s gaze Peter looked down at his left arm, only to see a large gash in the material. He vaguely remembered one of the bandits futuristic weapons grazing him as he swung past, the blaster having a curved blade that hooked over the wielder’s arm for close range attacks. But he’d been too preoccupied to notice any pain. He peeled back the fabric a little which revealed a deep cut spanning the length of his upper arm. It was deep enough that it had cut through the layer of fat under the surface of his skin, exposing the muscle underneath. He swallowed thickly, the sight of it making him feel queasy. What surprised him was the amount of blood; for a wound this big he’d expected there to be a lot more but he figured that maybe his suit had some kind of function to help stop the bleeding. He pulled his sleeve back covering the wound.

“Nah. Just a scrape.” He said shakily. Clint wanted the press the matter further but was forced to turn his attention back on the scene in front of him when a sudden wave of men clad in sleek, skin tight armour appeared seemingly from nowhere.

“Ah, shit.” Muttered Clint. Peter had be right, something had happened to Thor. The god was bound by golden chains that appeared to be burning hot and he seemed to be knocked out. He was being dragged by two of the large aliens following close behind the man who appeared to be the leader. By this point they had already managed to defeat the former group, their limp bodies laying around the wreckage of their ship. He couldn't hear what was being said, but he was pretty sure he knew. They were trying to bargain (or blackmail) them into giving them the drives in return for Thor’s life. Obviously a fight ensued, the group of at least fifty men (all with similar weapons to the ones the bandits had used) flooded the small area.

Clint grunted and Peter turned to see the man had ran out of arrows. “Stay put.”

“What?! No way!”

“Stay put, Peter, I mean it! You gotta keep that case out of their hands.”

“I know that- but they must’ve noticed enemy fire coming from up here by now, they’ll be coming up here to get it!” Sure enough he was right, the leader was huddled with three of his men and they were all looking up towards where the two men were hidden.
“Fuck. Fuck okay, get us down there as fast as possible and we’ll get back to the shuttle. Whatever you do, don’t engage with anyone, just run like hell. We’ll cover you so just go, okay?” Clint said seriously, grabbing Peter by the shoulders and not breaking eye contact. He nervously nodded. The two walked to the edge of the cliff only to see twenty of the Kree warriors scaling the side of three mountain. Reacting of pure instinct Peter wrapped his arms around Clint and dove off the ledge. As the fell he shot a web at the opposite wall which swung them straight into it; he twisted so that his body collided with the rock instead of Clint and he hissed in pain. He quickly recovered, continuing the pattern of swinging and dropping from either side (quicker now so that he wouldn’t get body slammed again) getting them to the valley floor in a matter of seconds.

This time around, Peter listened. For the most part. He tried to avoid combat but he had to dodge quite a few hits as well as deal some out. He was nearing the clearing where they’d hidden their ship when he realised Clint was no longer running behind him; that momentary pause he took gazing back to find the man violently stabbing one of the Kree, was all it took for him to get blindsided by another. The woman tackled him, throwing him against the ground. She sat on his chest and knelt on his injured arm whilst trying to tear the case from his other. He cried out in pain the added pressure on his arm was excruciating, but he refused to lessen his grip. The female eventually grew frustrated trying to pry it from him, instead she withdrew a smaller version of the gun she had thrown in favour of trapping him, and aimed it as his forehead.

Peter froze expecting to have one of those ‘my life flashed before my eyes’ moments, but it didn’t come. What did happen however was a large metal disc flew through the air and struck the Kree in the side of the head, knocking her off of him.

“Thanks cap!” He yelled whilst scrambling to his feet shakily and taking off back in the other direction. He felt a slight wetness between his legs that he prayed was it was only sweat.

“Anytime kid!” The man called back cheerily as ever.

Finally Peter got back to the ship and out of the firing zone. He half expected to be greeted by another army of aliens but to his relief he wasn’t. Clint made it back not two minutes after he did.

“Don’t they need you out-“

“They’re fine Thor woke up, besides Hulk’ll obliterate them in no time,” Clint states simply.

Peter just nodded breathlessly, the adrenaline started leaving his body. He shook a little where he was standing so he leant against the side of the ship trying to appear as nonchalant as Clint. He still had the case clutched to his chest which the man had to gently coax from him.

“I should really wait and give it to Mr. Stark, sir. No offence..” He stares wide eyed at the man the adrenaline dump and well as the numbness he was starting to feel down his left side was affecting his judgement.

“Why? In case I’m a Russian spy?” Clint laughed. Peter tried to laugh too but it came out strangled and forced. Clint looked the boy up and down a few times but decided against saying anything. He figured that Peter was just worn out.

Not 10 minutes later the fight was finally over, all four men making their way back to the ship. Of course Tony made it there first.

“Peter! Are you alright?! Are you hurt anywhere?!” He landed right in front of him immediately moving his mask to reveal his face; which was painted with pure worry.
“Yeah, Mr. Stark, I’m fine. I-I got the drives.” He breathed shakily but sounded confident.

Thor also landed right behind the ship and the man had a large gash across his eyebrow. “Well done spiderling! It’s a good thing you acted when you did!”

“No, Thor it’s not a good thing.” Tony was still furious that Peter had gone against his orders in such a dangerous situation, but he was glad the boy had used his skills to stay alive- not that he would be much longer he was ready to murder him. He was busy patting Peter down the sides of his arms (Peter was careful not to flinch or wince when the man grazed the open cut) and tilted his head from side to side, having the boy look up and down.

“Mr. Stark, you’re making me dizzy.”

Tony let go of him, still eyeing him suspiciously. He seriously doubted there was any way the kid had gotten out of the ordeal unscathed. Captain and Bruce (who had now returned to his normal stature) came up behind the rest of the group.

“That was some good fight you put up there kid,” Steve smiled at him. “Good job on getting the case when you did.”

“Thank-“

“Can we not glorify what just happened, please?” Tony snapped. The rest of the men looked at him, sensing a volcano about to erupt.

“We should head back,” Bruce said, clearly trying to distract the duo. “Nat’s probably wondering what’s taking us so long…”

He trailed off. They piled into the shuttle but the argument didn’t stop there. In fact it had just begun.
“That’s not the point Peter, and you know it.”

They arrived back on the main body of the ship. The other three men quickly exited the craft in a desperate attempt to escape the tension that had built within it over their short journey.

“But that is the point! You go on about how I need to be better than you, and think with my heart and my head and that’s what I did! If I hadn’t of grabbed the case when I did the Kree could have easily grabbed it and-“

“One rule! One rule, I’ve driven home to you from day one- and what is it, Pete, hm? Come on, you clearly have all the answers, what’s my one rule?” Tony yelled. This was the angriest Peter had ever seen the man be towards him and frankly it was starting to scare him. He wanted to stand his ground, he truly felt he had been a big part in this missions success despite it not going according to plan, but he also wanted this conversation to be over.

“Follow orders.”

“Ahh, so you did listen! You just chose not to do so. Obviously like every other fifteen year old on the planet, you think you know everything! We had it under control, we were fully prepared for an ambush, we knew exactly what we were doing. Christ, we had back up plans! You had one job to do and you couldn’t even do that, you could’ve been killed-“

“But I wasn’t! I held my own out there!”

“Oh yeah right up until Steve stopped you from getting your head blown off right? Huh?” Peter kept his mouth shut. “That’s what I thought. You were out there to observe-“

“That’s what I did.” Peter gritted his teeth, the way Tony was patronising him was really working on his last nerve and he was struggling to hold back. It wasn’t his fault that the had no wireless contacts on that planet, how else was he meant to let them know. ‘Was Thor being held hostage part of your master plan too?’ Was what he wanted to say but he bit his tongue.

“Boy if you cut me off one more time you’re gonna live to regret it.” If Tony wasn’t angry before he was seething now. He knew Peter had a point, he had been impressed with his initiative and combat skills under pressure. But he’d known many men who’d acted similarly, not following orders and rushed ahead without thinking, and those men weren’t around to tell their story. He had to drive home how important listening to his elders was especially on the battlefield. He thought he had and that Peter was ready. Clearly he’d been mistaken. He kicked himself for not listening to the doubts he’d had earlier that day and letting Steve convince him otherwise.

Peter on the other hand was prepared to back down if it meant that his mentor would no longer be angry with him. Not only had the man’s anger began to scare him but his arm was aching even more than it had been on the ship. It felt heavy, like it had been turned to lead and he was
struggling not to let it hang limply at his sides. His muscles were aching with the weight of it and the stinging in the wound itself was beginning to spread up his shoulder and down the side of his chest. He kept his mouth shut and looked down at his feet.

“I’m sorry, sir.”

“Damn right you’re sorry and you’re gonna be sorry for a while.” Tony lowered the bite in his tone but remained firm. He knew better than to be too harsh on Peter and he could hear himself start to sound like his father. “Give me your suit and go lay down for a while, I know you’re exhausted. We’ll discuss this more later.”

Usually he would have protested, but his desire to appease Tony combined with the pain in his arm he relented, going into the bathroom to take a quick shower. He felt a chill run through him as he undressed and stepped under the hot water. It felt nice to get the grime off of him and the heat was helping to relax his taut muscles. Hesitantly he ran his hand over the cut on his arm, which seemed as though it had grown wider since he last looked at it. He hissed, touching the skin sent a ripple of stinging pain to spread around his bicep. The whole area felt hot to the touch, even compared to the temperature of the shower. ‘Surely it can’t have gotten infected that quickly’ he thought ‘although I have no idea what that metal was made out of or what kind of bacteria might’ve been floating around…’

He pushed that thought to the back of his mind. He knew there was a basic first aid kit in his bag so he decided he would clean it out with antiseptic before he laid down. He staggered out of the shower, attributing his dizziness to the heat and steam. He got changed into some sweatpants and a hoodie, despite his raises temperature. He didn’t want to risk anyone else seeing his injured arm both because he didn’t want to cause a fuss or make anyone worry, and he didn’t want to give Tony anymore ammunition against him. He could only imagine what the man would say if he realised he’d actually gotten himself hurt.

“See?! I told you you couldn’t take care of yourself!” Or something to that effect.

He made his way slowly to the bunk room and collapsed onto his bunk; it was difficult to maneuver himself up there as his arm had refused to cooperate. It was getting to the point where his hand felt entirely numb and he couldn’t raise his arm away from his body. That was when he started to question his choice not to tell anyone and considered pulling Bruce to one side (though he knew it would eventually get back to Tony), but before he could make a decision his body chose for him; his vision blurred and he was forced into a deep sleep.

“Tony, you gotta calm down, you were way too harsh on the kid.” Steve stood leaning against the kitchen counter with his arms folded whilst Tony sat with his head in his hands at the table.

“You think I don’t know that?” The man replied coldly. “I was angry okay? He scared me half to death, if you hadn’t have acted when you did he would’ve-“

He cut himself off not wanting to think about what might have happened. That image of Peter being pinned to the ground with a gun to his head kept flashing up in his mind and he didn’t like the way it made his heart race.

“I know. I understand, I really do, T. I don’t blame you for being upset it’s the first time you’ve seen him in a situation as serious as that. But you’ve got to remember this is gonna be his job someday. He needs this experience.”

“He wasn’t meant to be get this kind of experience yet. He was meant to watch and learn-“
“But the fact is he went with his instincts and stopped the Kree getting the drives. You and I both know we could’ve handled it if they had and the kid overestimated the severity of the situation, but he even still brave. And that was his first experience on a real battlefield”

“I know. I’m proud of him. But that doesn’t mean-“

“Look Tony you’re talking yourself in circles here. We’ve all done it at some point- and no you’re right he shouldn’t be yet he doesn’t have enough experience to be going against orders and making rash decisions. But nothing bad happened. We were there, we worked as a team, he listened to Clint-“

“The second time.”

“Yes. The second time.” Steve growled, he was getting frustrated at the mans stubbornness. “I was there to save him, same way you’re there to save me and Nat’s there to save you-“

“I get it-“

“That’s what a team does-“

“I get it! Okay, I was too harsh on the kid, he did good and he wasn’t hurt so I shouldn’t have gotten as mad as I did.”

“Right. And he still needs to be disciplined.”

“Definitely-“

“Yes. But you can praise him too, you know. It doesn’t have to be one or the other. Not everything has to be so black and white Tony.” With that Steve turned away from him, making it known that he had no more to say on the matter. Tony sat for a while and contemplated the man’s words. He fond that he agreed wholeheartedly with him, much to his annoyance. He sighed and relented to himself that he would have a much more productive conversation with Peter later.

“You’re right.” He huffed to the super soldier, who was busying himself washing dishes.

“I know.” He smiled in a sing song voice making Tony huff once again.

“I’ll talk to him when he gets up, I know he’s exhausted. I wanted to talk to you about setting some boundaries with him too.”

“Oh, uh, well okay. Do you think I’m the best candidate for that?” He dried his hands and looked round at the other man.

“Your advice is always helpful. I’m gonna talk to Clint too, since he has the most experience with the whole parenting thing. I might mention it to the others and see if they are any concerns.”

“I’d be happy to help, you know how much we all care about him.” Something in the way Steve spoke let on that he was hinting at something else.

“What?” Tony eyed him suspiciously.

“Hm?” He hummed innocently. “Oh, nothing...IronDad.”

“Shut it.”

The team once again settled in the makeshift living room, instead of going their separate ways and
going in and out of the bunk room, as no to wake up Peter. But after a couple hours when the teen still hadn’t emerged Tony started to get antsy.

“I’ll just go check on him-“

“Tony, he’s fine. He’s not a baby, let him rest. Christ, I’m surprised you haven’t installed a baby monitor in his bunk yet.” Nat laughed. Tony shot her a look before sitting back down. He didn’t think he was being unreasonable given the morning they’d just had. “He’s probably still mad at you for yelling at him anyway, let him have his space.”

“I suppose.” He leaned back in his chair and turned his attention back to the TV. He still had a niggling feeling that something was wrong but he didn’t want to risk upsetting Peter anymore that day. Bruce could see that his friend was stressed.

“I was gonna go grab my book anyway, I’ll just check in and see if he’s up.” He smiled casually and Tony nodded back at him gratefully. Both Nat and Clint rolled their eyes.

When Bruce entered the bunk room he was met with the back of Peter’s poking out of a bundle of blankets. The boy appeared to still be asleep. Wanting to make sure he walked up to his bunk and peeked over to look at his face. Sure enough Peter was still fast asleep, breathing evenly. A thin sheen of sweat covered his face, but Bruce put that down to the fact that Peter had bundled himself up in two blankets and the comforter he had stolen from his mentors bed bellow. He attempted to peel back one of the many layers he’d cocooned himself in but Peter pried them back, grumbling in his sleep. Chuckling Bruce decided to leave the boy alone and returned back to the common room.

“He’s alive.” Bruce announced sitting back down. “Still sleeping.”

Tony seemed satisfied with this answer as he didn’t press the man for anymore information. It got to be around six thirty, when Clint had almost finished preparing dinner, when Tony decided that Peter had had more than enough sleep (as well as enough time to hopefully forgiven Tony for yelling at him). Both he and Thor entered the bunk room, Thor wanting to retrieve the bag of funyuns he’d been hiding.

“Up and at em’ sunshine. Let’s go.” Tony patted the side of Peter’s bunk. He received zero response, in fact the boy didn’t react at all. “Come on Pete, it’s dinner time.”

This time he shook the boy gently. Still nothing. He shook him again. Then again. Just as he was starting to freak out the boy groaned and murmured something Tony couldn’t hear.

“What was that kiddo?”

“Not yet, Auntie May.” He moaned again, pulling away from Tony and nestled back into the blankets.

“I know my luscious hair may have fooled you Pete, but I’m not your aunt.” Tony chuckled. He expected Peter to snap out of his sleepy haze and be embarrassed by his blunder, but Peter immediately went back to sleep. “P, come on. Up, you can’t be tired anymore.”

This time Tony manually rolled him onto his back and once again received no resistance. Peter’s head lolled lazily to one side his eyes half opening. This freaked Tony out so he shook him hard again. “Peter, come on open your eyes.”

He did, but not fully. His eyelashes fluttered and his eyes darted around the room but didn’t focus on anything.
“Hmm?” He grunted.

“Buddy, you alright?” Tony’s blood was pounding in his ears, something was wrong. He’d seen Peter half asleep many times before, but this was different. His eyes stared right through him and there was no recognition in them.

“Good evening, child!” Thor called over, not realising the moment of panic his friend was having.

“Thor go get Bruce.” Tony said quickly, having placed his hand on Peter’s forehead only to feel that he was burning up.

“Why, is something wrong?” Thor peered over Tony’s shoulder at Peter, whose skin was flushed a sickly grey colour.

“Just go.” With that Thor hurried out of the room yelling for Dr. Banner as he ran down the hallway. “What’s wrong with you kid, huh? Petey, can you open your eyes for me?”

Tony stripped the blankets off of him and lifted the boy off of his bunk and down onto his own, effortlessly. He noticed that the boy was soaking wet, but he couldn’t tell if it was from sweat or something else, but the smell of ammonia that burnt his nostrils gave him an idea. At that point the didn’t care. He was debating taking off the boy’s hoodie when Bruce rushed into the room.

“What happened?” He immediately crouched down next to the boy and moving his head in a similar way to he had that morning.

“I don’t know, he wouldn’t wake up,” Tony went into auto pilot, relaxing somewhat having Bruce there meaning he didn't have to be the only responsible adult handling the situation, but still trying his best not to panic. He went over to Bruce’s bunk and retrieved a case full of basic medical equipment he had shoved under his bed.

“He’s clearly running a fever and he’s unresponsive. He didn’t display any signs of concussion earlier, not that that would particularly explain his elevated temperature.” Bruce speculated whilst checking Peter’s pulse. Tony placed his case open next to him and he reached in for a stethoscope to check the boy’s breathing. “Thank you.”

“Do you think it’s an infection?”

“I couldn’t tell you. I’ll have to run some blood work- Peter, can you open your eyes for me?” Luckily for them the ship had all the amenities needed to conduct a thorough investigation. “You said he didn’t get hurt?”

“Not that I know of but god knows he wouldn’t tell me if he did- Pete come on, wake up.” The two men helped prop Peter up as Bruce rolled up his sleeve to administer a shot.

“This should help bring down his fever-“ Bruce looked a Peter’s arm in shock. All of his veins stood out against his skin and a purplish bruise looked as though it had spread down his arm, trailing from above his forearm and fading towards his wrist. Even from the small amount of bicep that was exposed Bruce could see a thick crust of congealed blood sticking the fabric of his hoodie to his arm. “Tony help me get his jumper off, but be gentle, it looks like it’s stuck to him.”

Tony obliged, the two working together to hold to limp teen up as they peeled his hoodie off of his sweaty body. For the first time since Tony entered the room Peter fully opened his eyes, though they were still glazed over and hazy looking.

“T-Tony..?” He murmured. He sounded like he was drunk, his speech slurred as though he had
little control over his facial movements or that he was on the brink of drifting back into unconsciousness. “What- what’re you doin?”

“It’s okay bud, you’re just a little warm we need to get you cooled down okay?” Tony was nowhere near prepared for another medical emergency with the child so soon, and to his dismay he was panicking even more than the first time. He hadn’t even thought that possible but he could feel his hands shaking as he held the kid still.

“No, no wait!” Peter had started to come to his senses and realised that the men were about to expose his wound. He knew that it would be better just to accept the help but part of him was still afraid of getting in trouble. “Please don’t!”

“Pete, it’s okay, I just wanna take a look.” Bruce tried to soothe but Peter yanked his arm back and started thrashing trying to get out of Tony’s grip.

“Get off of me I said no!” But Tony held him firm.

“Don’t make Bruce have to use a sedative on you too. Now sit still and calm yourself down.” He said sternly. “What happened to your arm, Peter.?”

“I don’t..I don’t want to.” He cried in one last ditch attempt to avoid revealing his injury to the two. He sniffed but stilled, finally allowing Bruce to gently remove the clothing, being careful not to rip it away from the tender skin underneath; he revealed the cut but it was far worse than when Peter had last seen it only a few hours before. There was still very little blood but now instead of the clean looking hole Peter remembered, the skin was bright red and angry looking, with festering splits in the swollen skin. The bruising on his forearm was nothing compared to the black marks that wrapped around his arm and crept up his shoulder. The most concerning part of all was the thick, green sludge that was now oozing out of the gaping lesion.

“Jesus Christ.” Tony covered his mouth and turned away. He’d seen plenty of gore but seeing that kind of injury on a child he considered to be his own at this point, was too shocking for him to handle. He didn’t feel like he was going to throw up, but he felt truly nauseated.

“Peter, did this happen today?” Bruce asked gravely. The boy nodded. “Okay, can you feel when I do this?”

Bruce pinched the back of Peter’s hand. He shook his head, looking scared. “Right, that’s okay, you’re okay I just need to know how far it’s spread.”

“How far what’s spread?” Tony asked trying and failing to keep the panic out of his voice.

“I can’t tell you for sure but it looks like some kind of neurotoxin. A regular infection could never take hold so quickly. It’s spread rapidly, but not so rapidly that I’m worried for your life Peter. You’re going to be alright, don’t panic. But we need to get him down to the medi-bay so I can try and identify what this is. We have a good amount of Kree chemical weapons on file from the intel Captain Marvel has gathered, so hopefully I should be able to find out what one it is.”

“Okay..” Peter said shakily.

“Can you stand?” Again Peter shook his head. He didn’t even want to attempt it, scared whatever toxin was overtaking his arm would spread if he moved too much.

“I’ve got him.” Tony said scooping him up without giving room for protest. The two men took quick strides down the hallway and Tony took the opportunity to question the boy’s actions.
“Why Pete, why didn’t you say something?”

“Cause I knew you’d be mad at me.” He said with his head down, mainly out of shame but also because it took a lot of energy to keep him head elevated and the motion of the man’s steps was making him feel dizzy. His speech was still slurred and he hated the sensation of not being in control of his own tongue.

“I’m sorry, Petey. I’m not mad anymore I promise. We can talk about all that later.” Much to Peter’s utter shock the man pressed a light kiss to his forehead. “I promise I’ll never be mad when you’re hurt or sick. No matter how upset I am about something else I promise you can always come to me about anything, buddy. Okay?”

Peter’s chest felt a warmth blossom in it, and not in the bad way he was experiencing earlier. He gripped the man a little tighter before whispering, “Okay.”

Tony’s has surprised himself with that action but he certainly didn’t regret it. He often struggled to show signs of physical affection, but he knew that was the best way to show Peter he wasn’t upset with him. It was much quicker than spending the next three hours reassuring the boy, but of course that wasn’t the only reason he had done it.

They reached the medical area of the ship which was filled with equally advanced tech as their one at the tower. Tony set Peter down on the bench in an upright position, going to help the boy swing his legs round. However, Peter tried to do that himself and ended up almost smacking his head on the floor. Tony caught him by the shoulders, making Peter wince at the tenderness in the joint on his left side.

“Let’s not add a concussion onto our list of problems right now, huh?”

Peter gave him a sheepish grin that faded quickly as another stab of pain shot through his arm. Bruce wasted no time in injecting him with an anaesthetic before going to work on cleaning the wound, both swabbing and taking blood samples.

“Remember Peter, due to your metabolic rate the numbing won’t last long, you can tell me to stop when it starts to where off I don’t want to hurt you.”

Peter nodded. Bruce input the samples he took into a machine in one corner of the room. “Tony keep an eye on that for me and tell me what comes up.”

The other man did so, somewhat hesitantly. He wanted to stand by Peter so the boy could squeeze his hand when the pain got to him. Peter could sense his apprehension so he gave the man a brave smile that didn’t suit his pale face. He wanted to show Tony hat he wasn't a baby. Even if he did act like a stupid kid and put himself in harms way he could at least handle to consequences without fuss.

The machine Bruce had inserted the tubes into whirred loudly as lines of writing Peter couldn’t make out started popping up on the screen. Tony began listing off components of Peter’s blood and their levels; he couldn’t understand what that meant either all the numbers making his head spin even more.

“Definitely some kind of an infection…okay we can work with that.” Bruce said confidently. Whereas he seemed relieved Tony still looked majorly concerned. Peter guessed his numbers weren’t very good but by this point he was starting to become drowsy again and his vision was blurring. He made the mistake of looking down at his arm when Bruce began stitching it and his stomach lurched.
“Mmm- Tony.”

The man was back at his side at an instant. He picked up the boy’s other arm by his wrist and held his hand in both of his. “It’s okay, don’t look at that look at me.”

He gazed up at the man and clenched his jaw tight. He didn’t want to seem weak or make Tony worry even more (if that was possible at this point). He took a deep breath through his nose and closed his eyes.

“That’s it Pete, out through your mouth.” He gently squeezed his hand.

“Don’t want to throw up.” He said teeth still clenched.

“I know buddy, just keep breathing.”

“I can give you something for the nausea after I’m done here.” Bruce said. “This wound is too deep for me to just suture. I’m gonna give you some dissolvable internal stitches, then pack the wound, then give you stitches on the outside that’ll have to come out in a couple days. The inside needs to heal before the outside does or you could end up with an abscess. Given the severity of the infection I don’t want to take any chances, okay bud?”

Peter nodded his head slightly in acknowledgement, not really taking the information in. Even the slight head movement was enough to make him want to pass out. His head was throbbing. He squeezed Tony’s hand and the man gently squeezed back.

“It’s okay.” He whispered to him, planting yet another kiss on the boy’s wet curls. “You’re okay.”

“I’m sorry I was so stupid.”

“Shh. You weren’t stupid Petey, you did a really brave thing. I’m sorry I got so mad earlier I was just scared, we both know what you did was wrong but your heart was in the right place and I’m proud of you.” The man stroked his hair as he spoke.

Peter opened his eyes to look up at the man, for a moment the pain melted away and he relished in the praise he was receiving. But then he the sharp sting of the needle Bruce was using on him brought him back down to earth.

“Ah fu-“ he caught himself “dge cakes!”

“Fudge cakes? That’s a new one. You’re making me hungry.”

“Don’t make me laugh, Tony!”

Bruce was halfway through finishing up Peter’s stitches when Steve came into the room.

“I’m sorry but we waited so long we got worried-“

“It’s okay, he’s alright.” Tony soothed, finally starting to relax himself. Bruce has put the boy on a drip full of strong antibiotics that already had the boy looking brighter. “He got sliced by one of the bayonets. Turns out they were covered in a venom that causes accelerated necrosis, but Peter’s metabolism worked quicker than it did.”

“Jeez, sport. That’s a nasty gash you got there.” Steve looked visibly relieved and managed his signature smile for the boy, who looked a lot better than Thor had previously described.

“Yeah, it’s gonna make a cool scar!” All three adults rolled their eyes at him but smiled
nonetheless. Steve then left the room to inform the others that the ‘Spiderling’ was not in fact ‘inches from death’.

“And you are done, Mr. Spider-Man.” Bruce said sitting back to marvel at his work. It had taken quite a bit of patience to convince the severed flesh to join back together.

Instinctively Peter twisted his arm to get a good look but both Bruce and Tony grabbed him.

“Hey, hey, you wanna undo all the doc’s hard work?!” Tony cried.

“Oops. Sorry.”

“Sit still just a minute longer, I’ve still got to put a bandage over top.” Bruce moved to do so.

Peter tried to sit still but he’d started to perk up and feel almost better (other than the headache and general pain on his left side). He was even managing to flex his fingers. He’d also been sitting there for over two hours with an IV draining into his system.

“You gotta pee?” Tony asked already knowing the answer.

Peter blushed but nodded shyly. It was the first time any colour had shown on his face since Tony found him in bed, so Tony welcomed it. Not to mention the fact he found it kinda cute when Peter got embarrassed like that; not that’d he’d ever tell him that should he want to face the wrath of an indignant teenager.

“Just a minute, Pete, I promise I’ll make this quick.” Bruce smiles sympathetically. Peter gave a small smile back before continuing to squirm. When Bruce had finished (finally) the boy tried to immediately sit up by himself but was knocked back by another wave of dizziness. Tony caught him and pulled him upright again.

“You gotta slow down pal, you’re still fighting that nasty infection. You’re gonna feel crappy for a while.” He helped Peter to his feet, again agonisingly slow. Peter pushed his knees together and bounced a little, hoping that it would come off as him trying to steady himself. “I got you, come on.”

“My legs work fine Mr. Stark, it’s my arm that hurts.”

With that Tony held his hands up, letting the boy sway for moment. “Okay, be as cheeky as you want, I won’t be mopping up the puddle.”

Tony smiled triumphantly when Peter was forced to immediately grab hold of the man to steady himself. He ignored the dirty look he got off of the teen, instead just waltzing him to the bathroom. He wordlessly helped the boy loosen his pants, knowing it would be difficult to do quickly with one hand, and waited outside the bathroom while Peter took care of business.

“Uh..Tony?” He heard a quiet voice. ‘Oh god tell me he didn’t have an accident inside the bathroom, I’m way over my emotional quota for today’.

“Oh, yeah?”

“Can you grab me some clothes, please? I wanna shower again. I feel disgusting.”

‘Oh thank god.’ “Sure bud, do you think you can do it without getting your arm wet or should I grab a bag too?”
“Uhhh-“

“I’ll grab a bag.”

He grabbed Peter’s pyjamas, figuring it was almost time for the teen to be going to bed anyway, and a plastic bag designed for waterproofing casts and headed back to the bathroom. He helped Peter get his shirt off and cover his bandage before exiting the room after he assured him that he could ‘take it from here, thank you.’ He waited outside of the bathroom until he was done, Peter only calling for help when he needed it to put his shirt back on.

“Feel better?”

“Uh huh, I’m starving though.” Peter said dramatically.

Tony laughed, he wasn’t used to the kid being so forward about- well anything. He guessed he’d learned his lesson about not speaking up, at least for now, or was too tired to remember one of his key personality traits. “You kind of made me miss dinner too. Come on, I’m sure they saved us some.”

“With Thor around? I don’t think that dude has even heard of leftovers.”
Healing

Chapter Summary

Very fluffy family dynamic stuff going on here with a dash of omo thrown in for good measure

The rest of the evening went without incident; Peter had perked up considerably, though he was still a lot more quiet and withdrawn than usual. He was content to sit quietly and watch a movie with the rest of the group without discussing the cinematography or any major plot holes. Instead he just learnt against Tony and watched the movie, zoning in and out of the conversations around the room. He felt the older man stroke his hair every so often which encouraged his eyes to droop. He was determined to stay awake though and kept sitting forward to shake himself out of it.

“You can rest, Pete it’s okay.” Tony opened his arms up once again so that the boy could lay on his chest. It was the first time the man had offered snuggles like that when he wasn’t either hyperventilating or otherwise incapacitated. Not that he was one hundred percent at that moment, but still he was way more coherent than on the other occasions Tony had let him cuddle up to him. It was too tempting to resist, he’d missed the physical affection he’d grown so accustomed to receiving from his aunt growing up and he always felt so comforted in the man’s presence.

“Fine, but I’m not sleepin’” he relented somewhat huffily, Steve noticing the boy had the exact same expression and tone that Tony had at the dinner table earlier that day. He got some satisfaction knowing that Tony was going to have to deal with a mini mirror image of himself. Despite his protests the boy slumped against him and Tony wasted no time pulling him closer to his chest and rubbing his back, carefully placing his arm as to where he was putting no pressure on it.

“There we go, all comfy?” He hummed. Peter nodded and sighed against him.

“You need anything?” He whispered this time. Peter shook his head and burrowed in closer, showing his lack of desire to be moved for any reason. Tony chuckled and continued to rub the boy’s back rhythmically.

The rest of the room struggled not to coo out loud at the scene. It was odd to see Tony so relaxed and openly affectionate. They were all used to the man putting up his usual cool, sarcastic front with all of them, only usually experiencing tender moments with the man on an individual basis. He shot them a look when he caught them staring but it was hard to take the man seriously when he was coddling a fifteen year old.

Peter kept trying to fight against sleep but he kept feeling his eyes close. He struggled against it for as long as he could before giving in and letting them shut. When he did so Tony gently jostled him and shorted, “thought we weren’t sleeping, huh?”

There was no bite to his voice but Peter still scowled, not opening his eyes to give the man a glare. “M’not m’just restin’ my eyes.”

All the adults in the room chuckled lightly. “Wow, I’ve never heard that one before.” Clint quipped.
Peter lazily opened one eye to stare at the man, resisting the urge to poke his tongue out at him. He dramatically sighed “hmph” at him instead only inciting another round of laughter amongst them.

“Shh, now grumpy. Ignore owlman and get some sleep.” Tony soothed, still unable to keep the smile out of his own voice. Peter relaxed against him breathing in the faint scent of his cologne.

“His painkillers should be wearing off round about now,” Bruce said. “I should give him another dose before we head to bed.”

Tony simply nodded. He intended to wake Peter up before then to use the bathroom anyway, if the boy didn’t wake up of his own accord to do so. One by one the group started to retire to their bunks, each of them wishing each other goodnight before disappearing. Tony was also starting to struggle with staying awake but he didn’t want to move in fear of disturbing the boy wrapped around him. Only when his own bladder screamed for release after four hours did he finally decide to try and pry Peter off of him.

“Sorry, Buddy, I’ll be right back.” He whispered as he tried to stand as gently as he could. However the boy just whined and clung tighter around his waist. “Come on you little spider-monkey.”

He had to use some force to break the teens grip on him but he tried to be as gentle with his arm as possible. Peter curled into the now empty space Tony had left behind, pouting in his sleep. It took the man a lot of self restraint not to snap a picture right then and there but he knew that there would be hell to pay if Peter ever found out. After using the bathroom he finally decided it was time he got Peter up and into an actual bed.

“Hey, there.” He patted Peter’s shoulder gently. “Wake up, bud, let’s get you to bed, hm?”

Thankfully the teen was a lot easier to rouse than he had been before having his arm treated. That being said, he wasn’t exactly happy about being woken up. He frowned up at Tony as soon as his eyes opened.

“Sorry, honey. But you can’t sleep on the couch.”

“Mmm, why not?” He whined grumpily whilst rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand. ‘God this kid’s so adorable, what’s wrong with me, when did I grow ovaries?’ Tony thought.

“Cause you can’t, besides we gotta get some more medicine in you.” Tony did feel guilty about waking him up, after all he was pretty sure Bruce would’ve been able to give the big his injections without waking him. But he didn’t feel comfortable doing such a thing when the boy wasn’t conscious, something about it didn’t feel right. He also knew better than to let Peter go to bed without a potty break first.

Bruce had been hanging around in the doorway yawning, ready to administer Peter’s medication before heading off to bed himself. “This should get you through till morning.”

Peter braved the injections without fuss and went to follow Bruce back to the bunk room, wanting nothing more than to flop onto his bunk and go back to sleep. But Tony stopped him.

“Pete, don’t you think you’re forgetting something?” He asked gently. He still felt rather awkward asking a fifteen year old if he needed to use the restroom but he was growing accustomed to it. It was just a learning curve for him, he wasn’t used to interacting with kids all that much and he wasn’t sure what was normal behaviour and what was a Peter thing.

“Hm?”
“Don’t you think you should use the bathroom before you go back to sleep? It’s been a while.”

Peter blushed, feeling ashamed the man felt the need to ask that question. He knew that Tony was right but it didn’t stop it from hurting his pride. “No, I don’t need to go.”

“Come on, Pete. Don’t fight me on this we’re both exhausted. Just go try.” The man was too tired, emotionally and physically, to chase the boy into admitting his need. He waited outside as he stomped into the bathroom and walked him back to the bunk room. He was still a little unsteady on his feet but nowhere near as bad as he had been a few hours before. When they entered the room and Peter readied himself to climb up to his bunk Tony stopped him again.

“Ugh, what now, let me sleep.” He knew he sounded like a bratty teenager but he didn’t care.

“We’re swapping bunks tonight. I don’t want you hurting your arm climbing in and out. No arguments.” Tony said flippantly, leaving no room for Peter to protest. The man had already swung himself up onto the top bunk. Peter felt guilty that the man had given up his bed to him but he supposed it made sense. He crawled into the double bed (which sheets had been replaced) when in the darkness he saw Tony drop his arm down and swing something in his face.

“Aren’t you forgetting Mr. Bear-Bear?” He teased but not meanly.

Peter snatched the toy from his hand before anyone had the chance to see it (not that any of the sleeping figures would have). He hissed back at the man “Don’t call her that!”

After a moment Peter heard the man quietly say, “Her?” Peter could hear the smirk on his voice.

“Ugh! Goodnight Tony!” Peter turned dramatically on his side facing the wall of his pod, despite the fact that the man couldn’t see him do it.

“Sweet dreams, Kiddo.” The man laughed.

The next morning everyone awoke before six am; everyone other than Thor and Peter. Thor only crawled out of his pit when he smelled bacon, but Peter was having a harder time waking up that morning. When he’d had a good night’s sleep, he tended to wake up bright and early and bursting with energy, eager to start the day. But the sudden infection had knocked it out of him. He didn’t wake up until Natasha came in to call him for breakfast.

“Hey Peter! You alive in here?” She leant around the door frame slapping the metal wall as she spoke. He groaned in response the loud sharp noise hurting his sensitive ears and startling him awake.

“Don’t want breakfast.” He groaned again and covered his face with a pillow.

“You know Steve will pitch a fit if you don’t eat.”

“Ugh, I’ll be down in a minute tell him. I need some time to wake up.” He spoke into the pillow.

“Okay. Just be quick, if you’re not don’t come crying to me when Steve rips the blankets off of you.” She cackled and walked back out to the dining area. Peter had intended to get up, he really had, but somehow he ended up falling asleep again.

He woke up not fifteen minutes later, feeling as though he’d only blinked. He glanced at the time on his phone which verified he’d actually nodded off for a quarter of an hour.
“Crap!” He jumped up.

“Language!” Steve said from the doorway making Peter jump out of his skin.

“Sorry! Sorry, Mr. Rogers, sir I’m getting up!”

“We’ve talked about this Pete, my name is Steve,” he kept his tone light “and breakfast was half an hour ago.”

“I know, I know. I didn’t mean to fall back asleep.” Peter bounced in place, his bladder making itself known. He hoped Steve wouldn’t grill him for too much longer because he wasn’t the only one protesting Peter’s extra time in bed.

“Hurry up and get ready- we can’t keep Bruce back from eating the froot loops forever.” Steve winked at him and turned away to walk back down the hall. Peter waited a minute before he ran to the bathroom, not wanting anyone to realise how desperate he was. This proved to be a mistake, cutting the time before his bladder forcefully emptied.

Despite the god’s somewhat rugged appearance, Thor adhered to strict Norse customs which included an intense grooming regime. It wasn’t uncommon for the man to spend upwards of three hours in the bathroom trimming and preening his facial hair as well as deep conditioning, then braiding his golden locks. Unfortunately for Peter, the man’s beauty schedule happened to coincide with a day in which the entire team were on a ship with only one bathroom.

The kid barrelled down the hallway skidding to a halt outside the bathroom door. His heart stopped when he saw the occupied sign on the doors touch pad display. He hadn’t accounted for this happening, having assumed everyone was still eating. He crossed his legs and grabbed himself. He knew he had to knock but he was dreading it. He’d never been comfortable having to rush someone in the bathroom, even his Aunt, despite the times she had reassured him that it was okay. Not only did it embarrass him but he always felt so rude kicking someone else out of the restroom all because his tiny bladder refused to wait any longer.

He gritted his teeth and prepared himself. He took a deep breath and wrapped his knuckles against the door.

“Yes?” Oh, crap it was Thor.

“Oh, uh Peter couldn’t find the words. He stood there squirming incessantly.

“Young Peter, is that you?”

He didn’t answer, his voice getting stuck in his throat in a ball he struggled to swallow. He opened his mouth and shut it again. He could hear Thor verbally shrug to himself and continue whatever he was doing. He felt ridiculous, he couldn’t understand why he was finding it so difficult, did he want to wet himself? He had to man up or he was gonna end up peeing his pants for no good reason- again. No, he couldn’t let that happen, he knew he was being irrational. ‘Just ask.’ He held himself with one hand and went to raise his other arm to knock again, only to be met with a wave of pain coursing through the limb. He’d accidentally twisted his injured arm in a way the stitches clearly didn’t find agreeable and he felt them pull away from each other. Acting on reflex he grabbed the top of his arm with the hand he’d been using to keep his bladder in check. That was a big mistake.

He felt a rush of urine immediately shoot out of him, soaking his underwear. Peter bent in half grabbing his crotch with both hands this time. He summoned all of his strength to his abdomen in
hopes of stemming the flow and avoid disaster. He cursed under his breath and knocked again, louder this time.

Thor seemed mildly annoyed at being disturbed again so soon. “Yes? Who is it?”

“Peter.” The boy groaned out. “How long are you gonna be?”

Thor didn’t answer, causing Peter to panic. He hoped he hadn’t offended the god but he was struggling to contain himself. He was trying to figure out how he’d hide his wet clothes and clean the puddle in the hall without anyone catching him, when the door opened. He was greeted by Thor in nothing but a towel...and a pink shower cap. He took a mental picture to remind himself of the hilarity later, but he was too desperate to even breath at this point let alone laugh.

“Go ahead and use the facilities, little one.” Thor wasted no time forcing the desperate teen into the bathroom and shutting the door for him. He wasn’t particularly phased by the sight of the boy having shared his childhood with Loki; he had witnessed his brother in this particular situation many times. He just hoped the shy boy wouldn’t be too embarrassed about his condition later. He waited patiently outside the door whilst the boy relieved himself. Steve came barrelling into the corridor, hellbent on dragging Peter out of bed.

“The boy has risen my friend, he’s just using the toilet!” He bellowed cheerfully. He always found it amusing when Steve showed any signs of being irritated, as his furrowed brows didn’t seem to suit his constantly smiling face.

“Ah, okay fair enough.” Steve said relaxing visibly.

Inside the bathroom Peter wasn't relaxing at all, despite having relieved himself. Once again he’d managed to avoid releasing the entire contents of his bladder onto himself but had wet his underwear through thoroughly. He cringed at the sensation of wet fabric clinging to his skin but he was still thankful it hadn't soaked through onto his pants. Well, at least nobody would notice the stain on his dark pants if they weren't looking for it, which he hoped no one would be. He repeated the routine he had done only two days prior, rinsing his underwear then stashing them under the sink.

“Shit.” He cursed under his breath. He’d forgotten to get rid of the other pair he had hidden there. There was no way he could waltz out past Thor holding with them in his hands, surely the man would ask questions, if not at the very least tell Tony. He’d just have to remember to stuff them in his bag at some point, maybe when the rest of the team fell asleep that night. He had to remember.

He exited the bathroom with his head held down quickly apologising for interrupting the pink-cap clad man.

“No harm done child!” Thor smiled, clapped his large hand on Peter’s shoulder and reentered the bathroom.

“Peter! Food, now! Cap’s gonna have a bitch fit in a minute!” Tony yelled from the kitchen. Peter then heard Tony say ‘ow’ which he assumed came from something Steve had thrown at him. Peter snickered then called back:

“Coming! I’m gonna get dressed first!” He ran back to their room to change into some everyday clothes when he realised he’d ran out of underwear. Obviously Happy hadn’t accounted for the idea of the teen wetting himself three times on such a short trip. Peter sighed as he had another unpleasant decision to make. Obviously he had no choice but to go commando as he had no idea what Tony had done with the clothes he spoiled during his fever-nap but the pant options he had available weren’t very appealing for someone in his current predicament; Sweatpants would be
comfortable but it would be very obvious to anyone who happened to glance below Peter’s waist would be very quickly clued into the situation, or jeans, which would hide his shame but be very, very uncomfortable. It didn’t take Peter long to chose the latter, he’d rather put up with a day of discomfort than the likelihood of a mortifying conversation with one or more of the adults he was cohabiting with.

“PETER!” Steve bellowed.

“I’m coming! Jeez, can a guy put some pants on??”

Finally Peter entered the kitchen, throwing himself down in a seat with an empty bowl. The rest of the group had finished their food and were sitting drinking coffee.

“Good afternoon.” Tony muttered taking a sip of his coffee. He received a scowl from the younger male that made him splutter. “Hey, I wasn’t the one rushing you!”

“You were conspiring against me! You do realise most teenagers sleep in past twelve on weekends, right? I hardly think making it down for breakfast at eight-thirty on a Sunday is as bad as you’re making it out to be.” Peter grumbled going to pour himself some cereal but all that came out was colourful dust. He shot an equally disgruntled look at Bruce who held his hands up and shrugged. The man had a seemingly insatiable sweet tooth which he had once insisted was down to the endorphins sugar released in him, aiding his ability to control the Hulk. Peter just thought the man used it as an excuse to hoard candy.

“Breakfast is served at seven-forty five. I warned you that we couldn’t keep him away from the froot loops forever.” Steve said smugly. Peter just sighed and pouted as he got up to stick some pop tarts in the toaster.

“Is that the healthiest choice-”

“Steve,” Natasha cut him off laughing. “You wanted him to eat, he’s eating, lay off a little.”

Peter pulled a chair and sat on it backwards, mimicking Steve from one of the PSA videos he’d seen in detention. “So, you missed breakfast. What choices lead you to this life of delinquency-”

“Okay, okay.” The resounding laughter that filled the room finally making the man back down as he joined in. “You’ve been practising that, huh?”

“Yes!” Peter grinned with a mouthful of pop tart.

“Gross, Pete, close your mouth.” Tony laughed.

“Oops, sorry!” Said again around his partially chewed breakfast pastry.

After breakfast Peter spent the rest of the morning in the control room with Tony and Natasha, once again entertaining himself by staring out into space. Occasionally he’d ask questions about astrology or astrophysics related to their current location, such as “What’s that constellation over there?” and “Hey, Mr. Stark? Do you know what the relative population of that sand on the desert planet we went to? I wanna include it in my Boltzman equation thesis.” With the look he received from Tony at that last question, he tacked on:

“Hypothetically of course, I’ll just say I found a sample of it on file in your lab or something.”
Tony sighed in response pinching the bridge of his nose. “What did we say about talking about space stuff outside of home, Peter?”

“...Not to.”

“Speaking of which didn’t you bring some homework with you?”

Peter threw his head back and sighed. “Ugh, I’m in space for the first time ever don’t I get to enjoy it?!”

“You can enjoy it while doing your homework.” Tony stated simply not even looking at the boy as he continued fiddling with an older model of his telepresence headset.

“Come on, Tony, can’t I just do it Monday morning? It’ll take me like half an hour to get through, it’s only four assignments!”

Tony didn’t doubt the boys ability but still he’d rather not have Peter deal with the stress that early morning essay writing would bring him. “If it won’t take you long, you won’t miss out on anything then will you?”

Peter pouted but got up to go and retrieve his school things, shifting awkwardly when his jeans rubbed him the wrong way. Tony eyed him.

“You okay?”

Peter nodded adamantly feeling a blush rise in his cheeks.

“You gotta go to the bathroom? Thor should be out by now-”

“I don’t need to.” Peter snapped. He was embarrassed that the man would ask him outright in front of Natasha. “I don’t need you to ask me that, I’m not a five year old.”

Tony bit his tongue against making any comments about past experiences where he had to do just that and watched as the teen stormed out of the room, angrily.

“Nice.” Nat chided, stretching the N.

Tony sighed. He never knew what was the right thing to say or when to say it. He wasn’t exactly a complicated teenager himself he was consistently a douche. Not that he had many interactions with his father in those days, but the ones he did didn’t give him anything that could use to model his parenting with Peter.

“You baby him too much.” Natasha could see the cogs turning in the man’s head, she had a knack for that. “You’re always either too strict or too soft, there’s no in between.”

“Yeah, Steve said a similar thing. I just don’t know what’s normal behaviour for a kid his age and what’s not.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“What? Of course it does.” He shook his head flippantly.

“There ain’t no cookie cutter kids in real life, Tony. Pete’s an individual. He’s too smart for his years and because of that he craves independence. While on the other hand he’s an anxious fifteen year old, in a world that’s scary for him, so he also needs constant reassurance.”

“How can I give him both? Like you said, I either push him too far, expecting him to do things he
can’t handle or I underestimate him or I get overprotective, I don’t know what I’m doing.” This conversation had hit Tony hard and suddenly, it was as though all of the inadequacies he’d felt since becoming Peter’s guardian all piled on top of him at once.

“No dad knows what they’re doing Tony, some just do a better job at pretending they do, like Clint.” That got a slight smile out of the man. “It comes with time, practise and patience just like anything else. You two are too similar sometimes, so you’re gonna butt heads. It happens. You gotta encourage him to do things while at the same time letting him know that whatever happens you’re still gonna be there to help and support him.”

“Why are you making so much sense?”
She shrugged, her face as expressionless as always. “I’ve watched Clint over the years, heard his side and the kids. So, as a neutral third party, obviously I could see the bigger picture. He grew along with them.”

“It all sounds so simple when you say it,” Tony sighed grumpily.

“I mean that coupled with being an orphan, I just know what I would’ve wanted growing up.”

The man nodded sullenly. “I suppose being a parent you give your kids everything you didn’t have.”

“Yeah. You know, nature vs nurture and all that junk.”

“Thank you, Nat. I mean it.” He smiled gratefully at her having found her pep talk much more encouraging and productive than the one he’d had with Steve. “I needed that.”

“You’re doing great job Tony, think about how far Peter’s come in what, five months? Before he was too scared to even look at any of us and now he’s sitting at breakfast poking fun at Steve like the rest of us.” The two of them laughed.

“That is true.” He didn’t often think about that, but even he had to admit the stark change in Peter was impressive. “I’m glad he’s comfortable enough with me now to argue, as much as he pisses me off.”

“The feeling is mutual at times, old man!” Peter called from the living room. He’d heard some of the conversation, not all but enough.

“Glad to hear it!” Tony grinned.

“Same here!”

“Likewise!”

“Right back at ya!”

“I concur –”

“Oh my god you’re both so annoying!” Nat yelled breaking up the two’s ridiculous back and forth that had all three of them laughing. “Damn sometimes it’s better when you’re fighting, at least the you give each other the silent treatment and I can get some peace!”
Peter sat on the living room floor with three textbooks open out in front of him, scanning over each one quickly and somehow managing to absorb all the necessary information. He found himself immersed in his last essay, history, that was only meant to be 800 words long but Peter was already pushing the 1700 mark. As he was writing his mini autobiography on Nikola Tesla, one of his favourite historical figures, he barely noticed Dr. Banner enter the room.

“Whatcha working on?”

“History homework.” Peter replied, swinging his feet in the air, lying on his front.

“Anything interesting?” Bruce said rhetorically eyeing the stack of notebook paper the boy had accumulated. “How’s your arm feeling, Peter?”

“It feels fine, doesn’t hurt unless I move the wrong way.” He pauses his writing momentarily to look up at the man. “Thanks again for patching me up earlier, I know I should’ve told you sooner.”

“It’s alright, if Tony had been that mad at me I probably would’ve been less than forthcoming myself.” He said kindly. “I would like to take another look at you today though, see how well the antibiotics are helping.”

“I feel so much better already.”

“I’m glad bud.” Bruce stood up to leave the room again, ruffling the boy’s affectionately hair as he went past.

They waited until after lunch to check Peter’s arm as Bruce was worried about giving him anymore medicine on an empty stomach.

“Let’s take a look at this arm then.” Bruce said as he gently unwrapped Peter’s bandaged arm. He’d considered calling Tony in to join them but he found that Peter was more likely to admit that he was in pain when the other man wasn’t there. He peeled back the gauze covering the wound happy to find that very little puss was still weeping from it and the surrounding bruising had already faded to a purplish red. “Looks like the antibiotics are working well.”

Peter gave him a weak smile in response. He’d never had a strong stomach when it came to gory stuff. He wasn’t the worst about it but the sight of certain things did leave his knees a little weak. He knew he had to get used to it if he wanted to pursue a career in this line of work. Bruce was cleaning the area with a stinging solution when he hummed, sounding perplexed.

“What’s wrong?”

“Oh, nothing, nothing Pete. Just some of these stitches are pulling really tight…” the man trailed off, clearly considering his observations inside his head but Peter started to worry.
“Well, isn’t that what they’re supposed to do? I mean, like, they’re meant to hold my skin together so..?”

“You’re right, but if they pull to tight they can end up imbedding in the skin.” He muttered turning his head different ways as he began to pull at each stitch with a pair of tweezers. Peter tried his best not to flinch. “Let me know if I’m hurting you.”

“Yeah.” Replied a tight lipped Peter.

“Hmm,” Bruce furrowed his brows. “It looks like all of them are starting to grow into your arm-you haven’t noticed any swelling?”

“Oh uh.” The teen shook his head.

“I know you have accelerated healing but this is excessive.” He gave a light laugh. “I’m gonna have to take these stitches out and reopen the wound again.”

“What like cut me?” Peter gave him a wide eyed look.

“Don’t worry, it’s nothing unfixable. I’ll numb you up again. The skin has already fused together that’s all, I hadn’t planned to take out the packing material for at least three days, but if you’re healing this quick they’ve got to come out now before you get a secondary infection when your body starts rejecting the foreign material.”

“Are you gonna do it now..?”

“I was planning to, is that okay? It’s gonna take me a minuet to get set up and sterilise everything if you need to take a break?” Bruce gave the boy and out in case this was his way of saying he needed to use the restroom.

“Is it okay if I go and get Tony..?”

“Of course, buddy. Go ahead just tell him to wash his hands.”

Peter nodded as he scurried off to the control room to retrieve his human comfort blanket. He was ashamed of himself for being so needy but the man was such a calming force for him, he couldn’t help but become addicted to his presence in times of stress.

“Uh, Mr. Stark?” He called quietly from the doorway. Both Steve (having replaced Natasha) and Tony turning their chairs around to look at him.

“Hey there, underoos. All patched up already?”

“Uh, no actually, Dr. Banner wants to take the stitches out. I-I-I was just wondering if you’d come and sit in with me…” He trailed off. Tony immediately stood up and turned to Steve.

“You okay manning the controls?”

“I’m sure I’ll manage.” He smiled.

“Good, come on then Pete.” He didn’t question Peter about the doctors reasoning, he trusted Bruce wholeheartedly and he could see that his ward was becoming agitated. He was just happy that Peter had called on him rather than trying to brave it alone.

“W-wait!” Peter cries suddenly and halting to a stop.
“What’s wrong?”

“Bruce said to make sure you wash your hands.”

“Seriously?” He sighed. “Hold on. Do you need to pee before I go in?”

Peter shook his head.

“Okay go on ahead I’ll join you guys in a moment.”

Peter wanted to wait for the man to accompany him, but didn’t want to seem even more childish than he already felt. Tony could sense the boys hesitation.

“Or you can wait for me. Either is perfectly fine.” He gave the boy a smile before heading into the bathroom, not wanting to dwell on it and pressure him even more. Tony offering his reassurance to the boy was enough to put him at ease and he elected to head back to the medibay on his own.

When Tony entered the room Bruce was already working on rubbing iodine around the area and Peter was laying back on the examination table. On the surface he looked calm but Tony’s paternal instincts told him the boy was far from it. He sat in the chair on Peter’s good side and offered his hand once again which he immediately latched onto. Bruce injected some numbing to the area; some in Peter terms meant a metric ton for most people as his body usually metabolised the medicine before Bruce could get anything done.

He got to work snipping and picking the blue plastic thread from Peter’s skin. He and Tony helped to distract Peter with idle conversation, him answering the boys questions on radiation and Tony answering what his favourite food was. When it came time for Bruce to reopen the wound, it wasn’t Peter who was nervous.

“How deep are you gonna go?”

“Not very, I’m just aiming to retrieve the gauze.”

Tony was surprised at his own reaction, but he guessed it was due the fact that Bruce was going to be deliberately causing more injury to his kid. The logical side of him knew that there was no reason for that to bother him; Bruce was conducting a safe procedure in a sterilised environment, with years of experience under his belt as well as years of gaining Tony’s trust. He was the only doctor he had allowed to tend to Peter since he met the boy over a year ago, but something about this situation was making him uneasy.

Peter looked up at Tony, sensing the man’s shift in mood. He smiled reassuringly. “Hey, I’m okay, really. I can’t feel a thing.”

“I know, tough stuff.” He’d managed to regain composure of himself outwardly, not wanting to upset Peter again.

“I know, tough stuff.” He’d managed to regain composure of himself outwardly, not wanting to upset Peter again.

“Ready?” Bruce glanced at them both. After receiving a nod from Peter he made the initial incision, having to deepen it several times. It was a slow process as Peter was what he called ‘a bleeder’ meaning he had to stop every few seconds to mop up the blood. He finally managed to cut through the thickened skin and into the cavity he’d filled with silver-impregnated packing strips but that wasn’t all he found. He looked visibly taken aback as he continued to stare at Peter’s arm.

“What’s wrong?” Tony’s serious tone rang through the room which made Peter turn to look up at the doctor.
“Tony can you come here for a second.” Bruce said very quietly. He soon gathered himself realising that he should probably reassure his patient, who’s heart rate, he could see on the monitor, had picked up speed. “Nothing to worry about, Pete I just need help mopping the blood as I work.”

Tony knew that Bruce was lying to the boy because of the little twitch he’d developed in the corner of his mouth. He rushed to the other side of the table and he knew immediately what had the other man so stunned.

Inside Peter’s cut he saw the gauze, but he could also see why Bruce didn’t just immediately pull it out; it’s path was blocked by thousands of thin, white strings spanning the length of the gap in every direction. He and Bruce exchanged glances.

“What the fuck?” Tony muttered making Peter jerk his arm away from the two men. They tried to grab him both to keep him from hurting himself but also from seeing what had them so freaked out.

“Hey, what are you doing?! What’s the big deal?! Let go I wanna look!”

“Sit still now before you hurt yourself!” Tony barked. “Or I’ll have Bruce put you under!”

The child relented though he was still straining to see what the two men looked so perplexed about.

“I’ve never seen something like this in all my life…” Bruce murmured putting his glasses on the end of his nose and leaning in close to peer into the cut.

“Is it something to do with the Kree’s weapon or..?”

“I don’t think so, what does that look like to you?”

Tony was both in awe and horrified. “...Spider-webs.”

“Exactly, it’s like his body is literally stitching itself back to-“

“WHAT DID HE JUST SAY?!”

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After about an hour of the three of them gawking, examining, panicking and marvelling, they finally came to the conclusion that Peter’s body had been much more greatly affected by the bite than anyone had first realised. It was a situation that had to be handled with great care; they didn’t know exactly what they were dealing with and Bruce was adamant he didn’t want to interrupt Peter’s natural healing process. He suggested leaving the wound open after removing the gauze.

“What so you can study him?” Tony said feeling heat rise to his face. He regretted accusing his friend of such a thing as soon as the words left his mouth seeing Bruce’s face fall.

“Of course not.” The doctor replied quietly. “I don’t want to cause any more harm than I just did. I’m not doing this in the name of science, Tony.” He was clearly offended by what his friend as said but he knew it was only because he was fretting over the boy. He understood Tony’s angst though he couldn’t help but feel a little hurt.

Peter on the other hand had recovered from the initial shock and he himself thought that this was the coolest thing he’d ever seen. “I wanna study it! I didn’t even know I could do that!”

“Peter, we have to keep quiet about this.” Tony turned to him looking deadly serious. “We need
some time to monitor you before anyone else finds out. You don’t want to end up being taken back to the compound do you?”

Peter shook his head gravely, thinking back to when he’d first been bitten. He’d been immediately whisked off to some secret government base to be tested repeatedly, spending three months being continuously examined and made to perform feats of strength as well as his other powers whilst a fleet of doctors recorded their observations; they often used scare tactics to force him into producing web fluid for their studies, as well as other things. He didn’t remember much of it, being heavily drugged at the time to keep him placid, but he did know that he didn’t want to end up there again.

“Right, so Bruce is gonna have to do a little more research into whatever going on. Don’t go spouting about it to anyone, understand?” Though Tony was well respected and high up within the agency, he still had superiors who would know doubt like to investigate Peter’s regenerative abilities, especially now they seemed to be getting more rapid each time. He took a moment to think about how quickly Peter had recovered from his esophageal tear a few months prior and it seemed to him that the teen’s body was healing even quicker than it had then. He hadn’t meant to threaten the boy with the prospect of him getting taken away but he had to be honest and outline the severity of the situation.

“I-I won’t Mr. Stark.”

“It’s gonna be fine, Peter.” Bruce chimed in softly. “We won’t let anything bad happen to you. This isn’t a bad thing either, I just want to understand it more so I can care for you better in the future. There’s no use me treating you the same as everyone else if it’s only gonna interrupt your natural healing process.”

The studies the scientists had done on Peter and the information they’d gathered on his mutation, had done a great job at aiding Bruce in helping him understand his body chemistry up until this point; he of course hadn’t agreed with their methods of how they’d obtained the data but it had been helpful nonetheless. He didn’t want the boy to have to go through anything else like that for him to be able to tend to him in the future.

“You think this is something we’ll be able to handle in house, doc?” Tony asked, finally seeming to relax.

“Sure, I don’t see why not. There’s no sign that this is anything other than healthy for him, I’ve already taken some tissue samples that I can examine better at my lab. I mean it when I say that this isn’t something to be scared of.”

“Good, after all the time I’ve invested I’d hate for the kid to just croak on me.”

“Wow. Thanks, much love to you too Tony.” Peter rolled his eyes causing the other men to laugh.

“I’m gonna leave you alone now, okay? I’m just gonna put some steri-strips over the top to keep you from walking around with a hole in your arm. Keep taking the antibiotics as a precaution.”

Once Peter was finally able to leave, he noted how Tony had elected to stay behind and discuss the matter with Bruce in more depth without him. He wasn’t too bothered by this, the whole thing was getting too weird. He knew his body worked a little different now but he never realised it was that different. Though he supposed he should’ve considered the possibility that his powers weren’t restricted to just his super strength and an ability to scale up walls. He decided to let Tony and Bruce deal with the hard stuff, determining cause and effect and calculating the rates of stuff and blah, blah, blah...He was gonna focus on how cool he thought it was- he was like a really slow
wolverine! Or at least Wolverine before the Hugh Jackman version got injected with adamantium, though that was hardly considered canon anymore after the whole Wade Wilson fiasco-

As he was making his internal comparisons about comic book superheroes he heard a loud bang followed by a series of people yelling “THOR!”

“WELL IT WAS A BLOODY ACCIDENT! DO YOU THINK I’D WASTE AN ENTIRE BOTTLE OF GRAPE GLORY DELIBERATELY?”

Peter walked in to see Natasha trying to grab a spinning, fizzing bottle of soda that was still sending sticky purple fluid cascading around the room, getting herself even more soaked in the process. Peter and Clint bust out laughing, the former quickly jumping out of the way when the spritz from the impromptu sugar sprinkler almost hit him. He jumped up onto the wall and perched there at an angle to avoid the spreading puddle.

“You idiot.” Natasha yelled standing up fully with soda dripping from her hair.

“Well as I said I didn’t intend to do that!”

“Most people would apologise you big blond bastar-“ she cut herself off glancing at Peter. “Dummy.”

“I’ll get a mop.” Peter said helpfully still laughing. Instead of dropping back into the ground he crawled along the ball and dropped onto the floor in the hallway. He thought he’d seen a kind of janitors supply cupboard during his explorations on his first day on board.

“I’ll grab some bleach, I’m pretty sure there’s some in the bathroom.” Clint followed suit.

“And I’ll go change my shirt.” Nat hissed through gritted teeth glaring at Thor. The god just stood there pouting with his arms crossed.

Clint opened the cabinet under the bathroom sink and grabbed the yellow and blue bottle. He then grabbed what he thought were cleaning rags before he realised they were wet.

“Oh, ew!” He dropped them on the floor wiping his hand on his jeans. Were they underwear? Gross. He prayed that the liquid on his hands was only water as he tossed the damp fabric into the trashcan at the far end of the room, pinching them with only two fingers on an attempt to avoid anymore contact. By the size of them he realised that they must’ve been Peter’s and he wondered why the hell the kid had left his soaking undergarments laying around. Though to be fair, the boy had taken several steps to hide them from view. Having kids of his own he was used to the kind of weird behaviours and logic that came with them, so he knew that Peter thought he had good reason to have to keep whatever was going on a secret. He wanted to completely forget what he’d just seen and go about his day, considering even putting the garments back where he’d found them; however he knew that wasn’t the right thing to do, either someone else would find them or Peter would manage to avoid confrontation all together, which he supposed he’d wanted in the first place.

Clint tried not to wonder about the reasoning behind the boy’s actions too much, but whatever it was he came to the conclusion it was something he’d have to mention to the kids mentor. He really didn’t want to involve himself in such personal matters but he had to be a responsible adult. He also didn’t want the boy to have to deal with whatever the problem was on his own. He wouldn’t want that for his own kids so he felt he owed it to both Peter and Tony to speak up.

He took the bag of trash with him, tying it closed and shoving it into the main bin outside the kitchen so someone else would discover the teens discarded clothes.
Peter was none the wiser, already mopping the floor with vigour when Clint returned. Steve also came in not a moment later.

“What on God’s green earth happened in here?!”

“Thunder thighs over here is a clumsy fuck.” Clint shrugged.

“Language in front of the minor, please.” Steve stressed once again. “Gimme that here kid, I’ll do it.”

“It’s okay Mr- Steve.” He caught himself.

“If you want you can get those stains up there on those cabinets for me.”

Peter wastes no time showing off his skills, hanging upside down from the ceiling scrubbing furiously.

“So we’re letting the wounded kid do acrobatics now? Why isn’t Thor doing it himself?” Nat said scowling.

“Ah, yeah I’d forgotten about that.” Steve too frowned looking up at the child suspended in midair.

“What? No I’m fine, now honest! You can ask Dr. Banner!”

“Where even is Bruce?” It occurred to Nat that she hadn’t seen him since lunch.

“Oh he’s in the med office talking to Mr. Stark about my-“ he cut himself off when he heard Tony’s warning resound in his head.

“About what?” Clint eyed him. Maybe Tony already knew about Peter’s little secret. Perhaps he didn’t need to tell him at all, though he doubted the boy would admit to that in front of everyone else.

“Oh nothing. But yeah, I even got the stitches out, see?” He showed off his arm.

“Nice scar, Spiderling!” Thor smiles wildly at him. “Your first battle scar!”

“Dope right?” Peter grinned back at him.

“Not dope, now down you come kiddo. I don’t want Tony on my back when you bust your head open. You’ve had enough injuries this weekend come on.” Steve held out his arm for the pouting boy to use for support, but Peter made a point of doing a backflip down instead.

The rest of the day flew by quickly, much to Peter’s disappointment. There was no place on earth that he could happily sit and marvel at for hours on end. He found that the constant darkness outside the ship combined with the warm ‘natural’ lighting was so deeply calming to him. Coming back down to earth (both physically and metaphorically) meant going back to school and days pent up in the lab. He’d experienced freedom on the mission that he hadn’t tasted in months, freedom he had so desperately craved. He wished that they could stay up there for just a little longer.

He’d completed his homework and then some which Tony sat and read over with him. He corrected a few minor grammatical errors here and there and criticized Peters ‘chicken scratch’; “maybe you should reconsider a career as a general practitioner.” He more so wanted to show Pete that he had an interest in what he was doing in school. His questions hadn’t ever been more than “Did you have a good day” or “Learn anything interesting?”; neither ever lead to a great deal of
conversation before the subject shifted to their latest projects. Both of them had thoroughly enjoyed the bonding time and though Tony knew Peter never needed any actual help with his homework, he silently vowed that he would make a habit out of sitting down with the boy.

It was only when Nat had announced to start getting ready for their descent. Everyone moved quickly to ensure all the appropriate furniture had been strapped down and secured and all loose items stored safely away. Tony made sure to pull Peter to one side and encourage him to do himself a favour before he got settled in his seat.

“Go to the bathroom first, landing longer than taking off, trust me. And you can give me that look all you want Petey, but you know I’m right, so go on.”

He did so grumpily before taking his seat next to Natasha this time, nestled between her and the wall. He was opposite Clint, Bruce and Thor respectively whilst Steve and Tony sat at the front controls. Thor looked grumpy too.

“I don’t see why I have to seated back here.” Thor snarked, focussing on Steve.

“You know damn well why Thor, don’t even try it.” Tony replied. “I’m not gonna talk about this again, you know what happened last time.”

“What happened last time?” Peter addressed the room though it seemed everyone was intent on ignoring his question. Clint was the one to give in and gave Peter a half assed answer.

“You don’t wanna know kid.”

“But I do, that’s why I asked.”

“You look nervous enough already I ain’t gonna tell you any horror stories.”

“Oh, Bird-Man, you really do drone on- you make it sound as though some of us died! We were barely maimed!”

“Tell that to my femur, discount Zeus!”

“I beg your pardon?! Don’t use such foul language in front of the Spiderling!” He clearly had a misunderstanding about what body part Clint was referring to.

“What?! That doesn’t even make-”

“Girls, girls, you’re both pretty. Now can you stop screaming in my ears.” Bruce remained visibly calm, though Peter noted that his skin had turned just the slightest hint green. The other two men silenced immediately.

“Wait, are we gonna be lading back at the base or like, in the ocean and stuff?” Peter bit his lip. He knew the ship was more of a jet than a conventional space shuttle but he knew that it would be difficult to control exactly where it would land, based on wind interference alone.

“You mean you haven’t got your parachute?” Tony called back.

Peter laughed sarcastically but he was still obviously very tense. He felt the woman sitting next to him pat his arm comfortingly “Don’t worry, it’s not as bad as when we take off. Just be prepared for your ears to pop.”

Never having been one for physical interaction, the gesture of Nat’s movements made Peter feel both honoured and soothed. She was the least likely one of the avengers to offer any kind of skin to
skin contact that wasn’t purely based on survival. There had been times where she made small actions to initiate some forms of affection, which made the handfuls of high fives and hugs even more meaningful.

What the assassin told him to prepare for was right. As soon as he felt the shift dip he could feel a pressure start to build in his ears. He could hear Tony say something about adjusting the cabin pressure as much as possible but Peter was too busy doing his breathing techniques to pay much mind.

He kept his eyes firmly on the ground this time and he didn’t struggle to help his head up, he let gravity move him as it pleased. That method did help to alleviate the face ripping sensation. Tony was right when he said that it took longer to descent than it did to take off and Peter was secretly glad the man had made him pee first. The dropping gave him an almost indescribable pulling sensation in this stomach, which he found was only comparable to one of those theme park rides that takes you up high and lets you free fall for about thirty seconds before catching you; only this was lasting minutes and it didn’t feel as though anyone had any control over the craft and the sensation is his belly was making him feel like he wanted to pee, so he was very glad his bladder was empty. He kept telling himself not to panic even though his body was trying to tell him about the impending crash it thought was coming. He made the mistake of lifting his head for a moment, only to have it forced back down by the pressure in the soaring vessel.

For a second he thought he passed out because when he blinked the sky outside went from black to a misty blue and the roaring seemed to get twenty times louder. He found he was able to lift his head up now though, rather than it being forced down it was being pushed back against his chair. That was when he noticed that Clint was still slumped in his chair with his neck not supporting his head at all. He tried to yell, ‘Mr. Barton, are you okay?!’ but either no sound came out of his mouth or it was swallowed by the deafening reverberation. It felt as though it went on for an hour, but in reality they were circling to land on the base within about five minutes, the ship acting as a commercial fighter jet once it entered the appropriate level in earth’s atmosphere. As soon as he was able Peter managed to tell out:

“Uh, guys?! I think Clint’s fainted!”

All the adults (other than Tony who was piloting, obviously) turned to look at the man who was still leaning limply against his headrest.

“It’s okay, we’re landing in just a second!” Steve called back. No one looked majorly concerned other than Peter, who had never seen Clint so much as wince before. True to his word though, Steve has been right about when they were landing as Peter felt the ship immediately start shuddering as the plummeted full force towards the ground. If his body wasn’t freaking out before it was now. He tried to keep breathing and he squeezed his eyes shut, much like he had done during their ascent though he made sure not to swear. The ship nose dived, before suddenly pulling up once more until they were horizontal. Peter felt bile rise in his throat which he viscously swallowed as the ships wheels deployed underneath and started catching the ground, making the whole ship judder.

“Ugh, Tony.” He heard Steve mutter disgustedly and he had a feeling Tony had been showing off his flying skills. When the craft finally came to a halt every person jolted with it in unison (of course except Nat, but Peter wasn’t even convinced she was human by this point). Where as the others snapped back in their chairs Clint remained leaning forward, the motion having made his mouth open and he was just hanging there drooling. Steve was the first one to get unbuckled, he
trusted his ability to be able to stand on a moving aircraft, and he went straight over to Clint.

“Clint buddy, you alright there?” He sounded perfectly calm and he gave a light slap to the side of his face a few times. His eyes fluttered open. “We lost you for a minute there.”

“Mm, I’m fine.” Clint sat himself up looking hazed. “We home now?”

“Yep.” Steve helped him out of his buckles before turning to do the same for Peter.

“Is it- is it normal for people to just- just-“

“Pass out?” Steve offered, to which Peter nodded. “Yeah it happens, we didn’t want to mention it in case it freaked you out.”

“Well, a warning would’ve been nice! I thought Clint was dead!”

Everyone else laughed at that other than Clint who looked somewhat embarrassed about fainting in front of his teammates.

“Pete you don’t have to yell we’re right I front of you.” Steve laughed, still working on Peter’s buckles. It seemed Tony had placed a few more straps on Peter’s chair, which he smiled at. The man was really overprotective with the kid.

“I’m not yelling!” Peter ‘said’.

“Have your ears gone?” Tony walked out from his area of the cockpit and walked down the steps towards him.

“Huh?!” Everyone laughed again.

“Come on, Underoos, lets go.” Tony smiled after Steve had finally managed to free him. “We gotta get you fed and to bed, school tomorrow.”

“Ugh! Don’t remind me!”

“Stop yelling!” Tony laughed again.

They ate a quick dinner before retiring to their respective bedrooms, Peter obviously doing so before everyone else as he almost fell asleep into his plate twice. Tony ushered him to bed and came in just as he was crawling into it. Peter notes that the man never usually came into his room to say goodnight to him and it gave him that fuzzy feeling in his chest again.

“All tired out?” Tony asked casually from the doorway.

“Mhm. Thank you for an amazing weekend, Mr.Stark.” He yawned as he laid down.

Tony sighed lightly and sat down on the edge of Peter’s bed. “I’m glad you enjoyed it. You did good for your first time Kid. But you know you don’t have to call me Mr. Stark anymore. We’ve talked about this.”

“Force of habit, m’not used to saying your first name ‘specially round everyone else. Don wanna slip up at school.” Peter’s speech began to slur and his eyes closed. Tony found that Peter was a lot more honest and open with him when he was half asleep, but he felt a some guilt in taking advantage of the boy’s sleepy state.

“Well I don’t wanna hear it anymore okay? Not from you.”
“Mmkay, sorry Tony.”

“Get some rest bub, I’ll take you to school in the morning yeah?”

“Mm yeah that’d be cool..” he trailed off before finishing the thought.

“Sleep tight, Underoos.” Tony whispered, once again affectionately brushing the boy’s hair away from his face and planting a kiss on his forehead before he could stop himself. This kid was turning him all mushy and he wasn’t sure if he liked it, but he couldn’t help it. Every time he saw him he felt the overwhelming urge to hug him and punch anyone who so dared as looked at him the wrong way. He quietly exited the room and turned the light off.

“Shit, wait.” He hissed under his breath and dashed down the hallway to his own room. He retrieved the worn out bear from his bag once again before slipping back into Peter’s room and tucking it under his arm. Peter sighed softly and snuggled it close. Tony had to leave the room to stop himself from audibly cooing.

This boy was gonna be the death of him.
The next day Tony kept the promise he’d made to the sleepy teen. He made sure to clear his early morning schedule (much to his PA’s annoyance as he’d be the one having to deal with all the angry press and businessmen) in favour of spending more time with him. Of course the two spent hours together in the lab and such, but it was the little moments, like when they went to the movies together and sat down to go through Peter’s schoolwork, that he found he enjoyed even more. He loved finding out about Peter’s other interests and he loved even more that Peter had a lot of things in common with himself at that age. They both had a deep appreciation for history, geography and philosophy, and enjoyed finding out about other cultures. He thought that maybe he should take the boy along next time he had to make an overseas business trip. What impressed him most those was Peter’s creative talents, one he himself had never possessed. Of course he knew the teen had a brilliant mind, only another top tier innovator would be able to keep up with the likes of the Tony Stark, but his imagination was insane.

When he read over some of the work Peter had done for creative writing class he’d been amazed at the quality of his writing. The boy also talked like a typical teenager, so he was shocked to see how advanced his vocabulary really was; The piece Tony had read was set in some kind of medieval fantasy world that Peter had filled with a plethora of unique creature and scenery. Though it wasn’t his type of thing, Tony had found himself sucked into the world the boy had created. He felt guilty for not knowing about his child’s hidden talents sooner.

As he walked down the hallway towards the kitchen early that morning he saw Peter come out of his room looking disheveled.

“Mornin’ Pete.” He didn’t receive a response just a half lidded nod. Tony could tell by the boys movements that he’d had yet to relieve his bladder that morning, watching as Peter did a little jig when he started walking down the corridor. “What’s wrong with the toilet in your room, bud?”

Peter opened his eyes fully. “Oh yeah, we’re not on the ship!”

With that he scurried off back into his room leaving Tony there suppressing his laughter. The rest of the morning went by smoothly and soon Tony was in his car for the school run.

“You know I could have you enrolled in a school nearer by, it’s such a long way for you to travel everyday.”

“I like my school, though.” Peter frowned. “I don’t mind the journey either, I’ve got it down to a science.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah! Like, so, I get the same bus everyday, way earlier than I need to so I can make it down
town with enough time to stop in at Delmar’s-

“You mean you haven’t been eating Steve’s lovingly homemade nutritious lunches?!” Tony said in mock horror.

“If you tell him I swear to god.” Peter warned.

“He’ll be heartbroken.”

“Well Ned loves them, besides the sandwiches aren’t for me I was getting to that part. I’d usually grab one to give to Ned’s mom on her way to work when I go and meet Ned.”

“You mean you go to the other side of town to meet him then all the back way up to school?”

“Yup, he never really liked walking into school alone it’s...easier for both of us to go in together.” Peter said quietly towards the end. ‘Easier to brace the name calling when there’s two of you.’

Tony chose not to push Peter on whatever it was he’d left unsaid, not wanting to spoil his good mood before school. “Wait so if Ned gets your lunch what do you eat?”

“Uh...well.” Peter chuckled nervously and gave his guardian a sheepish smile. “I haven’t been eating lunch for past few weeks, just while I’ve been studying for tests and stuff cause we can’t eat in the library-”

“You know that doesn’t check out right? I know you spend your breaks with Ned and how could he eat two lunches in the library if you can’t eat in there?” Tony said in a nonensence tone.

“Okay, okay.” He hadn’t expected Tony to poke holes in his story so quickly, although he should’ve known better. You could cut yourself on the sharpness of Tony’s wit. “Ned’s dad got laid off of work, so they’ve been struggling a little bit...I know how it feels to go hungry, so I wanted to help out and there’s no way in hell they’d accept any money or anything from me so-”

“What’s his name?” Tony cut Peter off. He felt himself well up inside at how kind and selfless his boy was being.

“Who Ned? Well his name’s Edward but after twilight came out he-”

“His dad, Petey. What’s his dads name?”

“Oh! Uh, Marvin Leeds. How come?” He watched as Tony pulled out his phone and started scrolling through it. “Mr. Star- Tony! You can’t use your phone while you’re driving!”

“Cruise control kiddo.” He muttered still tapping on the screen.

“Well, you’re being a fantastic role model. I hope you know that Auntie May would have an absolute field day if she sa-”

“Ted’s father is no longer unemployed.”

“His names N- wait what?!”

“Don’t worry, they won’t find out it came from me. He’s a contact builder so I got him a kushty little job at a firm I have shares in right here in Queens, so Ted won’t have to move schools either.”

Tony shrugged nonchalantly; he understood peoples aversions to receiving handouts, even when they came from a friend. Humans were sensitive creatures with an awful sense of pride and he didn’t want Peter to have to deal with the repercussions from Ned’s families bruised ego. Also from
what he’d seen of the boy he was very nice and both him and his family had treated Peter as one of their own for many years. What’s the point of being a man in his position if you can’t help your friends?

Peter just gawked at him for a moment, not even addressing the man’s refusal to say Ned’s name correctly. “You’re so awesome, Tony.”

“I thought I was a terrible role model?”

When Tony pulled up outside the school Peter sank down in his seat to avoid being stared at by the rest of the student body. It was well known that he had an internship at Stark Industries at this point, but everyone had doubted he ever even got to see the man in person, which Peter was fine with. He wasn’t one for being the centre of attention, even when the audience was positive so the idea of a bunch of students gawking at him in the car with Tony Stark himself made him want to crawl out of his skin.

“Embarrassed to be seen with me?” Tony smirked.

“Trust me, round here it should be you who’s embarrassed to be seen with me.” Peter retorted, grabbing his bag and jumping out when he saw the coast was clear. He spotted Ned waving at him from the otherside of the schoolyard. “I gotta go, I’ll see you tonight!”

Something about the way Peter had said the first part of his statement made Tony feel uneasy but he smiled and called after him. “Have a good day, Kiddo.”

“You too, Mr- uh, Johnson, Sir!” Really kid? That’s the best name you could come up with?

Tony watched the two boys head into the school chattering excitedly, but he still couldn’t get that troubled feeling to go away. Surely Peter wasn’t having trouble at school, he loved it? He talked about it constantly and was always excited to head in. Tony managed to brush the feeling off, hoping that it wasn’t one of those fatherly instinct moments, he assumed it was just normal teenage self esteem issues. Peter was one of the fairly nerdy kids, but not a social outcast, he was in clubs and Tony knew he had a few good friends. No, he assured himself, his boy was fine.

The next few days flew by as everyone returned to their normal schedule, Tony running from meeting to meeting, Steve and Thor doing workshops around the states, Clint returning home to his wife and kids to make up for the weekend he’d missed, Bruce worked on Peter’s lab work and Nat...Did whatever Nat does? In any case it was Thursday before all the Avengers had assembled back under one roof. Tony had unfortunately not been able to take Peter to school for the rest of that week, he had too many engagements that he’s put off for too long as it was. Even Tony Stark could only get away with so much.

Peter understood and even though he enjoyed the quality time with Tony, he was a little relieved. He enjoyed his routine and the solic he found in the early hours of the morning and on his journey home. It was one of the only times he felt he could truly be alone and think to himself, it was often when he had his best ideas. Of course at the same time he still greatly appreciated how the man was trying to alter his schedule around him, it made him really happy to know that Tony wanted to spend time with him that badly.

Tony had listened to the advice Nat gave him that day on the ship, he was willing to give Peter more freedom so long as the boy remained close enough for him to protect him and support him when he needed it; So when Peter had asked to hang out at Ned’s house after school he had let him, so long as Peter called him or Happy when he needed picking up. It got to around seven o’clock that evening before Tony started getting antsy. He still hadn’t got around to setting up clear rules
for Peter and he wasn’t sure what time was appropriate to want a fifteen year old home. He was safe with his friends family he was sure of that, but the fact that Peter hadn’t called or texted at all since around three P.M. was bringing back that discomfort in his gut. He didn’t want to interrupt the kids evening if they were having fun, but he decided he had to check in before he exploded.

The call rang three times before Peter picked up, each one making Tony’s anxiety build. “Hey, Mr. Stark! Sorry it’s so late I lost track of time I was just about to- what? Oh, Ned says hi.”

“Hi Ned.” Tony said happily, all of the anxiety he’d brought upon himself melting away as soon as he heard Peter’s voice. “What you guys up to?”

“We were just playing some old games Ned found on this console that’s like older than me called an Atari.”

“You never fail to make me feel old, Bub.”

“Sorry.” He laughed. “And I’m sorry I lost track of time, I’m so used to living around the corner from here, did you want me to come home?”

“No you’re good, just remember to check in next time. I’ll come and get you around ten, that sound okay?”

“Ten?! I mean yeah cool that’s cool.”

‘Ah, so clearly ten was too late.’

“Or nine.” He corrected. “You’ve got school in the morning and I don’t want to force you on Ted’s parents for too long.”

“It’s Ned Tony!” He heard the boy mentioned gasp at Peter’s using his first name.

“Oh yeah, Ted. I’ll see you in a couple hours buddy.”

The next day passed just like the last, Peter asking again to go to Ned’s after school.

Underoos: Hey Tony! Is it okay if I head to Ned’s house again?

Tony: Sure. Just remember we’ve got plans to test out the new functions on your suit tomorrow. I don’t want you getting too tired.

Underoos: I know that’s why Ned’s mom said she’ll drop me back for 6 :) 

Tony: Okay tell her I said thank you and you behave okay?

Underoos: I’m always good 0:) I’ll see you before dinner!

Tony: See you later kiddo, be safe.

It got to around four when Clint came down to Tony’s lab, something the latter man found highly unusual.

“Hey, Tony. You got a minute?”

“Sure. Everything alright?” Tony put down whatever piece of tech he was working on to give the man his full attention, something equally as unusual.
“Yeah, I just gotta ask you about somethin’. Or, well, tell you I guess. It might be a bit of a sensitive topic though.”

“Barton if you’ve contracted some kind of venereal disease I really think you ought to see Bruce.”

“It’s about your kid, Tony.”

Tony stopped joking and stared at Clint seriously. “What about my kid?”

Clint sighed and sat on a table opposite Tony’s current working space. “On our last day on the ship I found something, now I don’t know if you know about it already or if it’s my place but—”

“Cut the crap, get to the point.”

The archer sighed again, he knew Tony was going to be difficult about this and he was dreading it. “I found a couple pairs of his underwear hidden under the sink in the bathroom. They were wet so I think he’d washed them out intending on come back for them later.”

“Did you ask him about it?”

“No I thought it best to have you deal with it—”

“So you waited a fucking week? Really Barton, are you that stupid? Something could be seriously wrong with him- You know he got hurt right? You were there, maybe he was hurt worse than we thought did you ever consider that?”

“If I had spoken to him he would’ve clamped down on me you know that and I wasn’t sure what I was even asking him about anyway. How was I supposed to know you weren’t already clued in—”

“You should’ve just asked me Clint, I’m one text away there’s no excuse for that. I’m not saying you should’ve ran through the ship waving them round like some fucking beads at Mardi Gras but you could’ve just asked—”

“Okay, I understand where you’re coming from.”

“Do you? Cause if it was one of your kids you can be damn sure I wouldn’t wait almost a week before telling their dad about a possible medical issue—”

“Who said anything about a medical issue?”

“I just fucking did.” Tony stood up suddenly and stormed to the elevator, Clint firmly at his heels.

“Tony I’m sure it’s nothing to worry about- really!” Clint called after the man that had already started heading towards Bruce’s lab.

“Nothing to worry about? Really, Barton, give me your expert medical opinion on the matter. Unless you’ve got a doctorate hiding somewhere out a sock in it. You should’ve told me as soon as you found them—”

“I know, I know. But look, I’ve been through it with both of my boys too it’s not as uncommon as you think—”

“Clint your boys are three and seven. Do you really think that their issues apply here? Peter is fifteen. This shouldn’t be happening to him at this age.”
“Well whatever’s happening- we don’t even know exactly what it is yet, we’re both just jumping to conclusions. But either way whatever it is is not his fault.” Clint growled that last part mistaking Tony’s concern for criticism. Tony had always had obvious Daddy Issues and he wasn’t sure as to how far they were going to bleed into Peter’s life.

He stopped in his tracks and stood directly in front of the man, almost chest to chest. He looked at him with fury in his eyes. “Don’t you dare even suggest for one second that I am blaming my son, Barton.”

Both men were taken aback, by Tony’s sudden intense aggression but also the fact that the man had openly admitted to how he considered Peter to be his own child.

“I’m not.” Tony took a deep breath before continuing, desperately trying to move the conversation away from his sudden admission. “I’m not angry at you I’m sorry. God knows I’m not angry with Pete either I’m mad at myself for not catching on to it. Do you think this has been causing his mood swings?”

Clint thought that Tony was taking his speculation a bit too far. “T, it’s two pairs of underwear-“

“Yes, Barton, you just told me that.”

“It’s not as though he’s constantly wetting himself. Let’s at least let the kid have a chance to explain himself, who knows. Have you considered the fact that he’s a teenage boy and well-“

“Yes, thank you, I have. I’m pretty sure that wouldn’t have caused a big yellow stain on his mattress though would it?”

With that Clint shrugged, not exactly knowing anything about that part; he just assumed that there were other incidents he didn’t know about and that what he’d found was only the latest development in a series of events. The two parted and Tony knocked on the door to Bruce’s office.

“Come in.” Greeted the man’s soft friendly voice.

“Come on Bruce surely this is nowhere near normal for a kid his age.” Tony said, watching the man’s expression after he’d finished relaying the story to him. “I know he’s wet the bed at least once too, JARVIS caught him trying to break into the laundry room in the middle of the night but I decided to save him the embarrassment.”

“Well, everybody’s bodies develop at different rates and it’s not uncommon for pubescent boys to have the occasional accident..but no. Not really. Not if it’s without just cause”

“What would be just cause in your book?”

“Well if he’d been waiting a long time or was frightened or whatever. Bedwetting would be especially understandable, given his deep sleep patterns and his fast metabolism. His body probably produces too much urine whilst he’s asleep but his body doesn’t wake him up to go. Nocturnal enuresis is exceptionally common in teenage boys. It’s only an issue if it’s happening spontaneously, without him feeling any urge to go or if he experiences pain whilst passing urine”

“You think he could be incontinent?” Tony was scared at the possibility of that happening. He knew Peter would be absolutely mortified, maybe he was scared too and that’s why he didn’t mention anything to him. What if Peter still thought he was going to be angry or belittle him or send him away? The thought of that made his chest ache.

“I don’t know Tony, but I seriously doubt it. We just spent a whole weekend with him we
would’ve noticed if he was losing control to that extent. You’re extrapolating. You know, anxiety can be a big factor, increases urination combined with a fear of people knowing you need to use the restroom could be behind it. It could be an issue if him not being able to fully void either causing him to leak in his underwear even if he makes it to the restroom on time. It's obvious Peter’s bladders on the small side but I can’t tell you anymore than you can tell me without examining him and asking him. So it’s best not to jump to conclusions, okay? This could still just be a couple isolated incidents.”

“I know there’s like endless other reasons I’m just.” He pauses to take a deep breath and get a handle on himself. “I just don’t want him to end up with long term issues. I wanna know if this is something I should be really worried about.”

“Okay, well, that’s what we’re gonna do alright? But if you go and ask him while you’re all over upset about it he’s gonna take it the wrong way and hold back information on us.”

“I know. I know.” He sighed. “This is just gonna be awkward and I’m not emotionally prepared for this.”

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“They aren’t mine.”

“Are you suggesting that one of us did this?” Tony said, trying to keep any kind of accusation out of his tone. He was trying as gently as possible to coax information out of the boy but Peter had completely shut down as soon as Tony and Bruce entered the room.

“Guess so cause they’re not mine.” Peter deadpanned but there was a fierce bite to his voice. His face was completely blank and his voice had no emotion to it. He wasn’t even looking at the men he was staring at the space between them.

“Look Pete please don’t get hostile with me we’re just trying to help. Tell me what happened.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Well we have to have this conversation whether you want to or not-“

“Says who?” He whipped his head round suddenly to snap at Tony, his eyes blazing. Tony would never admit it in a million years, but he felt a slightly intimidated at the look the boy gave him. He’d never seen Peter so furious- upset yes. Angry even? Yes. But Peter’s eyes were full of pure rage the likes he had only seen when Bruce was about to transform. He stood his ground though everything in him wanted to back down and forget the whole thing.

“Says me. And Dr. Banner. We’re worried about you.”

“Well don’t worry, cause I’m not a baby and I don’t need anything some doctor is gonna try and force on me, anyway.” With this he stood up from his sitting position on his bed. His accent New Yorker accent starting to come out.

Tony caught on to the last part of what Peter had said. “So this has happened before? And aunt May took you to see a doctor?”

“Tony I swear to god, shut up you literally have no idea what you’re talking about.” He growled.

“Did the doctor suggest you go on medication?” Bruce asked, both he and Tony had agreed that they would remain completely calm and neutral, despite whatever reaction they were getting out of
him.

“Oh my fu- you’re both acting as if I constantly just piss myself or something! It happened a couple times because Thor was hogging the bathroom and you” he pointed at Tony staring him right in the eyes. “Forgot to take the lock off of the fucking door! It wasn’t my fault!”

“So you’re not having problems the rest of the time?”

“I just told you- now get out of my room!”

“Pete-“

“I’m serious I’m done talking about this, you’re not even listening me!”

“Peter, don’t interrupt me.”

“Why not?! You’re the ones who bust in here and started asking me questions like you knew what the hell you were talking about when you don’t. Yeah, I had a couple accidents, that weren’t my fault. Tony you know how anxious I get- I thought you understood why I can’t always..” his eyes started filling with tears at this point.

“Petey, I do understand when you can’t speak up and you’re right it’s not your fault. I didn’t know that’s what had happened-“

“No you didn’t know, you just assumed! And don’t even go there saying you understand because you don’t understand shit!” He cried and sat back down on his bed. He wished he’d asked to sleepover at Ned’s. “Just go away. I'm not going incontinent so you don't have to worry about me burdening you with that too- I know I'm too much to handle anyways, so just don't bother yourselves next time.”

“Pete-“

“Go away!”

“Peter don’t-“

“I mean it get the fuck out of my room!” At that moment Peter was startled by the harshness of his own voice and immediately regretted what he said, expecting Tony to leave or start screaming back at him.

Instead Tony crouched down in front of him and spoke in a calm low voice, one so authoritative that Peter had no choice but to listen to him. “I won’t tolerate you speaking to me like that, do you understand? I know you’re upset and your fight or flight is kicking in, but now is your chance to calm yourself down and prove that you can have an adult conversation with me. Okay?”

“Please, just go away.”

“Fine. But you know I’m gonna have to talk to May about this instead.”

Peter wanted to scream at him not to but the continued to stare angrily at the floor.

“So you’re okay with me to go ahead and do that? Okay.” He knew it was a low blow but he didn’t know what else to say to get the boy to give in and start talking. He didn’t want to walk away and have to have this fight all over again to get back to square one.

"Stop, Tony please! Okay..okay. It was only at night. And only until I was like, I don’t know 11,
when it started to taper off...mostly.

Tony made sure not to show any reaction on his face so the boy didn’t feel the need to stop talking to protect himself.

“I’ve always just had a small bladder, I guess. You know that already. It’s nothing else I swear. I just can’t always hold it long enough especially when I get to scared to say anything cause I know people get mad cause I-I have to go a lot. Auntie May took me to the doctor when I was little about it cause of the bedwetting and I kept getting bladder infections at school and stuff where I wouldn’t ask the teacher to go, but then Ned came to my school and I was asked to be his buddy and he helped me break the habit. Most of the time at least. You-you we’re making it sound like it happens all the time and I know it happens t-too much for someone my age but it’s not, it’s not like that. I-I just..” once again he trailed off, now blinking away tears.

Tony saw that as a sign to finally break away from his neutral approach and he sat down to comfort the boy. He wrapped his arm around him. “Underoos, I’m sorry. I’m sorry, you’re right I shouldn’t have assumed it was something bigger going on. I was just worried that you were trying to hide it because it was an ongoing thing-“

“Exactly, y-you always go overboard and think you know everything.” Peter sniffed wetly, he was still angry at Tony clearly but he didn’t reject the comfort he was giving him. “You’re like a hypochondriac when it comes to me or something, why couldn’t you have just asked me instead of turning this into some kind of intervention? You always tell me I gotta- I gotta speak up and stuff but you don’t even do it!”

“You’re right. Everyone tried to tell me I was overthinking it-“

Peter jerked away from him and stared up at him wide eyed. “What do you mean everyone?”

“I mean Bruce, buddy. And Clint. He’s the one who found them. He even suggested that it was just a part of you becoming a man nothing to do with-“

Peter groaned and covered his face again wishing someone would just shoot him now. “Oh m god, please stop talking or I’m gonna throw myself out of the goddamn window. I’m never leaving my room again. I shouldn’t have gone on the mission-“

“Stop. Uh uh, you’re slipping again.” Tony grabbed his wrists and gently pried them from his face. “He didn’t wanna make a big thing out of it either he told me in complete confidence, I promise. He’s not one to gossip and he thought it was just a couple isolated incidents, like you said.”

“Ugh.” Peter wiped his nose on his sleeve. “Why does everything have to be so goddamn dramatic around here? Can’t people just stay out of my business?”

“Nope, cause you can’t be trusted.” Tony tried to lighten the mood but clearly Peter wasn’t up for that.

“Clearly.” He muttered miserably. “It would be great if y’all could just ignore me once in a while.”

“I feel like I do that too much as it is, Peter. That’s why we’re in this situation in the first place, I want you to feel comfortable enough to come and tell me when something like this happens.”

“What So you can run and tell Bruce that I need an emergency examination cause I just can’t stop pissing everywhere? Or so you can go and tell Auntie May what a baby I am? I can handle it on my own I don’t need someone to wipe my ass for me Tony, I’m fifteen for christ’s sake.” Peter snapped again, now he was starting to feel hot fresh rage rising up in his chest.
“No. I’m sorry. I wasn’t suggesting any of that Peter, I was just scared okay? I thought something was wrong, because you never tell me when it is.” Upon hearing his mentor admit to being scared, something he’d never heard before, startled Peter into calming down somewhat. Enough to listen to the man’s point of view.

“I know...I’ve been trying to get better at it, I really have…” He hung his head looking disappointed, had the man really not noticed his efforts?

“Pete, the progress you’ve made over these past few months have been amazing. Don’t doubt for a second that I can’t see how hard you’ve been trying, we just gotta get on the same page. I know I need to be better at communicating too, but this is all new for me. It’s my first time at this whole parenting schtick and I’m so paranoid about doing the wrong thing. That’s why I go to Bruce or Clint or- well anyone really, I just want to do what’s best for you because I love you. That’s all and I want you to be happy here. I don’t want you to feel like you have to hide stuff from me anymore.”

“I love you too, Tony.” Peter said quietly. He finally understood where the man was coming from, he hadn’t realised how much Tony agonised about doing the wrong thing. It was the same fear he lived with. It put his mind at ease too, to find out why the man so often ‘gossiped’ about him. “I guess we are on the same page then.”

“Good. In that case come here.” Tony held his little finger up.

“Ugh, really? This again?” Peter groaned but managed a smile.

“Do I look like I’m joking?”

“If I say yes does that mean I won’t have to pinky swear?”

“Boy, sit down and gimme your finger.” Another groan. “Bruce here can be an eye witness too.”

The man had taken such a back stance during that argument that Peter had almost forgot he was in the room too. “I don’t take part in legal disputes Tony, we’ve discussed this.”

Bruce’s comment managed to make Peter crack a smile again and grasp Tony’s hand with his.

“Now we gotta promise each other to tell each other things, no more secrets or running to other people first. If something’s wrong we talk and we’ll make the decision together whether or not we involve anybody else, it out got it?”

“Got it.”

“Pinky swear?”

“Pinky swear.” Peter giggled.

“Sir, I told you that this contract is legally binding, I don’t believe this is a laughing matter.”

“You’re such a dork Tony.”

“I know you are but what am I?”

“Okay, enough, can you two please get out of my room now?” Peter said but he was still laughing.

“Fine.” Tony droned out dramatically. “Gosh, you’re so uncool, Tony. I wish I we could be more like Batman and Robin at least their cool- gosh! You’re always like- caring about me and stuff-like ugh, whatever-“
“Get out!”
The D Word

Chapter Summary

I lowkey HATE school wetting's so I have no idea what possessed me to write this chapter- hope y'all like it anyway!

“You gotta get a handle on this, Petey.” Tony said softly, he didn’t want to make the boy feel any worse about the situation he was just thankful Peter had avoided disgracing himself in front of the entire class, because he was convinced the boy would never go to school again if that had been the case.

“I know.” Peter snapped. He stared out of the window. The last thing he wanted was a lecture he just wanted to go home, lock himself in his room and forget the shame for a while.

“You gotta start speaking up sooner bud.”

“That’s easy for you to say you’re not the one dealing with all this social anxiety stuff are you?!” He raised his voice a little, whipping his head round to look at the man in the driver’s seat. He felt angry tears burn in his eyes, did the man really think that he wasn’t trying? It had been hard enough to make up an excuse at the very last minute.

“Hey, hey. Don’t talk to me like that alright? Not the enemy here.” Tony said sternly. He gripped the steering wheel a little, whipping his head round to look at the man in the driver’s seat. He felt angry tears burn in his eyes, did the man really think that he wasn’t trying? It had been hard enough to make up an excuse at the very last minute.

“Hey, hey. Don’t talk to me like that alright? Not the enemy here.” Tony said sternly. He gripped the steering wheel a little tighter trying not to let his emotions get the best of him; whenever Peter yelled at him his initial reaction was to get aggressive back, the Howard Stark coming out in him. He hated that side of himself and he knew that nothing good would ever come by fighting fire with fire. Besides, he knew Peter wasn’t truly angry with him, he was mad at himself. He just lashed out at those closest to him because that’s what teenagers do and he definitely didn’t want to hurt Peter anymore after the day he’d just had.

Peter wiped his eyes furiously with his sleeve refusing to let any tears fall. He’d embarrassed himself enough for one day he didn’t want to add crying again to his list. “M’sorry…”

“It’s okay. Now can you tell me what happened?”

Peter sat at the back of the class in his fifth period. English language. Their teacher, Mr. Brunswick was notorious around school for being a very strict, no nonsense, kind of man. He was the kind of teacher other teachers would threaten misbehaving kids with.

“Anymore back chat and I’ll have you go and sit in with Mr. Brunswick’s class!” He recalled his math teacher screaming one time.

From Peter’s experience though, the man was actually very nice. He was pretty easy going so long as his class behaved well and he often organised trips and allow them to do interesting group activities. He had a strict no bathroom rule; well not quite. He wasn’t an unreasonable man, there had been several occasions where he’d made exceptions for students who were obviously desperate. Often if they had finished all of their work and generally behaved well he would allow
particular students to go, if they asked at the right time. The man had taken a shine to him in Peter’s freshman year, when he’d entered the school short story competition to get a five hundred dollar voucher to use on any part of the school they wanted. Much to his surprise, Peter had won. And much to those close to him surprise- he didn’t use the money to fund the science department. He chose instead to donate the money to refurbishing the school’s library. He received quite a few bruises from that decision, a group of older boy’s who had tried to pressure him into funding new uniforms for the basketball team weren’t too happy about him not taking their expert advice.

Since then, Mr. Brunswick had always been especially kind to Peter. Not to the point where he would show any signs of favouritism or bias, but his school reports were always glowing, even compared to Ned who had achieved the same English grade as him still had a long list of improvements to work on whilst Peter had only gotten one: “believe in yourself Peter, you are far more capable than you give yourself credit for.”

The day had been a long one for the boy. Since having that long winded discussion about admitting his needs and the new house rules had been put into effect, things were feeling pretty tense at home. Not unbearably so, but the the point where Peter was preferring to spend his free time alone in his room rather than shadow Tony in his lab, which for him was alarmingly out of character. Plus, just to make matters worse, they had mock ups for finals that week, every single day and since Peter was doing several more electives than the other students, he’d been double booked for almost every test. To avoid him possibly cheating or giving answers to the other students, the teen had been placed in isolation having to be walked to and from each test hall accompanied by an adult. He’d even had to use the teachers private bathrooms to avoid contact with other students. This didn’t stop him from hearing flashes comments about:

“Stark’s golden boy getting special attention yet again,” “I bet they wipe his ass for him too since he’s too important to do it himself.” Not that those comments particularly got to him anymore, he just didn’t like to hear his father’s name in that smug little shit’s mouth. There he goes again calling Tony his dad, perhaps he should just embrace it.

Mr. Brunswick’s class was the only one Peter had gotten to spend with the other students as his entire year would be taking the exam at the exact same time. He had never been so relieved to see Ned’s smiling face at the back of that classroom.

Since they had an upcoming test, Brunswick had them all use the period for study, Peter himself electing to greater familiarise himself with a book of poetry containing every possible poem that was included on the states curriculum. He knew that they would pick from that list of fifty poems, so he wanted to at least have seen the text before entering the exam hall. He liked to be prepared. It was a welcome change from the stuffy halls filled with sweaty teenagers and the tiny back office he was placed in the rest of the time. They only thing wrong was that Brunswick’s study periods were a no talking zone, so he couldn’t even catch up with Ned about that days antics. The settled for exchanging a smile with the boy, even being able to sneak the odd whisper in here and there, and that was good enough for Peter.

They had only been in the class for about twenty five minutes when Peter felt the familiar gnawing sensation in his lower abdomen. He glanced at the clock. Surely he’d be okay for another hour? No, maybe that was a little excessive. He’d never been one to ask Mr. Brunswick for permission to use the restroom, other than that time he got a massive nosebleed in the middle of the man’s dramatic reading of Macbeth. It had scared the rest of his classmates shitless and Ned applauded him on his noses comedic timing. It was always careful to visit the restroom beforehand, to avoid the situation all together. The man liked him though right? He’d let him go to the bathroom wouldn’t he?
He started to doubt himself when he saw the man outright refuse another boy permission to leave class. One cool thing about class though, was that he allowed the children to listen to music whilst they studied, so long as they continued to sit silently. If he caught anyone abusing that luxury he was quick to take it away from everyone. Even during test week, he and fellow teachers had no worried about the students possibly cheating as the school’s WiFi only allowed them to access certain websites; even if you were only to use your personal data, you still wouldn’t be able to go on Instagram or even YouTube whilst on the school premises. What Peter could do though was send emails. He’d been granted special access due to the fact that he often had to have work sent home to him when Tony needed a special hand in the lab. Luckily for him Tony had convinced the school to give Ned that special access too as Peter would often communicate to teachers through him.

He knew it was risky but he was starting to panic a little. His bladder had already filled up considerably on the last ten minutes, no doubt due to his stress but he also remembered he’d gone longer without a bathroom break than he would on a usual school day- his schedule being off kilter because of the teacher strict anti cheating policies.

P3t3rP: Hey Ned

TheNedatron2000: Hey Peter!

He smiled at his friends never ending enthusiasm. He always made Peter feel like the coolest person on earth even when everyone around him was hellbent of putting him down, Ned always acted like he was so lucky to have Peter as a friend. Man Ned was the best and he made a mental note to send him a sappy text later, but right now he needed a distraction from his need to pee.

P3t3rP: Watchu working on?

TheNedatron2000: Trying to analyse the Maya Angelou poem in chapter 4, wbu?

P3t3rP: Going over the state curriculums anthology

TheNedatron2000: again? Dude you know that this is a practice test and our real one isn’t until the end of the year right XD

P3t3rP: I know lol I just like being prepared

TheNedatateon2000: your always prepared for everything that’s why I love you

P3t3rP: *you’re

Peter received a real life look for that one.

TheNedatron2000: really bro? You finna be that guy?

P3t3rP: XD

Peter shifted in his seat trying to find a comfortable position, every time he found one his bladder made protest again and he was forced to readjust. He felt a familiar bubble of panic start to rise in his chest again but he swallowed it down. He was trying to convince himself that he would ask at exactly the halfway point through the period, that way the man couldn’t use the old excuses of “class only just begun” or “it’s almost the end of the lesson, you can wait.” He felt that would be the most appropriate time and when the man was liable to be the most reasonable. He just had to build up the courage to do so first, each minuet that passed nearing closer to his deadline made the panic grow more.
TheNedanator2000: you ok?

He turned to see Ned looking at him in concern. He gave him a sheepish smile before replying.

P3t3rP: yh im good

TheNedanator2000: you don’t look good

It was then Peter made the gesture of being struck in the heart with a mock expression of horror on his face. ‘Rude’ he mouthed.

TheNedanator2000: u no what I mean

P3t3rP: phone down Mr. B’s coming.

Both boys promptly slipped their phones back into their pockets. The man was indeed making his way around the desks lining the room, peering over the shoulder of each student to check on their progress. He stopped a couple time to answer questions or offer his words of wisdom, but every step closer the man took Peter felt himself get more and more anxious. He knew now would be his best opportunity to ask to use the restroom but he still had five minutes before the halfway mark. Now that he’d fixated on that number the idea of asking before it was enough to make his nervousness spike tenfold, which was not helping his need for the restroom in the slightest. He crossed his legs by the ankles and leant forward on his desk, raising his butt slightly off of his chair. For some reason the temporary suspension helped as the wave surpassed.

Ned could feel Ned’s eyes boring into him, trying to make Peter turn around and look at him. He refused to. He didn’t want to see that knowing look that made him feel like a small child getting caught doing something they shouldn’t, he got enough of that at home. His teacher turned around and made eye contact with Peter, the man starting towards his desk. Peter jolted, slamming himself back into his seat, the sudden movement making the tiniest bit of urine seep out. He whimpered, earning a look from his teacher but also from several of the other pupils surrounding his desk. He quickly tried to cover it with a cough, though it was only somewhat convincing.

Mr. Brunswick gave Peter a small smile, looking at thick stack of notes the boy had accumulated. “Feeling good about the test, Peter?”

He nodded but the man mistook his growing desperation for nervousness. “Hey, you’ve got this. Look at all this preparation you’ve done, I bet you know your way round that anthology better than anyone in this room, including myself. Remember what I wrote in your report last year?”

Again the boy nodded, a blush having risen to his cheeks from all the praise. He glanced up for a second only to see Flash making a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp.

“Good, keep it in mind. And keep up the good work.” He patted Peter’s desk as he turned back around to look over another students progress. Peter barely had time to gather his bearings when he felt his phone vibrate against his leg.

TheNedanator2000: P just walk out I’ll tell him you’re sick or something

The offer was tempting but he couldn’t bring himself to do it. The idea of walking out in front of the entire class with the chance of one of his favourite teachers stopping him anyway was less than appealing. What if he yelled at him to go sit back down, or blocked his exit? Then everyone in the class would laugh at him and he’s still need to go just as bad as when he started. Even worse images creeped into his head of him wetting himself in front of everybody while the man ridiculed him. His chest started heaving and he felt like he really was going to be sick.
TheNedanator2000: Please Pete I’ll go ask him for you just let me do something

When Peter still didn’t move Ned scooted his chair back, intent on asking the teacher for him, causing an ear piercing squeal to echo around the room. Everyone groaned at the sound including Peter, though he was groaning for other reasons. He bent forward almost double in his seat clutching his lower abdomen, he wanted to hold lower but there was no way he’d even consider doing such a thing in this close proximity to his peers.

The squeak had turned Mr. Brunswick’s attention back in the boy’s direction and his eyes instantly landed on Peter.

“Mr. Parker? Are you alright?”

Ned opened his mouth to speak for him but Peter beat him to it. “No sir, I think I’m gonna throw up can I p-please go to the restroom.”

Without a moment's hesitation the man replied. “Yes, yes of course.”

He then paused for a moment before turning to Ned. “Edward, can I trust you to go with him?”

“Yes sir, of course sir, I'll grab your stuff Pete.” His best friend scrambled to his feet attempting to grab both his own and Peter’s stuff all at once. But Peter didn’t stick around to help, as soon as he got permission he was making a beeline for the door. With the help of their teacher to pick up both of their things, Ned ran keeping close behind him, weaving in between the other students desks.

But of course, even with relief in sight another obstacle had to arise, in the form of none other than Eugene Thompson. Flash stuck his foot out just as the boy came running by him tripping him over despite his reflexes. He had to use all of his energy to keep his bladder in check he couldn’t afford to waste it keeping himself upright. He didn’t even look back at his bully, he just scrambled up and continued to bolt for the door. He could feel everyone in the rooms eyes on him, but he didn’t have time to concern himself with that, not when he was thirty seconds away from watering the floor.

Ned on the other hand dropped everything he was holding, sending books and papers scattering across the floor. He lunged at the other boy, shoving him with both hands hard, forcing him off of his chair. “Asshole!”

“Mr. Leeds that is quite enough! Get out of my sight right now and go and tend to Mr. Parker!” It had been a while since he’d heard Mr. Brunswick yell and it had never been directed towards him. The red hot anger he had felt in that moment was quickly replaced with downright fear. He rushed out several apologies (none towards Flash of course, who was trying desperately to hide that Ned had split his pants when he pushed him) and raced after Peter, who by now was long gone. Damn that boy could move fast even with a bursting bladder.

As soon as Flash made him fall, Peter felt his bladders resolve unwinding. Each step he took sent another gush of urine into his boxers and this time he could feel it dripping down his inner thigh. ‘No please, I’m almost there!’

Fortunately for him the bathroom wasn’t far from where his classroom was located, but unfortunately by the time Peter had shut himself securely in the stall he no longer needed to use it. He tried in vain to rip his clothes off and at least finish in the toilet, but it wasn’t worth it. The damage was done. He crouched slightly as his body gave in, feeling rivets of urine running down the back of his legs, a few dripping onto the floor. His jeans soaked up most of it, so there wasn’t exactly a puddle he would have to worry about a poor janitor cleaning up later, well no different than they had to usually in the boy’s bathroom.
Peter went numb. Rather than the panic attack he was expecting he was met with a cold, emptiness in his chest that came with the realisation that he’d have to text Happy. Usually he would have asked Ned to grab his gym clothes from his locker, and he would’ve just gone to the school nurse and lied about having thrown up himself, as he’d done several times before. However, Peter had taken his gym stuff home earlier that week to be washed. He sat down on the toilet he didn’t use and held his head in his hands.

Ned came bursting through the door. “P?! You alright?!”

“Yeah.” He replied quietly. Clearly he was not alright.

“Dude, did you actually throw up? I thought you just had to piss but you went pale as fuck! Oh and dude I wiped Flash out for tripping you and he ripped his fucking pants!”

“Ned…”

“And Mr. Brunswick screamed at me- I thought I was gonna piss my pants too and-“

“Ned..” He said a little louder, his voice breaking.

His friend stopped jabbering abruptly as he could hear the shift in Peter’s usually voice and he felt a stab of guilt for his last statement. “You didn’t make it did you?”

Peter just sniffled.

“It’s okay dude, no one saw you right?”

“I don’t think so,” Peter said miserably. “I’m gonna have to text Happy.”

“Oh shit, that’s no fun, uh...I mean I would offer you my gym clothes but they’d drown you.” Ned chuckled. He knew what agent Hogan’s temperament was like, though he’d only met him twice. He didn’t seem like the kind of guy you’d want to admit peeing your pants to, so his heart went out to Peter. Trying to find a way out of the situation he suggested “I could go to lost and found for you? They might have something down there.”

“I doubt anyone lost a pair of underwear, Ned.” Peter managed a shaky laugh. “Even if they did I’m not sure I’d want them.”

Ned laughed too. “Yeah, I guess you’re right. What do you need me to do, P?”

“I’ll- I’ll text Happy. See what he wants to do, he might want you to run out and grab my stuff for me I’m not sure if he’ll be allowed in the building..”

“Uh. Okay that’s fine- I’ll have to go back to class and tell someone where we went though, do you know how long it’ll take him to get here?”

“He’s outside.” Peter wasn’t stupid. He knew that Tony often sent Happy to babysit him (mostly to make sure that Peter didn’t sneak out to go on his own little unauthorised crime fighting spree again) but for once he was grateful. At least he wouldn’t have to have someone ring home, god forbid Tony got a call come through from the school nurse and it be for this.

“Oh, okay. Let me run back and get your stuff okay? I’ll tell Mr. B you’re in here up-chuckin’” Ned said in his usual cheery tone before quietly exiting the bathroom.

Taking a deep breath Peter took his phone of out his pocket with shaky hands and texted his
mentors bodyguard.

Peter: Mr. Hogan, are you free?

His reply was instant. The man wasn’t used to Peter texting him so there was a slight panic that went through him, his training telling him to ready himself for some kind of emergency.

Happy: Of course, what do you need Kid?

Peter: Could you bring me the spare clothes I know Tony has you keep in the trunk?

Before he answered he took a second to ponder how the boy knew what he had in his car. He just hoped if the boy had been snooping that he hadn’t swiped the old prototype of his spider suit he kept in there for emergencies.

Happy: Can do. What’s wrong?

Peter: Thank you.

Happy: Don’t ignore me kid, what happened?

Peter didn’t answer. Happy sighed, this kid was as stubborn as a mule sometimes and he didn’t remember signing up to deal with a teenage version of Tony. He got out of his car and grabbed the bag of clothes from the trunk, when he spotted Peter’s friend outside the school anxiously looking around. Ned’s eyes fell on him and he waved excitedly, Happy offering a small hand gesture of acknowledgement in return. He met the boy halfway, holding the bag out of his reach when Ned instinctively went to grab it.

“Uh uh, where’s Peter?”

“Uhh, well, he said I should just come and grab the bag for him Mr. Hogan you see-“

“I’ll deliver it to him myself thanks. Just show me where he is.” He deadpanned letting Ned know instantly that he wasn’t going to back down. Ned cringed knowing he wasn’t going to be able to spare his friend from anyone else finding out about his accident. He’d grown very protective over the years towards him, almost acting as a big brother at times.

“Are you- are you even allowed in the school? Would it not be easier for you to just-“

“I can get in anywhere. It won’t be a problem.” The man gestured for Ned to lead the way which reluctantly he did.

Getting past school security was a piece of cake, Happy just flashing his Stark ID and S.H.E.I.L.D badge. Ned ‘woah’ed when he saw it, giving Happy a little stab of satisfaction. Ned lead Happy to the bathroom that Peter was huddled inside of, still trying his best to deter him and coerce him into giving the bag to him instead.

“I don’t think you should go into the student bathroom sir, I can give them to him.” Ned made one last attempt to help Peter avoid and embarrassing situation but once again he was met with complete resistance.

“Kid, get outta my way. If you wanna make yourself useful go and get his stuff.”

Ned sighed and turned away to do just that, remembering he’d left most of it in the classroom after he body slammed Flash, hoping that Happy would at least be sympathetic to his friend.
Happy pushed open the restroom door with a loud squeak alerting Peter that someone had come in. He hoped it wasn’t another student, or even worse, Happy.

“Peter?”

‘Ah, fuck.’

“Yeah.” He called alerting the man to his presence.

“What’s wrong?” He wasn’t too fond of the fact that he was yet again meeting Peter inside a school’s bathroom and he locked the main entrance to it to avoid having run ins either anymore students. He didn’t really feel like yelling at another kid to find somewhere else to piss.

“I need a change of clothes.”

“Well, duh. That’s why I’m here. But why, what happened?” He didn’t really want to know the answer and he would’ve much preferred a ‘no questions asked’ kind of handover. But he’d have to answer to his boss when he brought Peter home early anyway so it would be easier on all of them if he could just get it out of the kid now.

“Nothing.”

“What, just felt like an outfit change?” The boy’s lack of response and flat tone started to worry him a little. He’d assumed the kid had just wet himself but the coldness in Peter’s voice made him start to wonder if maybe he was sick or hurt.

“Can I just have my clothes please?”

“Open the door kid.”

“No.”

“Yes. Now.” Happy raised his voice a little.

“No, Happy! Just give me my damn clothes!”

Happy didn’t dignify the boy’s outburst with a response he just pulled the door open, easily picking the simple lock with the side of his car key. He pushed open the door which Peter immediately kicked back at him, but not before the man saw his tear stained face and wet pants. His tone softened slightly, but he sighed in relief. At least he wouldn’t have to tell his boss that harm had come to the boy whilst he was under his watch.

“Ah, kid. What happened?” This time he passed the bag of clothes through the door as he spoke.

“Can we not have this conversation? It’s not like you actually give a shit anyway so just save us both the awkwardness, okay?” Peter snapped again, surprising Happy with just how much the boy sounded like his father figure.

“Alright, fair enough. When your friend gets back with your stuff I’ll drive you home. I already signed you out at the front desk.”

Peter sighed, feeling a bit guilty for being so rude to the man but he was not in the mood. “Okay, thank you, sir.”

“Don’t mention it.”
Peter paused apprehensively before biting the bullet. “Speaking of not mentioning things...you’re gonna tell Tony aren’t you?”

“Yup.” He said simply and Peter felt his heart sink.

“Awesome.” He sighed sarcastically. He couldn’t wait for this day to be over. Happy didn’t bother apologising knowing it wouldn’t bring the boy any solace, since they both knew it had to be done. He could tell the boy didn’t want words of comfort, which was good for him because he was the last person in the world anyone should come to for that. He was relieved when the boy came out and followed him wordlessly, having no interest in conversation.

“Hey, P. Don’t worry about it okay? Here’s your stuff.” Ned handed it to him with a hug. While doing so he whispered in his friend’s ear, “I’m sorry I tried to get him to stay in the car, but he like, really didn’t get the hint.”

“It’s okay.” Peter whispered back, feeling something for the first time since his accident when Ned wrapped his arms around him. He’s always sworn that his friend’s hugs were magic.

“You guys are bad at whispering,” Happy chimed in, in a mock whisper. “Now let’s go.”

“See you tomorrow!” Ned called and Peter gave him a wave.

The boy was silent for most of the drive home and much to Happy’s dismay, the journey didn’t feel right without the boy’s chatter filling the car. As much as he told himself he hated it, he couldn’t help feeling uncomfortable in the silence.

“So, Tony said it was test week, huh?” He asked awkwardly, trying to make conversation on his own accord for the first time.

“Yeah.”

“How’s it goin’?” He took a moment to marvel at the kid’s talent for making easy conversation a skill he’d never managed to possess himself.

“Fine, I guess.” The boy shrugged.

“Well, guess it’s gonna be a quiet drive then’ Happy accepted internally.

As soon as they pulled into Happy’s spot in the parking garage and halted to a stop, Peter was out of the car.

“Thanks for your help, Mr. Hogan.” He said not even looking at the man. He gathered his things, including the bag of spoiled clothes and immediately headed upstairs. Happy didn’t even bother to call after him. He just left a message with his boss saying to call him as soon as possible.

Peter ran straight to his room managing to avoid any of his housemates by some miracle. He asked Jarvis to set his room sign to ‘Do not disturb’ knowing most of the adults would respect that, before hopping into the shower to wash away a multitude of sins. He towelled off quickly, feeling tears starting to well in his eyes as the days events started to hit him. Changing into more comfortable clothes and crawling into bed, he let finally himself cry.

Tony checked his phone after the conference call he was on ended to see a message from Happy. He felt that now familiar sense of panic knowing it must be about his child. He knew it couldn’t have been an emergency situation. He’d instructed JARVIS to allow any calls from the man to come through at any time, no matter what he was doing; the same way he had told Happy to call
him if anything was ever seriously wrong with Peter, so the fact that the man had neglected to ring him out his at ease a bit. Not by much but a bit.

He hit the call button, Happy answering before the first ring.

“Boss.”

“Talk to me.”

“He had me bring him home, he should be up at the tower by now.”

“What? Why, what happened?” Was he sick? Was he hurt- maybe not badly because Happy would’ve called but if it was enough for Peter, with his near perfect attendance, to want to leave school halfway through the day it was still very concerning.

“I didn’t get the details but,” he paused for a second, feeling awkward about what he had to say. “I had to bring him his spare clothes from my car, Sir. Which he somehow know about by the way.”

“Ah.” Tony said simply. Part of his anxiety was completely alleviated knowing that Peter was safe and unhurt, but the rest of him was now preparing for the mammoth task of addressing the issue with the teen. He had to right? After the talk he’d had with him when he and Bruce confronted him about the underwear situation where he and Peter agreed to talk about these kinds of things, he knew he was obligated to keep up his end of the bargain. Now that he understood Peter’s issues weren’t purely medical, but weren’t purely down to his own stubbornness either, he felt it was easier for him to talk to the kid about. Peter felt that the man could finally see his side of things and Tony was assured that it wasn’t something he was doing wrong. With the air cleared (about the wetting issue at least) Peter had managed to avoid any problems since then, so Tony was interested in finding out what had caused him to have an accident.

“Okay, thanks Happy. I’ll address him snooping around in your car too.” The other man merely grunted in response to that and Tony smiled before hanging up; Peter was trouble when he was given the opportunity his bodyguard should’ve known better than not to secure his car around him.

Tony knew Peter. By this point he knew it was better to sit back and let the kid work through his own emotions for a while before he went in and muddied the water. He did however at least want to check that Peter had gone to his own room and wasn’t sneaking into anything she shouldn’t be, now he was unsupervised. Forever an opportunist, just like his old man.

He made his way up to the common floor, where all their bedrooms and communal areas were located. Seeing the ‘Do not disturb’ sign on his door was zero deterrent to the man, though he did knock before opening the door having not waited for a response, so that was something. He opened the door to see Peter, well the suspiciously human shaped lump under the comforter he assumed was Peter, curled up on one corner of his bed. He sighed fondly and went over to tuck the boy in a little more. He smoothed his curls away from his forehead.

“What am I gonna do with you, bud.”

Peter slept for a few hours, making sure once he woke up that he didn’t leave his room until the usual time people expected him to be home. The last thing he needed was anyone asking more questions, he still had to face Tony, who he knew would’ve been filled in on the situation by now.

He strolled out into the living room at around five, usually arriving home at around four thirty. He was greeted warmly by Thor and Steve.

“Good evening young Peter!”
“Hey, sport. How was school, I didn’t see you come in?”

“Hey guys, it was good. I actually got to go into a normal class today.” He laughed nervously, trying to keep his face from letting anyone in on the fact that there was something he was hiding.

He hung out with them until dinner, which they ordered in(a rarity in their household) . Everyone else eventually joined them in the dining room, Tony of course coming in last. Peter avoided eye contact but after his talk with the man he knew he shouldn’t have.

Tony could see the conflicted look on his face even as he turned away from him, so being the adult in the situation he decided to nip it in the bud. He came up behind Peter and hugged him round his shoulders, kissing the top of his head. He then leant down and whispered to him.

“Don’t worry about it right now, we’ll go for a drive later yeah? Just you and me.”

He could feel Peter's shoulders drop, physically relaxing knowing the man wasn’t angry at him but he didn’t exactly look happy about it. They all ate in relative peace, other than Clint’s minor squabble with Steve over fortune cookies. Clint had been taking extra measures to make Peter feel comfortable around him again, to assure him that he didn’t view him any differently. After they’d finished their meal Tony stood and announced their departure.

“Me and Underoos are gonna head to the store, does anyone want anything?”

“Ice cream!” Bruce blurted out seemingly involuntarily before looking embarrassed about his sudden outburst.

“Bruce no, remember your blood sugar.” Nat raised her eyebrow at him causing the other man to pout.

“I'll see if they've got any of that sugar free halo-top stuff,” he laughed. “Thor? Funyuns or Doritos?”

“YES!”

“I was gonna help Steve with the dishes.” Peter said trying to put the man off.

“It’s okay, little guy I can handle it.” Steve smiled.

Ugh, now Peter had no way out, Tony had him backed into a corner. He couldn’t make a fuss about not wanting to go in front of the others without then raising a bunch of questions.

“Okay, let’s go.” Tony said holding his arm out for Peter to duck under it. Once again he leant down to whisper to him, “remember what I said before sweetheart, I’m never gonna be angry at you for this kind of thing.”

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After he’d explained the whole story to the man, who had sat silently the entire time taking in everything he had to say, he turned to face him. Tony’s face was completely expressionless, which wasn’t uncommon, but there was something about the man’s atmosphere that Peter couldn’t quite read. He waited a minute for Tony to say something but he didn’t.

“W-what is it?” Was the man angry with him after all? It was his fault for not speaking up sooner, but he’d assured him that he understood Peter’s anxiety when it came to that.
“Who’s this Flash?” Tony spoke quietly, leaning his elbow against the window rubbing his chin as though he was in deep thought.

“U-uh, uh, no one.” Shit, he’d forgotten to skip that part when relaying the story. Tony had no idea about the bullying he experienced in school on a daily basis. Peter had been so careful not to mention anything about it up until this point. He’d been in such a rush to tell Tony about his terrible day he completely neglected to sensor himself.

“Uh huh.” Tony nodded slowly, clearly not believing him. Peter couldn’t help but notice the man’s whitened knuckles where he was gripping the steering wheel.

‘Oh god I’ve really messed up.’ Peter thought back to the heart to heart he’d had with the man, where he promised to be more open and tell Tony about the things that were bothering him. An uncomfortable silence filled the car, one Peter was too scared to break until they got to the store.

When they exited their vehicle Peter finally built up the courage to ask the man, “Are you mad at me..?”

Tony sucked a deep breath through his nose and waited just a little too long to answer. “No, I’m not mad.”

“Liar.” Peter reacted instinctively but regretted it straight away with the look that Tony gave him.

“Excuse me?” He questioned, his eyes blazing. The boy had the audacity to call him a liar when he’d specifically asked on numerous occasions if anything was happening at school?

“Dad I’m sorry I didn’t mean-“ What did he just say? Both topped in their tracks and stood there staring at one another.

“You just said-“

“No I didn’t.”

“Yes you did.” Tony kept his face expressionless but his heart was beating so loud he was surprised everyone in a three mile radius couldn’t hear it.

“No I didn’t.”

“But, you kinda did.”

“Well I take it back!”

“You can’t take it back.” Tony let himself grin. Peter blushed and spluttered wildly. He continued calmly. “Besides, I don’t want you to.”


Peter started walking ahead of the man into the store. Tony laughed wildly and staggered after him. He wasn’t laughing because it was funny it was purely out of pure shock. Sure, it went unspoken to everyone around them that Peter and Tony has more than a mentor/mentee relationship, but he never expected himself to ever hear that word directed to him- especially not from Peter.

“Nope, nope, nope.” Peter changed still walking away from the man, he refused to turn around and
face him. He couldn’t believe he just said that, it just slipped out. It came out so easily and so natural that it had barely registered.

Tony caught up to him in a few quick strides and wrapped his arm around him, still grinning the entire time. “Come on, son.”

“Shut up!”
That night Peter couldn’t sleep. He couldn’t believe he’d actually called Tony dad. The man’s reaction had surprised him completely, he was sure that his blunder would’ve made him uncomfortable and awkward around him, but it seemed to have to complete opposite effect. Up until that point, even though Peter knew Tony cared for him greatly, he had assumed that he only thought of him as a nephew at most. Peter had struggled for a long time to push the idea of Tony ever being anything more than a close family friend for a long time and now it seemed that he was right to consider the man to be something more. He was still mortified and felt childish and clingy for his mistake, but he couldn’t help but feel hope bloom in his chest when we thought about how Tony had smiled at him after he said it. Maybe he was reading too much into it. The older male just probably felt bad for him and didn’t want to embarrass him anymore that day. Besides he was only joking with him afterwards right? Though the ‘I love you’s we’re becoming more frequent and easier to say each time…

He tossed and turned for hours mulling his thoughts over before he finally gave up and got out of bed. He decided if he wasn’t going to be getting any sleep he might as well do something productive with his time. With that in mind he headed down to the lab; he wasn’t usually allowed to go down there alone so he hoped that JARVIS wasn’t set to wake Tony up if he did, but now was the perfect opportunity for him to work on something he’d-

“Can’t sleep either?” Peter nearly had a heart attack when he heard Tony’s voice from the far corner of the room. He hadn’t noticed him leant over one of the benches shrouded in darkness.

“Jesus, Tony!” He clutched his chest. “Keep that up and I’m gonna need one of those too!” He pointed towards Tony’s arc reactor.

“Sorry bubs didn’t mean to spook ya. Wanna come check out what I’m working on?”

“Sure.” Peter sat down next his mentor, who started explaining the intricacies of what he was currently configuring. “Wouldn’t it be better to place the conductor here to avoid triggering the main breaker?”

“Good eye.” Tony said proudly. “I was planning on moving the RCCB and swapping the cadmium copper for a expanded ACSR.”

Peter hummed considering the man’s idea. Now that Tony had gotten him to wind down a little he supposed it was best to broach the subject whilst he was distracted.

“So, you wanna talk about earlier?”

“Not particularly.” Peter said dryly, still focusing on what Tony’s hands were doing.

“Do you think we should anyway?”
“Probably.”

“Okay.” Tony got down what he was fiddling with and shifted his stool to face Peter. When the boy didn’t follow suit he leant over and manually twisted his stool around, encouraging Peter to look at him. “Tell me what you’re feeling.”

“I don’t know…” Peter wasn’t sure what to say or what the man wanted to hear.

“It’s okay.” Was all Tony thought to say. He still wasn’t very good when it came to being anything other than straightforward in these kinds of situations; he was still adjusting to dealing with the sensitivity of teenagers emotions, so he tried to tread lightly when it came to offering words of encouragement or comfort as not to set Peter off on the ‘I’m not a baby’ train.

“Embarrassed I guess? I didn’t mean for it to slip out the way it did..”

“Do you regret saying it?” Tony felt a lump in his throat as he asked the question. He would never want to push Peter into something he wasn’t ready for and God forbid he ever take advantage of the boy while he was vulnerable, but he had to know the answer.

“I don’t...I don’t think so.” Peter answered, ending in a whisper. “I know how that sounds and I’m sorry, you’ve just treated me like no one else ever has and I know I’ve probably miss read the situation so bad- you were just being nice to me and I-“

“No Peter. I’ve been thinking about it too.” Tony cut him off. “Trust me, I’ve been fighting against calling you my son in my head for weeks now, it’s not just you.”

“What?” He stared at him in complete shock. “You’re serious?”

“Ever since you got that stomach virus and I broke one of the twentieth story windows to get to you.”

“Oh.” Was all he said. His head was spinning, so he hadn’t been going crazy. “What..what now?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well like, what do we do now? It’s supposed to be important to define a relationship-“

“P, I don’t think dating advice you’ve heard off of The Bachelor really applies here.” Tony chuckled. “We can take this at whatever pace you need.”

“This is really weird.” Peter started to feel uncomfortable from the heaviness of the conversations and needed to know it wasn’t just him.

“Yeah, no shit. I hadn’t actually ever planned on wanting to adopt a fifteen year old, let alone one with superpowers and an attitude problem.”

“Okay rude.” Peter scowled causing Tony to crack a smile.

“But you’re right, this is really weird. Then again when has anything ever been normal in this house?”

“Fair point. You realise this all feels like some crazy dream though right? Like I had posters of you on the wall growing up and now you’re sitting here telling me you wanna be my..well you know.”

“And you just went and made it weirder. You better not have had any posters of cap or imma get real mad.”
“No, I did have quite a few of the black panther though, have you seen the tech he uses—”

“Okay, okay.” Tony said sarcastically. “I get it you’re a nerd.”

“You know, maybe I do regret calling you the D word.”

“You called me a douche? Or a dick- what’re we talking here? You been talking smack Spider-Boy, cause I can throw down—”

“I swear to god you’re so embarrassing- stop talking like that!” Peter laughed and held his head in his hands.

“Maybe I am cut out to be a dad if I’ve already got that part down.” Both of them chuckled.

“Can this stop being so awkward now?” Peter begged. The whole topic of conversation was making him cringe he wished he could just snap his fingers and skip over the whole thing, go straight to them both acting normal again (preferably with the added bonus of Peter having an established father figure).

“Please.” Tony cackled. “Whatever happens, I’ll love you no matter what. And you can call me whatever you’re most comfortable with, accept Mr. Stark...Or Mr. Johnson.”

“I was on the spot okay?!?”

Tony didn’t respond to that he just laughed. “But seriously, let’s not try and force anything. I’m happy as long as you’re happy.”

“Okay Mr. Johnson.” Peter grinned at him.

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The two stayed up in the lab until the early hours of the morning when Steve came down in the elevator.

“Good thing JARVIS exists or I would’ve been calling the FBI about a missing child.” He scolded.

“It’s a school day Tony why have you had him up all night?”

“Oops,” Tony whispered sarcastically through the side of his mouth to Peter, causing him to giggle. “We just got lost in what we were doing Cap.”

“What happened to being responsible and setting up some rules around here? Pete you’re gonna be exhausted today, he’s got exams coming up for Christ sakes!”

“Okay, okay, take a chill pill there Stevie, it won’t happen again we just lost track of time.”

“Yeah, Mr. Rogers- I’m okay really, I’m not even all that tired.” Peter tried to help soothe the man’s concern but it didn’t seem to work.

“No but you will be. Tony we’ll have a talk about this later, now come on you two at least get something to eat. You can at least give your body some energy that way.”

Tony made a face to Peter as soon as Steve’s back was turned and the teen spluttered whilst trying to contain his laughter. “Quit it Stark, I am not in the mood.”

The pair followed Steve in silence as to not anger him further. They joined the others for breakfast and Peter tried to stifle his yawns the entire time because Steve would shoot daggers at at Tony
every time one slipped out.

“Would now be a bad time to ask for a cup of coffee?” Peter laughed nervously. Steve let out a noise of frustration before turning to pop off at Tony again.

“On that note how about I drive you to school again, Pete? We can stop off at Starbucks on the way.”

“Cool, I’ll grab my bag!” Peter said excitedly, rushing off to get his bags hoping to avoid Steve chastising them both again. They both hurried into the car snickering about the other man’s mothering.

“He is right though little legs I shouldn’t have let you pull an all nighter with me on a school night.” Tong said seriously as he paused to let Peter catch up, his strides being significantly longer than his charges. He earned a dirty look for the choice of nickname.

“What’s all this about giving me rules?” Peter eyed him suspiciously. Given the promise they had made each other regarding discussing things before involving other people he knew he had ammunition if the man tried to avoid his question.

“I asked Steve to help me set up some ground rules for you. Just basic stuff like appropriate curfews and such.” Tony replied honestly.

“What does Steve know, he hasn’t even got kids. You coulda just asked Auntie May.”

“Give Cap his due, Pete, he’s good with kids. I did talk to her and she said it was up to me to evaluate the situation.”

“Hmph.” Peter huffed grumpily, he didn’t appreciate being compared to the middle schoolers the super soldier would do his stupid talks with.

“Lighten up buddy, I’ll still let you be a teenager.” He bashed Peter with his shoulder playfully getting a smile out of him. “You realise as soon as you smile I win, right?”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever old man.” Peter brushed him off getting into the car. Tony hoped in the drivers side and pulled out of the garage. True to his word he pulled off the highway into the Starbucks drive-thru.

“What do you want?”

“Uhm, a mocha- no wait! A caramel macchiato, please.”

Tony made a disgusted face. “I thought you wanted coffee not a cup of corn syrup.”

Peter pouted at him.

“Fine, but you’re getting a medium. No sugar rushes in my car.”

Peter considered blackmailing him into ordering him a venti by saying he’d tell Steve about his bad influences, but didn’t want to push his luck. Tony ordered himself something Peter found equally abhorrent and the two were soon back on the highway.

“You know we left super early right? Like, even by my standards.” Peter commented when he noticed the clock on the dash.

“I know but we were trying to escape the wrath of mamabear Rogers, remember? Besides, we still
“I thought we got it all out last night?” Peter groaned, he already said he didn’t expect him to call him dad again anytime soon so what more did Tony want from him?

“Not that. Do you remember what we were talking about when you let the D-bomb slip?”

Peter fell quiet and his breakfast wanted to make a reappearance. “Oh.”

“It’s okay. I don’t want to make you anxious, alright? I just wanna know that everything’s okay. Don’t panic about giving me an answer right away either we’ve got all the time in the world, Petey.”

“It’s—It’s just that, ugh, I don’t know—” Tony reached over and put a hand on Peter’s shoulder.

“Relax buddy, take some deep breaths for me.” He mirrored his own breathing to match what he wanted Peter to do. “Everything’s okay, you don’t need to get worked up about this. It’s just me and you.”

Tony’s words did help and Peter managed to catch the panic attack before it happened. “Good job P, you’re doing so good.”

“I’m okay.” He breathed quietly. “I just don’t want you to take it the wrong way or think that it’s more than it is.”

“Okay. I’ll try my best not to overreact this time.” He could understand Peter’s hesitation, he had shown a tendency to blow things out of proportion.

“Flash is just this kid at school who’s always given me and Ned a hard time. Most people would call it bullying, and yeah I guess it is. But I promise—” He held up his little finger. “Pinky promise that it doesn’t get to me like it used to. Me and Ned are both pretty, like, numb to it now, especially since the bite and when I got my internship with you I found an outlet to vent all of the bad stuff into, and now it doesn’t really phase me.”

“Define ‘it’ for me.” Tony was trying his best to remain calm but the word bullying was sending a tingling sensation down his spine that made him want to punch the next teenager he saw.

“You know, the usual stuff. Just general name calling and stuff like that.”

“Has he ever hit you? Or is he the kind to get someone else to do his dirty work for him?”

“No, no! Tony look, he’s not all that bad. Like yeah he’s a total ass, but he’s just an entitled rich kid who has to buy other people’s affections. I don’t think he’s ever had a real friend in his life, which just makes me feel bad for him honestly. His parents are always off doing things without him so he doesn’t even get attention at home and well...To be honest I think he’s just jealous of me and Ned’s friendship and our families. Like yeah, we never had much but having people to come home to who love you every night is priceless. He can’t buy that. And we’re the nerdy kids, we’re easy targets and we’re both too nice to do anything back.”

“Which is why he’s a piece of shit—”

“No, Tony he’s not. He’s just a kid too and he’s not as lucky as I am. Besides, me and Ned both agreed that we’d prefer he’d take his anger out on us, cause we have each other and we can handle it, than have him pick on some other lonely kid. If it makes him feel better and it’s sparing other people, I don’t really care.” He shrugged simply.
Tony sat in silence for a few minutes letting the teens rant sink in. He’d truly underestimated Peter’s emotional maturity and he’d never felt prouder in his life. How someone would want to pick on this pure, sweet kid was beyond him, but for that kid to then empathise with his bully that much? Tony would never have been so understanding, not at Peter’s age or even now.

“Well, that’s a very grown up way to look at it. But just because you understand it doesn’t mean you should have to put up with it, does your Aunt know?”

“Not the details, but I’m sure she has an inkling. Not much gets passed that lady.” Peter smiled fondly.

“I’ve noticed. What about the school?”

“A couple of the teachers...but nothing much was done, they’re all pretty scared to mess with Flash cause of his money I think, his parents fund nearly all of the school’s electives—”

“I could buy that school with the change in my pocket, it’s me they ought to worry about.” Tony snapped before he could catch himself. He’d always had a hatred for people who abused their power like that, he’d seen his father use his social standing to his advantage for many years so it struck a nerve with him.

“Okay, dad. I think it’s you who needs to take a few deep breaths now.” Peter soothed, knowing using that title would get the man’s attention, but also because it felt right and came out as naturally as it had done the first time. It worked and Tony regained his composure.

“You’re right. I’m sorry, I promised not to go off didn’t I?” Tony swallowed thickly but managed a smile.

“Yeah, ya kinda did.” Peter grinned at him. “I mean it when I say that I’m okay. I would tell you if it was too bad, I promise. And don’t go doing that tappy thing on your phone like you did for Ned’s dad okay? Cause that would make you just as bad as him.”

“Oh, Underoos I trust you. And I promise you that I won’t. Thank you for being so upfront with me, you did so well telling me all that, I know it was difficult for you.” He really wanted to ensure he praised Peter for overcoming something that had initially caused him anxiety, in hopes that it would encourage him to do so again, like Natasha had said. He noticed the boy was still a little jittery, though. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, caffeine buzz.” Peter laughed.

“What did I say about that?” Tony said in mock anger.

“Nothing! You said no sugar rush, this it totally different!”

“Lord, give me strength.” Tony threw his head back dramatically before switching on the radio. “We still have a lot of time to kill before I’ve got to get you to school, you wanna just drive around for a bit?”

“Sure, I’m just not listening to this crap cause it’ll put me to sleep.” He lent forward to hook his phone up to the speakers.

“So long as you don’t play any Justin Bieber or whatever you kids listen to these days.” Tony waved his hand haphazardly.

“You sound like Steve, don’t be so old.” Peter deadpanned. Tony was pleasantly surprised by the
boy’s taste in music. It was a pretty eclectic mix and he found that he knew more songs than he thought he would and the ones he didn’t know he still enjoyed. They drove around aimlessly for about half an hour before Tony started to head in the vague direction of Peter’s school. He noticed a change in the boys body language as he did so and he assumed that he was starting to get anxious.

“Caffeine still hyping you up?” He asked hoping that Peter would take it as an opportunity to talk it through with the man. He didn’t get the response he was expecting.

“Uh, kinda, I just have to pee a little.” Peter gave Tony a shy smile but avoided eye contact.

“Okay, there’ll be a McDonald’s coming up soon I’m sure.” He answered coolly and gave Peter a smile, not wanting to draw attention to or ignore the fact that he’d openly admitted he needed something without Tony having to force it out of him. He didn’t want to say it, but it wasn’t exactly an opportune time for the teens bladder to pipe up. They’d already passed a load of retail stores and restaurants (though he doubted most of them would be open at this time of day) and they were currently slowing down for traffic on the interstate.

Though Tony didn’t say anything Peter could sense his stress over the issue at hand. “Don’t worry, it’s not that bad. I can hold it.”

However, he was unsure for how long and he found himself thankful that Tony had only gotten him a medium sized drink. He’d only drank around two thirds of it but the caffeine was already taking effect on his small bladder. He was secretly anxious too, hoping to avoid any kind of situation in the mans car.

“Well, how about you text Ted and we’ll swing by and pick him up too?” Tony suggested. Yes it would extend their journey but timewise it would probably make little difference. Ned lived in a rather residential part of town so they weren’t likely to catch any early morning traffic. Also with the added benefit that Peter would be able to use Ned’s bathroom made the latter option seem much more pleasant.

“He’ll faint!” Peter laughed and did so, knowing what Tony was hinting to. He just hoped he could make it till then. He squirmed in his seat a little more noticeably this time and crossed his ankles.

“So, what boring adult stuff have you gotta do today?”

“Same old, same old.” Tony started, clearly knowing Peter wanted a distraction. “I’m gonna have some free time in the afternoon though, I was thinking of making some minor alterations to your suit.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.” Tony continued to tell him about what he planned to do it it, asking what Peter would prioritize and what he wanted done. Peter tried to engage in the conversation but his mind just kept reminding him of the growing ache in his lower abdomen. It wasn’t until he hissed in pain and crossed his legs fully that Tony started to get really concerned.

“How you holding up, kid?” Obviously already knowing the answer.

“I’m fine I just- I really gotta go to the bathroom.” Peter cringed and tried to twist himself back into a normal position but his bladder wouldn’t allow it. He wished he could be doing anything other than sitting down, the cramped position combined with the seat belt digging into his tummy was making everything ten times worse. He felt his face heat up in a blush from him squirming so openly in front of the older man but Tony already knew he had to go so what was the point in trying to stay still? All that would do is make him pee himself quicker.
“I know, bubby. We’re almost there, see? Ted’s street is just off to the right up there.” Tony pointed forward. He was starting to question the boys ability to wait that long as he appeared to have gone from a four to a ten in the space of about ten minutes. He found himself praying that the kid wasn’t gonna have a repeat of yesterday’s events especially since he’d die of shame if it happened in his car.

Peter bounced in his seat yelling as soon as he saw Ned’s house peak into view. “There! It’s that one!”

“Petey, I know.” Tony laughed. “Calm yourself before you explode-”

“I am going to explode!” Peter hopped out of the car before Tony had a chance to fully stop the car.

“Hey, careful!” He yelled after him, but the desperate lad paid him no mind, instead running straight up the steps of Ned’s house and rapidly spamming the doorbell, hopping foot to foot. It was his mom who answered.

“Hey, Pete.”

“H-hi Donna, can I-”

“Go on.” She smiled and pulled him over the threshold and pushed him towards the bathroom door. It was a familiar scene, nine times out of ten Peter forgot to use the toilet before leaving the house or was desperate from his walk from the bus station, so she’d become more than accustomed to Peter’s potty dancing over the years.

Ned walked down the stairs just in time to see Peter dash into the bathroom. “Hi Peter!”

“Gotta pee!” Was the only response he got before his friend slammed the door and bolted it. Ned didn’t blink an eye as he too was more than used to Peter’s bathroom habits. He looked out the open door to see Mr. Stark sitting in the car parked at the edge of the driveway. Tony Stark was in his driveway. Tony looked up at him and waved his hand showing Ned that he wanted him to approach the car. Ned swallowed nervously and said goodbye to his mom before walking towards the car.

Tony rolled the window down. “Hop in, Ted, wanna have a word with you.”

“Oh god, what did I do? Is this because of what happened yesterday? Does he think it was my fault or did that Happy dude say I was rude to him? Shit, shit, shit,’ Ned panicked inwardly as he got in the back of the vehicle.

The man took off his sunglasses as he turned to look at the teen. “Don’t look so nervous, you should know I don’t bite by now.”

“Uh, yeah.” Ned laughed nervously not knowing what else to say.

“I just wanted to thank you for taking care of Peter yesterday.”

“Oh! You, thank me?” Ned said in awe as though he was experiencing some kind of existential crisis. Tony continued on, being used to people being starstruck around him.

“I’m really glad he’s got such a good friend looking out for him when I can’t be there. He told me all about what you did for him.”
“It was really no trouble Mr. Stark sir, he’d do the same thing for me in a heartbeat. I’m always happy to help him out, it’s just what we do.” Ned offered him a weak smile, still clearly taking in the fact that one of his heroes was thanking him.

“Yeah, he said how it comes to you guys naturally at this point. I’m grateful you two have each other I know high school isn’t the greatest place.”

“Tell me about it-“

“Sorry bout that!” Peter said cheerily as he jumped in passenger seat. “Hey Ned! What were you two talking about?”

“Oh we were just gossiping and listing off all the thing we don’t like about you.” Tony said dryly.

“Must’ve been a pretty short conversation then cause I’m perfect.” Peter flicked his imaginary hair over his shoulder sassily.

“Someone feels better.” The older man laughed. “Ted, make a note to remind me- never let Peter drink coffee without a bathroom readily available.”

“I learnt that the hard way years ago Mr. Stark-“

“Ned!” Peter made a zipping motion over his mouth staring at his friend in the rear view mirror. Both Ned and Tony laughed when Peter started pouting dramatically. “You might as well tell him what happened at the lake.”

“Can I?”

“What happened at the lake?”

“IT WAS SARCASM!” Peter yelled again pulling his hood up over his head and pulling the drawstrings as tight as humanly possible.

“It’s not very good sarcasm if you have to announce it, P.” Ned teased and Tony ‘yeaaah’ed annoyingly in agreement.

“That’s it- I’m getting the bus.” Peter made a show of going to grab the door handle dramatically.

“Put your seatbelt on.” Tony laughed as he turned on the engine. The short drive was filled with chatter from all three of them, Tony was glad that he had finally gotten Ned to speak more confidently in front of him. He even almost slipped up and called him by his real name a couple times. He enjoyed feeling like a normal guy for once, just dropping his kid and his friend off at school on a Friday morning. When they pulled up to the school he instinctively reached out to tussle Peter’s curly hair as he was hopping out.

“You need a haircut, hippie.”

“Excuse you, I’m working on my mullet! Soon as I slick this puppy back ,it’s business in the front and a party in the back.”

“Take that Billy Ray bullshit outta my car.” Tony laughed. “Have a good day boys.”

“You too, thank you so much for the ride Mr. Stark!”

“No problem, Ted.”
“Dad.” Peter whined, his brain not even registering what he’d said. Man he was slipping into it way quicker than he thought he would. “Will you quit calling him that, you know his name isn’t Ted.”

“Whatever you say, Underoos.” He winked at Ned and gave him a look like Peter was crazy.

“Bye, Tony.”

“See you later guys.” Tony laughed as he pulled away.

“Later, Mr. Stark!” Ned called after the man before turning to look at his friend. Peter couldn’t read his face, he looked as though he was trying to figure something out.

“What? Why’re you staring at me like that?”

“Do you not realise what you just said?”

“What’re you talking about?” Peter was genuinely perplexed.

“You just called Tony dad.” Ned stated simply, no tone of shock evident in his voice.

“What, no I didn’t-“

“Pete. How long have we know each other? You still think you can hide stuff from me?” Ned raised his eyebrow.

“Well, it would be nice every now and then.” Peter sighed. He wasn’t exactly upset that Ned found out he just hadn’t planned on telling him so soon. He knew his friend would be nothing but supportive as long as he was happy. He would’ve just liked to have a little time to figure things out for himself Bedford he started letting other people in on his and Tony’s relationship.

“It’s no big deal dude, I totally called this ages ago.” Ned said nonchalantly and shrugged. “I just didn’t expect you to be at that point so soon.”

“Well trust me, it’s a new development. Can we change the subject now?”

“Sure, IronBoy.” Ned grinned, ducking out of the way before the punch Peter threw landed on his arm. “You gotta be quicker than- ow!”

Ned was cut off by a half full can of soda hitting him in the side of his head. “Hey lard ass! You got me a week of detention ‘cause of you fighting for your boyfriend Pukey-Parker over there!”

Peter sighed and wiped down the side of Ned’s backpack with his sleeve. He supposed ‘Pukey-Parker’ was a vast improvement on ‘Peter-Pissy-Pants’, a nickname he’d only just gotta rid of. He pulled Ned in the opposite direction muttering to him how it wasn’t worth it but Ned just couldn’t resist saying something back.

“Eat shit, Eugene!”

“What did you just say, Leeds?” Fuck, now he was coming over. Peter stood in front of Ned hoping to defuse the situation before it got physical. The scrawny, entitled teenager came almost chest to chest with Peter and stared him in the face. “Move it Parker.”

“Flash, just back off okay? Ned’s sorry he didn’t mean to get you in trouble-“

“Like hell I’m sorry!” The larger boy pulled Peter back by his bag and took his place, squaring up
to Flash. By this point a small crowd had gathered around them. “When are you gonna stop being such a fucking bully?!”

Flash started to say something else but Peter had had enough. He ripped Ned away from the other boy using his super strength. He whispered into his ear. “Ned, come on man, we’re better than this-”

“No Pete, I’m sick of him walking around like he owns the place-”

“I don’t care. Let’s go.” Peter dropped his voice into a low growl. He knew that Flash was all talk and he already had two of his goons ‘holding him back’, so he was no real threat. He was just concerned about his friend getting himself into trouble, especially on his behalf. He dragged Ned in the opposite direction.

“Why won’t you let me just hit him man-“

“Because it’s stupid Ned! You only succeeded in making yourself look like an idiot!” Peter snapped angrily. “How many times dude- we’ve been over this so many times. We fight back like that and he wins and we’re as bad as he is. But you know what? You wanna be a tough guy and start throwing hands go ahead, see where it gets you, but don’t you dare do it because of me because I don’t need that shit on my conscience!”

Ned stated at him for a moment. “Are you done?”

“Are you?! Don’t talk down to me right now Ned cause I swear to god-“

“I’m not trying to, P. You’re right, you’re always right about this, I’m sorry I should’ve listened to you.” Ned wrapped an arm around his shoulder, seeing his shorter friend getting himself all worked up worked to calm his own anger. “I just can’t always help it, after yesterday-“

“I know.” Peter said quietly. “I know. I don’t blame you. I’m just sick of the constant fighting. You gotta just learn to ignore him.”

“I’m trying, man, trust me I am. I’m just not having him start up with the name calling again I still remember last year-“

“Can we please not bring that up? Let’s just calm down and move on- you didn’t study for the Stats exam today did y-“

“SHIT!”

“Yeah, that’s what I thought.” Peter laughed “Come on, I can help you get started before I have to go back to segregation.”

The rest of the school day passed quickly for Peter, he was mostly preoccupied with the four tests he had that day, so he didn’t have much time to think about anything else. It was only in his second to last period that he really started to feel the effects his sleep deprivation was having on him. The teacher he had figured their students deserved a ‘break’ after their long week of mock tests and decided to ‘treat’ them by playing one of the most boring documentaries Peter had ever seen. With his passion for film he usually managed to find something t captivate his interest in any piece of media, no matter how uninteresting he found the subject; he’d usually focus his attention to the camera work, or framing but he couldn’t find one redeeming thing about this movie. It was so boring Peter couldn’t even occupy himself drawing up blueprints for possible projects, he was
convinced the endless droning of the narrators voice was melting his brain.

He didn’t even realise the first time he dozed off, he just closed his eyes for a second when he felt a piece of paper hit him in the face. He blinked his eyes open rapidly, which fell on the perpetrator; MJ. He scowled at her and she shrugged at him before giving him a ‘dude, what the hell’ look. He turned away from her miffed that she had startled him and tried to refocus in on the documentary, which had somehow gotten even more soul-crushingly uninteresting. It got to the point where he seriously considered giving himself a nosebleed just as an excuse to get out of class. Finally the class was over and Peter found that he struggled to drag himself out of his seat. He felt body felt so heavy and with the added weight of his school bag he knew he was visibly slower than usual.

On his way to his last class, MJ caught up with him in the hallway. “Hey, what’s up with you? You look half dead.”

“As complimentary as always.” Peter muttered snarkily. He still wasn’t best pleased with her after receiving a textbook torpedo at his face. He continued walking, not even stopping to look at her.

She stopped in her tracks and grabbed his arm forcing him to do the same. She turned him to face her. “For real Pete, you look like shit. I heard about you almost puking in Mr. B’s class yesterday-“

“Oh great so everyone’s already heard about that.”

“Dude, shut up, no one actually cares. Should you really be here today?” Her face visibly softened, for the first time showing real concern and Peter couldn’t help but notice how pretty her big brown eyes were when she looked at him like that.

“Oh great so everyone’s already heard about that.”

“Okay, now you’re zoning out on me. Come on let’s get you home-“ she proceeded to start dragging him in the direction of the nurses office.

“No, no, MJ I’m okay really! I’m just tired, besides it’s just one more class I’ll be fine.”

She eyed him up and down a few times before shrugging and looping her arm through his and continuing down the hallway with him, the linking she’d initiated making Peter’s stomach flip. He was glad she hadn’t grabbed his hand because he could feel his palms getting all sweaty. “Okay, wonderboy, whatever you say.”

Peter and his two best friends had the same last period, social studies, one of the only classes they all had together. They took their seats at their usual spot at the back of the class. Ned was fretting to them about how he thought he’d completely flunked his Statistics test when Peter’s heart sank. He could see Marissa Wilkinson sashaying her way to his desk. He put his head down and covered it with his hands.

Marissa was a girl Peter had known since kindergarten, she was one of those typical snooty kids that desperately wanted to be popular. Up until recently, she wouldn’t have given Peter the time of day. In fact, he even recalled a few times where she had made fun of his hand me down clothes or joined in with Flash’s teasing. But ever since it came out that he’d gotten the Stark internship she suddenly wanted to know him. More than just know him apparently, she was slowly starting to become obsessed with him.

“Hey Peter!” The way her whiny voice stretched out every syllable of his name was like nails on a chalkboard and he had to resist the urge to cover his ears.

“Hey Marissa.” He said flatly. It wasn’t like him to ever be rude to anyone, let alone a girl. But he’d been trying to throw her off gently for months but she wasn’t taking the hint. He even tried to
be friendly with her but she got touchy a little too quickly for his liking and it made him very uncomfortable.

“Oh, silly, you know I said you can call me Sissi!” She threw her head back, deliberately flipping around her curled auburn hair, cackling that high pitched squeaky laugh of hers. She playfully slapped his arm, unknowingly grazing his new and sensitive scar making him flinch slightly.

“Yes, well I call you a pain in the ass. Buzz off ‘Sissi’. ” MJ mocked, mistaking Peter’s flinch for him feeling anxious at the girl's presence, which wasn’t one hundred percent inaccurate.

“Excuse me-” Marissa started, but she was cut off by their teacher asking everyone to take their seats. She just huffed and turned away, stomping off down to the front of the class and MJ gave her a sarcastic wave. Peter had offered her a small apologetic smile but it wasn’t well received.

He shot a look at MJ to show he didn’t approve. She shrugged. “What? That girl is a creep.”

“That doesn’t justify you being mean to her.” Peter frowned.

“Well, sorry Mr. Sensitive. No wonder she wants to marry you.” She grinned, seeing the rise she got out of him.

“She does not-”
“Mr. Parker!” He heard his name being called from the front of the class. “Am I allowed to begin my lesson or should I politely wait until you have finished your conversation?

“Sorry Mrs. Davies…” He sank down in his seat hearing snickers around the class, blushing brightly. He stole one last glance at MJ and childishly poked his tongue out at her, before he got out his textbook as instructed to follow along with the reading.

He made it until about twenty minutes in before he started to doze off again, but Ned dealt a swift kick to the back of his chair, jolting him awake again. He could hear his two friends giggling but he was in no mood to turn around and look at them. He leant his head on his hand and tried to catch up with where his teacher was in the chapter. He didn’t even feel himself drop off again.

He was awoken abruptly by a loud smack on the desk in front of him, nearly making him fall off of his chair. He opened his eyes and was met by a red faced and furious looking Mrs. Davies.

“Was it not enough for you to interrupt my class but you also have the audacity to fall asleep during my lesson?!” She screamed at him, making him pull back into his seat in a desperate attempt to avoid her gaze. He wasn’t used to being shouted at by teachers as he was always considered to be a model student, so having the entire class direct their attention to him whilst he had a woman screeching in his face was bringing him close to having a panic attack.

“I-I I’m-” He tired to apologise but his mouth wouldn’t cooperate, his brain too busy trying to remember how to breathe.

“Quiet! See me after class and if I catch you sleeping again you’ll be going straight to the Principal’s office, understand?!”

He nodded his mouth gaping like a fish trying to give her a verbal response.

“I’m sorry?!”

“Y-Yes, Mrs. Davies-”
“Good.” She stood up and stormed back to her own desk leaving Peter stunned and visibly shaken. Both Ned and MJ gave him looks of sympathy not that he gave them any attention. He sat silently for the rest of the class, deliberately ignoring all of his friends attempts to get him to look at them. When the bell rang and his teacher dismissed the other students, he stayed in his seat and still ignored the duo when they tried to talk to him. Mrs. Davies ushered them out of the class. They left reluctantly, exchanging guilty glaces with each other as though they were both silently paying for Peter not to get scolded again.

Mrs. Davies took a seat from a neighbouring desk and sat opposite him. She was visibly calmer but she still had an air of anger around her. “What is the meaning of all this Mr. Parker? I must say this is highly out of character, I can usually count on you to be one of the best behaved students in this class.”

“I’m really sorry, Ma’am. I didn’t mean to fall asleep, I wasn’t trying to be rude.” He said, keeping his eyes fixed on his desk.

“You realise I’m going to have to give you detention for this?” She said. She was trying to remain firm but it was difficult looking at the forlorn boy sitting in front of her. He nodded sullenly in answer to her question, clearly disappointed as he had only a couple other minor discrepancies on his otherwise pristine record. “Or I can make a call home to see why you’re so-”

“No, Ma’am please don’t!” He shocked himself and her both at his interruption but he really didn’t want her to tell Tony he had fallen asleep in class. He was sure the man felt guilty enough already, nevermind was Steve would do with this kind of ammunition. He didn’t want Tony to think he didn’t have the stamina to stay p and work with him in the lab either. “I’m sorry, but please Mrs. Davies, can I just have the detention..”

“Very well. But there’s a note in your file that says I am obligated to notify your legal guardian if you are going to be late for any reason anyway. So if they ask, I will be informing them as to why you chose to have detention with me Mr. Parker. Have Mr. Stark sign this form, please.” She stated, ending the conversation by handing him the slip of paper.

“Yes, Ma’am. Sorry again.” Peter found himself blinking furiously as he left the room. He was both embarrassed and angry at himself that he’d essentially given himself a detention he could’ve avoided, considering the school had to contact Tony anyway. He just hoped he wouldn’t get in any trouble when he got home. He was so exhausted, now emotionally s well as physically, so he didn’t feel like stopping when he saw his friends waiting for him outside the classroom.

“P, wait up!” Ned called as the two had to scurry to catch up with him. “What happened? Did you get in trouble?”

“What do you think?” Peter grumbled. “You saw her in there.”

“We’re sorry dude, we tried to wake you up but you weren’t budging.” Ned said sadly, he could tell Peter was angry at them for not having done something to save him and he felt extremely guilty.

“Yeah, Ned even pulled out the gum I stuck in your hair-”

“Oh ew!” Peter reached up and felt the wet spot in the back of his head. He huffed angrily and walked quicker ahead of them both.

“Pete wait!”
“I gotta catch my bus.” He really was not in the mood. “I’ll see you guys on Monday.”

“Wait, are you sure you’re gonna be okay going home alone? What if you like pass out or something?” MJ said.

“Thanks, but I’m sure I’ll manage. Not like you’d be of much help anyway.” He regretted being so short with them but he didn’t know how else to get them to leave you alone. “See you later.”

“Text me when you get home!” Ned called after him worriedly but Peter didn’t respond. They finally stopped chasing him and allowed him to walk alone to the bus station. When he got there he decided he was too tired to take his usual route home, where he’d hop off and get on a different bus, and decided to take the bus that went all the way around to his destination. It added another forty-five minutes or so to his journey but after the day he’d had he didn’t care. Anything to save him from walking and exerting even more energy he didn’t have. He took a seat near the window and put in his earphones, finally winding down with a podcast and closed his eyes. He should’ve know that was a big mistake.

He only woke up when the bus driver shook him. “End of the line Kid.”

“Huh?” He said drearily looking around him. “Shit!”

“You alright there?” The man looked concerned.

“My dad’s gonna kill me!” Sure enough he had sixteen missed calls from the man, as well as four from Happy and other various texts and calls from his family.

“Better get going then Kid, be careful!” The driver called after him as he ran off the bus, shaking his head. He’d seen it too many times.

Peter was panicking. Tony really was going to kill him. He knew better than to ever go anywhere without telling the man first and now he was an hour late home and he hadn’t answered his phone the entire time. That plus the phone call home he must’ve gotten from his teacher, Tony was probably searching half the city for him now. He also desperately had to pee after waking up from his nap but he didn’t want to risk upsetting the man any further. Just at that moment he locked his eyes on a familiar blond man standing next to a car just outside the station.

“It’s okay I see him, yeah, yeah. Alright, got it. I’ll call you back in a second.” He was on the phone, clearly with a distraught Tony. He was already walking towards Peter who had crossed his legs where he stood. “Kid, what the hell do you think you’re doing?”

Peter opened his mouth but once again nothing telligible came out. “I-I uh-h Well I-”

“Go to the restroom Peter.” Steve sighed. “But if you’re not back here in two minutes I’m coming in after you, capiche?”

Peter nodded furiously and ran back into the station to avoid completely disgracing himself in front of the man. By the time he returned Steve was already back on the phone. “Yes I know- well, I was wasn’t going to let him have an accident Tony- No he wasn’t faking it- I can see him now he’s not trying to run away. I don’t know maybe you should calm down a little fir- Don’t yell at me Stark! I’m trying to help here! Okay. Okay- I said okay!”

Steve paused covering the mic on his phone to give Peter some warning. He smiled at him sympathetically. “He’s adamant he want to talk to you, sport.”

“Uh. O-okay.” Peter shook hesitantly. If he was shouting at Steve like that he could only imagine
the kind of greeting he was about to receive. He got into the car where Steve had held the door open for him when the man passed him the phone. He gulped and spoke in a quiet voice. “Hello?”

“PETER BENJAMIN PARKER!” Oh, crap, full name.
Tony Stark Is A Drama Queen

Chapter Summary

Man these chapters just keep getting longer? Like stfu dude, break your chapter's up damn..

Peter didn’t actually get a chance to respond for the next seven minutes. While Tony was busy arguing with himself it gave him time to get over the anxiety and fear of punishment, and accept his fate whilst also calming down completely. He sat patiently and waited for Tony to pause to take a breath.

“Are you gonna actually let me answer you now or-“ he said calmly but he was cut off by another wave of Tony’s screaming. He sighed and put the phone in his lap, it wasn’t like he had any trouble hearing what the man was saying.

Steve smiled awkwardly at Peter. “Yeah, he’s been going a little nuts. He was so worried when Happy called him to say you got a different bus than usual and you didn’t get off at your stop.”

“I didn’t mean to, I was too into my music..” Peter felt guilty lying to Steve but he was still trying to avoid him berating Tony for their late night.

“You fell asleep didn’t you?” Clearly Peter wasn’t as good at lying as he thought.

“No?” He said but it came out more as a question which only caused Steve’s smile to widen.

“Peter?! I’m talking to you!” He heard Tony’s voice crackle through the speaker.

“Yes, Tony I’m listening. But you haven’t even given me a chance to explain yet.” Peter sighed when he picked the phone back up.

“Save it! We’ll talk about this when you get home!”

Back home Tony was absolutely seething. He’d almost made himself vomit with all the worry since he got the call from Happy; his mind filling with a thousand scenarios, all of them being full of the most awful things imaginable. Everyone had told him he was overreacting and everything would be fine, but he refused to believe he was being anything other than reasonable. Anything could happen in an hour especially to a boy like Peter, who had countless enemies he didn’t know by name, just for being associated with Tony Stark let alone Iron Man. Even if the people who were after him didn't know he was Spiderman, having Tony Stark's apprentice was a huge asset if they were trying to get to him. The worry had dissipated the second he heard his son’s voice on the other end of the phone but it was immediately replace with red hot anger.

Steve spent the short drive with Peter getting the boy’s side of the story. He understood both points of view completely and tried his best to remain a neutral party, but he did promise Peter he’d vouch for him if Tony continued to refuse to listen.

“He always goes over the top!” Peter threw his arms in the air in frustration.
“I know it seems like it kid but it comes from a good place I can promise you that.”

“I get that, but come on Mr- Steve. Even you’ve gotta admit this is way overboard for a fifteen year old who’s a little late home.”

“An hour isn’t a little late in this business, Pete. We were all worried, just be grateful he didn’t send a whole fleet of suits out like he wanted to,” Steve tried to get a laugh out of him with the last comment but no such luck, Peter remained stone faced and he couldn’t help but notice the bags under his eyes. “You’re both tired, everything’s worse when you haven’t had a good night’s rest.”

Peter bit back the urge to make a sarcastic comment comparing the mans words to one of his PSA videos they played in school. “I know Tony’s got some kind of tracker on me and he has Happy stalking me all the time, surely you guys knew where I was.”

“Well, yeah...” Steve was careful not to let on how much he knew about how Tony kept tabs on him, should Peter try and remove the tracking device. “But nobody knew why or where you were going. So when you didn’t answer we assumed the worst. For all we knew someone could have had you at gunpoint or something.”

“Hit the nail on the head there Steve- assumed.” Peter snapped and folded his arms, looking like the poster boy for teenage angst. Steve thought it best to leave him alone for the rest of the journey, not wanting to rile him up anymore. It wasn’t long before they were pulling up to the tower, Tony standing there to meet them in the driveway.

Steve was the first to get out. “Tony, lets not go-”

“Out of my way Rogers.” Tony stormed past him and opened Peter’s door letting him get out.

“Come here.” Tony said to the teen but Peter walked right past him.

“Nope.” He popped the P.

“Excuse me? Here. Now.”

“I’m not a dog, Tony.” There was a bite to how Peter said his name. “And I’m not gonna stand there while you scream at me in public, thank you very much.”

“Fine, you wanna do this somewhere else? Then come on.” Without warning Tony suited up and grabbed Peter, sending them both skyward. Steve just sighed, so much for helping to calm the situation. Why did Tony have to make everything into a soapbox drama?

Tony finally let Peter go when they got to a balcony on one of the upper floors.

“Are you insane?!” Peter yelled as he stumbled and fell on his butt. He refused the hand Tony held out to help him up. “What happened to no more overreacting?!”

“Oh no, no, no. Don’t even go there.” Tony breathed a laugh with no humour behind it. “That does not apply to this situation. Do you have any idea how worried I’ve been, I get a call from your teacher saying you fell asleep in class then Happy calls me and says he lost sight on you when you didn’t get off at the right stop-”

“It was an accident! You’re making it sound like I did it on purpose!”

“I’m not saying that I’m saying don’t you dare accuse me of overreacting when I thought someone had fucking kidnapped you!” With that Peter closed his mouth abruptly and stared at his feet. Tony
took a deep breath trying to stop himself from speaking so harshly to the fragile child he knew was behind all that anger Peter was putting up as a front.

“I’m sorry. I just fell asleep and my phone was on silent, okay? I didn’t mean to scare anyone. I get why you were worried I know there’s a lot of people out there who wanna hurt me. But I can handle myself.”

“I know you think you can Pete, but you’re too young and naive, you trust people too easy. Why do you think—”

“You have Happy babysit me. Yeah, I get it. You don’t trust me because I’m a stupid kid. But hey your best little agent couldn’t even keep up with a fucking bus so maybe you shouldn’t trust people so easy either!” Peter laughed maniacally, having gone past being angry by that point. He didn’t ask for any of this. He didn’t ask to be bitten by some radioactive spider or for him to be the only one to survive it. He didn’t ask for Tony to suddenly start caring about him. “I know I’m a very important investment for you, you’ve put a lot of time and money into this little project ain’t ya?!”

“Stop it.” Tony couldn’t believe was he was hearing. He hadn't expected the argument to escalate so quickly but he should've know better given the boys fragile self esteem. But after everything that had happened between the two in the past few weeks how could the boy still think that of him? What did he have to do to prove to Peter that he cared about him? “You’re gonna regret all of this later so just stop now.”

Peter just laughed again. “No, fuck that. I ain’t gonna stand here while you call me names, I ain’t gotta take this shit from you I get enough of bullies at school! If I’m so much trouble how about you go and find another kid who’s easier for you to control, huh Tony? I’m sure Ted would jump at the opportunity- hell, anyone would, so go ahead, take your pick of all the broken kids in New York! I’m obviously too naive to seize this amazing opportunity that you've so graciously bestowed, oh humble Lord Stark!” He spat.

“I didn’t pick you Peter—”

“Oh no that’s right, I was forced on you wasn’t I? Well Bruce has plenty of my DNA in that lab of his so you can go ahead and clone me if you want, just make sure to take out the piece of his brain that controls his free will so he’s perfectly pliable for you—”

“Peter that is enough!” Tony refused to listen to anymore of it and he realised he’d pushed the boy too far. All of Peter’s insecurities were coming out at once and he had to put a stop to it before he had a full on break down. Seeing how much Peter was now overreacting to a small comment, that he didn’t intend to come across that way, showed him how truly unreasonable he had been. “Come inside, we can—”

“I’m don’t wanna anywhere with you.” Peter had angry tears running down his face. If Tony wanted to hurt him by calling him stupid and naive he’d see just how the man liked it. He wiped his face furiously and considered jumping the balcony to scale the side of the building. He knew that wouldn’t work, Tony would suit up and grab him before he could get anywhere. He knew he was being childish, but what did Tony expect? If he was going to treat him like a small child maybe he should act like one, so the man could see the difference.

“So, what do you want to do?” The man himself was at a loss of what to do. He didn’t know what he could say to calm Peter down at this point, everything he thought to say was being taken the wrong way and he felt helpless. He wished he had stayed by the car and had this conversation with Steve present, he’d always been better with the emotional side of things.
“I wanna go back to before I ever got the stupid internship.” Peter covered his mouth knowing he’d gone way too far. He hoped fruitlessly that somehow the man hadn’t heard him but he saw the man’s eye twinge. He didn’t mean that, he didn’t, he was just being hurtful but he never meant to dig quite that deep.

Tony showed little reaction on his face but he couldn’t ignore the stab in his chest when he heard those words come out of the boy’s mouth. He tried to tell himself that this was all Peter just lashing out in anger, something he’d done to his own father many times, but he couldn’t help the voice in the back of his mind telling him that he’s somehow ruined the relationship with Peter before it had even started. What was he going to do if Peter came to the sudden realisation that he didn’t want Tony as his dad, what was he going to do then?

“Tony I’m sorry I-"

“The best I can do is give you some space for a while, kiddo, I haven’t figured out time travel yet. I’ll let you know when I do.” Tony suited up and took off again, not giving Peter a chance to reply. He didn’t want the teen to see how wet his eyes had just become, it wasn’t the right time of year to blame it on allergies. He knew he wasn’t helping the situation by running away, but he couldn’t handle the thought of the new dreams he had for the future crumbling. It had been so long since he’d felt so driven and hopeful, he didn’t want to think about that being taken away so easily. He did the only thing he knew to work when he wanted to stop thinking. He went up to his private bar and plucked an expensive bottle of cognac off of the shelf, falling back to his old coping mechanisms. He sat there in silence trying to figure out how everything went so wrong so quickly. How had he gone from being Peter’s best friend, his dad, that morning to the boy wishing he’d never known him in less than a day? He couldn’t wrap his head around it and all the thoughts going around his head were starting to suffocate him. Maybe he really wasn’t cut out for this after all. Clearly he wasn’t giving Peter what he needed, he shouldn’t have let himself dream that he could.

It wasn’t long before he heard the sliding doors open behind him and he sighed. Peter had been right, no one in that house could leave well enough alone.

“Day drinking already Stark?”

“Piss off Barton, I’m not in the mood.” Tony remained staring ahead even when Clint sat on the barstool beside him, making it clear he wasn’t open to conversation.

“Steve told me what happened.”

“Of course he did, good old Cap’ even in this digital age he still manages to spread gossip quicker than twitter.” Tony said sarcastically, not putting up a fight when Clint moved his glass away from him. He was used to the other members of the team disallowing his self destructive habits. “Don’t have a crisis, Tony. Every dad goes through it.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Save it okay? I’m not here to pass judgement. I’m just here to reassure you.” Clint kept his tone friendly, despite the emotion brick wall the man beside him had put up. He was used to Tony shutting down at times like this, finding solace in his liquor cabinet rather than his friends, but he really did know what it was like to have that first big argument with your child. “I remember the first time Lila told me she hated me.”

“Yeah?” Tony allowed himself to show interest in what Clint had to say.

“Oh yeah, one of the worst days of my life.” Clint smiled. “Kids don’t have any idea how much
that shit hurts. It felt like the end of the world. How could this perfect little human I helped raise for the past twelve years not love me anymore? I didn't recognise the bratty little demon screaming at me because I wouldn't let her see a movie with her friends.”

He got a chuckle out of Tony. He was glad that he wasn't the only one who had felt like his world was crumbling around him after a simple argument. He felt so weak and pathetic, all the things his father had told him he was- wow, okay so it's his daddy issues coming back to bite him again? That's what all this was? Great. “I know he didn’t mean it.”

“No, but it still fucking sucks. It allowed to hurt you Tony as much as you hate to admit it you’re human too.”

“Clearly. I nearly started crying over a fifteen year old throwing a tantrum after he was the one who scared me half to death.”

Clint was surprised to hear Tony voice his emotions so openly, but he made sure not to let his face show that. He was happy that his friend was letting him in for once. “Oh a lot of tears come with fatherhood, Tony, I’ll tell you that now. I’m sure the kids a wreck right now too.”

“I know I should go and talk to him I just want to give him a chance to calm down. I went in too hot when Steve found him and I’m guessing he didn’t have the best day either from what his teacher said.”

“If it were me, I’d let him come to you. But you know him best Tony, so if you think you should go and talk to him first you go ahead. Just no more of this stuff,” he shook the bottle of alcohol pointedly. “That’s gonna get you nowhere.”

“Old habits die hard.” Tony sighed and patted Clint’s shoulder as he stood up. "Just remember Tony, if you feel like you're the worst dad in the worls, that probably means you're doing something right.”
"Uh, okay." Tony shrugged, but accepted the conflicting advice his friend bestowed to him. The two men exited the room and started to make their way down to the common floor but they were met with a sobbing teenager inside the elevator.

“I’ll get the next one.” Clint smiled, giving him an 'I told you so' look, and slapped Tony’s back encouragingly.

“Tony I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean all those things I said, I really didn’t! I don't regret the internship, meeting you has been the best thing that ever happened to me I just got upset when you called me dumb and I was mad and I shouldn't have- I don’t know where all that came from it was my fault for falling asleep on the bus and I’m- I'm just so scared of messing everything up and losing you I just-”

“Shh, come here, you’re alright.” Tony wrapped him in a hug as he got in the elevator with him. He was shocked that Peter had come to him so quickly, having accounted for at least a few hours of brooding. He had to admit to himself that the relief he felt when Peter accepted the hug was almost enough to make him start tearing up again. Everything the boy said mirrored his own fears and that was so unbelievably comforting. He felt ridiculous for letting himself get so upset at the boys words in the first place. Now he was accepting his role as a father maybe it was time to go back to therapy for all the Howard Stark stains left on his mind. “We both just got a little too upset huh?”

“I’m sorry, I’m so so sorry, I was so mean.” Peter continued crying into the man’s chest. “Why are you hugging me you should hate me-”
“You know I could never hate you, Shirley Temple.” He ran his hair through Peters curls and used the other hand to rub the boys back. “Come on. Take a few deep breaths for me, bubs. You’re okay.”

After a minute Peter managed to calm himself down and broke away from the man, wiping his nose on his sleeve. “I think I got snot on you.”

“Probably, but it’s not the worst bodily fluid I’ve had on me.” Tony smiled.

“Why does everything have to be such a big deal all the time?” Peter asked sadly, meeting Tony’s eye for the first time.

“Cause we’re both a couple drama queens.” Tony wrapped his arm around his shoulders and led him out of the elevator.

“You’re the drama queen.” Peter sniffed determined not to crack a smile.

“And you’re stubborn.”

“And you’re overprotective.”

“And you’re both too similar.” Steve said cheerily from the living room.

“Stay outta this Steve.” The two said in unison. Peter couldn’t help but laugh then.

“You wanna go get a nap now, Pete?” Tony asked.

“I don’t think I could sleep now if I wanted to.”

“Fair enough, wanna watch some TV? It’s usually around now that Steve watches his Golden Girls reruns.” Tony joked.

“I love the Golden Girls!” Peter said seriously causing Tony to roll his eyes.

“Of course you do.”

They ended up sitting on the couch watching a few episodes before Peter gave in and dozed off, leaning against his mentor. Tony took the opportunity to talk to Steve about seriously creating some rules. Steve was suggesting a few when he realised the man had stopped replying to him.

“Do you not think it’s a good- oh.” His eyes fell on the two that were now both sleeping soundly, Tony’s head fell back against the couch with his mouth was hanging open. Steve had to stop himself from audibly cooing at them as he got up to start on dinner.

The others flocked to the living room at around the same time and Steve had to shush each of them to stop them from waking the pair up. What he couldn’t do was stop Nat from snapping a picture on her phone (“Good blackmail material.” She shrugged).

“So the small one wasn’t childsnatched after all?” was Thor’s way of asking Steve about the earlier incident, which the others listened eagerly for a reply.

“No, he was just exhausted after he and Tony stayed up all night and he fell asleep on the bus ride home. Made it all the way to the last stop too that’s where I picked him up.”

“He clearly needed some sleep.” Bruce quipped looking over at the two nestled on the sofa.
“Well Tony can’t say I didn’t warn him.” Steve grumbled. “Maybe he’s the one who needs some rules.”

The rest of the adults dropped the subject, not wanting to get Steve started on his rant again. When it came time for dinner it was Thor tasked with waking the duo on the couch who decided to do so by hurrying a pillow in their direction and yelling.

“WAKEY WAKEY!”

The pillow landed Tony square in the face which in turn caused it to fall on Peter’s head, who grabbed it and sent it flying across the room, sticking it to the window with a web.

“Thor you ass!” Tony yelled in frustration clutching his face.

“Why would you do that?!” Peter groaned before shoving a hand between his legs and running to the nearest bathroom.

“There you’ve made the kid pee his pants now Thor, good job!”

“Tony, shut up! I did not!”

Dinner went smoothly despite everyone clearly wanted to ask questions about what had happened earlier that day. Steve and Clint had clearly warned them about prying. It was when everyone parted ways having cleared up after dinner when Steve called after Peter.

“Hey, sport. You got a minute?”

Peter saw both Tony and Steve sitting at the breakfast bar and his heart sank.

“Aw, come on guys, I’ve had enough emotion for one day.” He rubbed his eye tiredly. “Can’t this just wait til tomorrow? Whatever I did I can apologise then-”

“Sit down Mr. Know-It-All, this isn’t the spanish inquisition.” Tony laughed. “We’ve just got a couple things we need to set straight.”

Peter sighed but took a seat across from the two men, yawning. “You co-parenting now, Tony?”

“Hilarious, now enough lip.” That hurt Tony’s pride a little bit. He was perfectly capable of doing this by himself so what was the harm in asking for a little help every now and then? Besides it was nice not to have to be the authoritative one, he was letting Steve play 'bad cop'. Well, as bad as Steve could possibly be, which was about as bad as a grumpy librarian.

“It’s nothing major, Pal. Remember how we said about setting up a few ground rules?” Steve said gently, hoping to wear down Peter’s defences. Peter nodded so he continued. “Well me and Tony thought after today it might be the best time to establish them.”

Steve looked at Tony, passing the metaphorical baton to him. “The biggest one stems from the conversation we had the other night and what happened this afternoon. Communication. I’m not expecting you to call me twenty times a day or anything like that but I want you to text someone every time you go somewhere, whether that be getting on or off the bus etcetera-”

“But Happy follows me around anyway?”

Tony held one finger up to quiet him. “Let me finish. I was going to say if you agree to stick with that rule I won’t have Happy keep tabs on you twenty four seven.”
“So he won’t drive around after me anymore?” Peter asked suspiciously. He highly doubted that his dad would ever let him go anywhere on his own completely.

“Nope.” Tony said seriously. “So long as we have a mutual trust thing going on here. Obviously I’ll have him keep close by so if you did need anything he’d get there quicker than I could, but I won’t have him follow the bus or park outside wherever you’re at.”

Peter nodded. “That sounds fair.”

“Good.” Tony smiled, that had gone easier than he had previously thought. He’d expected a rehash of the argument they had had earlier so he was glad it had gone down smoothly with the boy.

“Steve you wanna say your one?”

“Okay. Secondly, no cursing.” Steve said very seriously giving Peter a look that made him want to squirm in his seat or hide behind Tony. “I don’t like it. We all have to get better at it, yes I’m looking at you Anthony-”

“Stop that.” Tony growled through gritted teeth. He hated it when anyone used his full name, especially Steve, it reminded him of being berated by his father. Steve knew that which ticked him off even more.

“Uh huh, I agree with that one.” Peter blushed guilty, thinking about all the times he’d cursed in the past few hours alone. His Aunt would have fainted.

“Okay, good. Also curfew on school nights is eight thirty and you’re to be in bed by ten at the latest. We’ll discuss weekend stuff when it comes to it.”

The rest of the rules consisted of general listening to your elders type things, but Steve stressed particular ones such as the no cursing rule and having to finish everything on his plate.

“Every meal I prepare is specifically calculated and portioned, so given your metabolism it’s important you’re getting the right nutrition. I’m not having any of this meal skipping business either.”

They sat around for about an hour discussing everything when Tony decided that Peter had to go to bed before he passed out right there in the kitchen.

“Okay Spider-Boy, off to bed with you.”

“Spider-Man, Iron Douche.” Peter yawned as he stretched.

“Language.” Steve warned.

“Sorry Mr. Steve.” Peters eyes had already started closing and he was two steps away from walking into the wall before said ‘Mr. Steve’ put his arm out to stop him.

“Might wanna open your eyes there, sport.” Steve chuckled.

“I got him.” Tony stood up and steered Peter in the direction of his bedroom. He managed to get him through his doorway before he started to collapse, only having to drag him the short distance to his bed. “When did you get so heavy?”

“Blame Steve’s pacifically calculated portions.” Peter murmured into the man’s shoulder, making not attempt to try and lessen his weight or support himself in anyway.
“Specifically.”

“Exactly.” Peter giggled as Tony dropped him on his bed.

“Goodnight goofball.” Tony laughed looking at the sprawled mess he now called his son. What was his life? When and how did this happen?

“Night, dad. M’sorry for being an asshole.”

“I’m sorry for being an asshole too buddy, sweet dreams.” He waited to see if Peter would move to tuck himself under the covers. He did no such thing, Tony couldn’t tell if he was asleep or was being too lazy to move that was until he saw the drool already coming out of the teens mouth. He sighed and went back over to tuck the boy in.

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That night Peter slept like a rock. He didn’t wake up until around three thirty, which was very unusual as he tended to wake up way before then in need of the bathroom. This caused a more inconvenient issue. Peter woke up with a stretch having not moved from the position Tony had so carefully placed him in. At first he felt content, enjoying not waking up and having to immediately dash to the bathroom but as that thought crossed his mind he became aware that his lower half felt extremely warm. He whipped back the covers to see that his worst fears were realised; there was a large stain spanning the entirety of his crotch and the sheets beneath him, soaking him down to the knees.

“Shit!” He leapt from his bed and started to gather up the sheets, hoping to catch them before the stain began to set in. He cursed himself for crashing so hard and not going to the bathroom before falling asleep. He knew better than to do that under any circumstances. He knew where the laundry room was as he’d had to make a few midnight trips down there in the past. Up until this point he’d managed to avoid JARVIS informing anyone about him leaving his room so late at night as he bargained with him; if he let JARVIS perform a vitals scan to show he wasn’t in need of any medical attention and if he didn’t take any detours on his way to and from the laundry room the AI wouldn’t alert Tony to his little problem. Just as he was beginning down the hallway he heard that familiar eloquent voice chime above him.

“Mr. Parker, I do believe per your recent agreement with Master Tony that you should inform him of your accident.”

“Thanks for the advice, JARVIS but I really don’t want to right now. Besides I don’t want to wake him up.”

“Master Tony is currently awake, Sir. Would you like me to-”

“No, thank you. I’m perfectly fine. Scan me if you don’t believe me.” Peter snapped irritably. As handy as the AI system was at times he could still be a real pain in the neck when it came to his newfound father’s spying.

“I already have, Sir. Per your previous instruction and all appears to be normal-”

“Cool, so we have nothing to worry about then.”
“Sir, if I may-”

“You may not. JARVIS mute.” Peter cut him off and continued to make his way down three floors bellow him to the laundry area. He really wasn't interested in having another argument with the stupid super computer. Had he listened to what the AI had to say he would’ve known that JARVIS had been trying to warn him that he wasn’t the only one roaming the halls so late at night.

“Good evening, young one!” He heard a booming voice call before he saw the long blond hair turn the corner, coming straight towards him.

‘Oh fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!’ Peter’s heart jumped in his throat. He didn’t have any chance to react, not even having time to hold his sodden sheets behind his back before he and the man were face to face. All he could do was stare at the floor and wish it would suddenly open up and swallow him whole.

“What are you doing up so- Ah.” Thor cut himself off. Even he wasn’t so clueless as to what Peter would be doing that late at night with a pile of laundry no less. He saw as the boys shoulders started to shake and it looked as though he was holding his breath, trying to will himself (or Thor for that matter) out of existence. Though at first he simply stood there awkwardly, but the look on Peter's face sent him back in time to his childhood and all of he and Loki's late night escapades. Thor found his big brother instincts kicking in and he crouched down a little, forcing Peter to look at him. “Oh, Spiderling it’s alright! Nothing one of those spinning water cycles can’t fix! Don’t look so downtrodden little one, come on.”

Thor put his hand on Peters shoulder, somewhat gentle even by normal people standards. Peter couldn’t bring himself to acknowledge the man and stayed frozen to the ground. Thor frowned, he’d never seen the boy look so scared in all his life. Peter was usually such a happy child and Thor enjoyed having someone around who shared his enthusiasm for life and all the wonderful things in it, it broke the gods heart to see his face looking so crestfallen.

“Peter, let me help you lad. You’ve got nothing to be ashamed of, honestly, it happens to everyone at some point or another.” Again Thor’s words of comfort were met with no response and he did the only other thing he knew to do. He wrapped Peter in a tight hug, with no regard to the wet sheets now squeezed between them both, and practically lifted the teen off of the ground.

“Thor no! I’m gonna get you w-wet!” Peter cried out, clearly trying his hardest not to cry.

“Ah urine is nothing compared to the bodily fluids I’ve been covered in, Spiderling, trust me. I believe the worst one was Firedragon vomit...anyway! Come along, let’s go and get you cleaned up, shall we?”

“Thor you don’t have to do this, I can do it by myself you can just pretend you never saw anything-”

“I’m not going to leave a child alone when they’re so obviously under distress, Peter.” Thor frowned, seeming to have taken some offence to the conversation. “It’s truly no trouble. Or would you rather I fetch Stark. Perhaps he would-”

“No, no! Please don’t, I mean, I’ve bothered him enough for one day, don’t you think?” Peter said miserably, once again hanging his head in shame.

“Not at all, young one. I happen to know that nothing you have ever done or could ever do would be of any burden to Anthony.” Thor said seriously before resuming his usual all-teeth bearing grin. “Now allow me to swap these soiled sheets out for fresh ones whilst you go and take a shower. I’ll
come up to your chamber with the new ones then I’ll collect your nightclothes to be seen to also, sound good?"

“You really don’t have to—”

“Hush now, I shan’t leave any room for argument. Now go on.”

“Thank you Thor...Really I mean it.”

“Anytime, Youngling.” Thor winked before turning away to complete his side of the clean up plan. Peter rushed off too, desperately trying to avoid run-ins with anyone else and quickly did what Thor had told him to do. The god saved him the embarrassment of having to face him a second time by collecting his wet garments that he left outside his bathroom and replacing them with fresh ones, silently. He even changed his sheets and comforter for him and he felt his eyes welling up at the man’s kindness. He was still awfully tired but he didn’t dare go back to sleep, in fear he wouldn’t wake up in time again. He decided to get some extra work done in preparation for next semester's school curriculum instead. It was around five o’clock when he heard a sharp knock at his door which startled him.

“Hey, Underoos, wake up I got- oh, you’re awake.” Tony blinked in surprise. “Everything okay?”

“Yeah, I just kinda messed up my sleeping pattern by falling asleep so early.” He chuckled nervously and rubbed the back of his neck. That wasn’t completely untrue, he didn’t feel tired at all by this point, having drank one of the secret energy drinks he kept hidden away from Steve under his bed. He wasn’t sure how much the man was buying into that statement though, so he was quick to refocus him on whatever he had bust in for originally. “Did you say you wanted to show me something?”

“Come with me!” Luckily he’d thrown Tony off of his scent as the man started to ramble about some break through he’d had whilst redesigning the canisters that held Peter’s synthetic web fluid. Something to do with using a metal that would help to keep the fluid partially dissolved, rather than solidifying in the can, which meant it would have a much larger firing range before it solidified in the air. Peter was immediately drawn in as any alterations to his suit meant he’d get to test, test and retest the modifications. He loved anytime he got to wear the suit especially when he was allowed to fully stretch his wings and test his limits, even if it was in a controlled environment. They spent the rest of the early hours of the morning testing out how well the new formula held up, having Peter perform all kinds of different swings, slings and Spidey-things (“Say something that lame again and you can take that suit off”). It wasn’t until they heard Steve bellowing over the tannoy that they broke their concentration.

“STARK DID YOU NOT LEARN ANYTHING FROM WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY?! WHAT DID I SAY ABOUT KEEPING PETER UP ALL HOURS OF THE DAMN NIGHT—”

“Woah, hey, hold your horses there Cap, I woke him up at five he got plenty of sleep!”

“Oh.” Steve said quietly, clearly regretting having flown into a rage quite so quickly.

“And did you just say the D word Mr. Rodgers?!” Tony gasped in mock horror making the boy beside him fall into a fit of giggles. “How dare you use such foul language in front of our impressionable youth!”

“Hey!” Peter protested through his laughter.

“Alright, I get it. Get your butts up here for breakfast.”
“And now the B word?! Who are you and what have you done with Stevie?!” Tony cried dramatically and Peter couldn’t contain his hysterics when Steve hung up the line in a huff. They made their way upstairs, Peter electing to stay in his suit (more like Tony couldn’t convince him to take it off).


“It’s shiny huh?” Peter grinned proudly, doing a little spin to show it off.

“Very shiny.” She smiled fondly at him as she sipped her coffee. “Just be careful around Bruce he can be a little magpie at times.”

“I don’t know what that means but okay.” He shrugged making the rest of the room chuckle. They all found it hard not to make the boy centre of attention but he really did manage to light up the room with his personality as soon as he walked in. It was nice for them to see him back to his usual bubbly self, especially for Thor.

“You gonna join us for training after breakfast?” Steve asked. “You’re all suited and ready to go by the looks of things.”

Peter looked at Tony to answer for him, not sure of what the man’s plans were. He shrugged. “I don’t see why not.”

“Cool! So I get to train wearing the suit?!” Peter bounced excitedly.

“Kid, why don’t I just have Bruce graft your skin inside the suit?” Tony rolled his eyes, though the boys excitement was infectious.

“What like a Big Daddy?” Peter laughed before noticing the room had gone quiet at that comment when all the adults gave him a mixture of confused and weird looks. “It’s from a game? Bioshock?”

“Whatever you say there Pete.” Tony clapped him on his shoulders.

“What? No, don’t say it like that!”

“Yeah, Peter. Whatever you say.” Nat teased, smirking again.

“Oh my god- Stop it!” Peter blushed furiously but was laughing at the same time. “You guys suck.”

“Watch it.” Steve warned though he was smiling also.

“Wait is Bioshock the one with those creepy little girls with big needles?” Thor asked through a mouthful of muffin.

“Yeah, that’s the one! See?!” Peter cried. Tony noticed that Peter couldn’t quite meet the gods eye and he was curious as to why.

“What kind of games have you been playing?” Bruce asked, looking rather disturbed.

“I mean it’s rated mature but there’s no cussing or swearing or anything…” Peter sweatdropped nervously deliberately avoiding Steve’s gaze. “Anyway- ahem, what kind of training are you guys gonna do?”

“Some basic combat stuff, nothing too technical. So you should be able to keep up, shortstack.”
Nat bumped him with her shoulder.

“Okay- rude. I’m average height for my age.” Peter deadpanned, obviously very unimpressed at the term of endearment.

“Tony, you told me he was fifteen?” Bruce said. Peter hadn’t expected Bruce of all people to join in the teasing.

“Wow! You know I don’t have to stand for this-”

“I thought you were standing.” Steve said, trying his best not to laugh, he’d clearly impressed himself with his quick thinking.

“Ooh, good one Rogers.” Nat commended him.

“Tony.” Peter whined and leant against the elder man.

“Okay, enough bullying my kid now, let him eat his breakfast.” Tony chuckled.

“Fine, we’ll get you after class then dweeb.” Nat said in a caricature of a high school bully, hitting one hand with the opposite fist ‘threateningly’. Peter poked his tongue out at her childishly which caused another wave of laughter around the room.

They ate their breakfast in relative peace before they all headed down to the gym. All chattering amongst themselves, Tony caught Thor give Peter a look once again that for some reason made the boy blush and turn away. He was starting to grow concerned as Peter had never showed signs of being uncomfortable around he man before.

“P, what’s going on?”

“Hm?” The child said distractedly as he stretched.

“What’s up between you and Thor?”

“Oh, uh, nothing. Nothing’s up.” Tony furrowed his brows at the way Peter’s expression changed.

“Uh uh, look at me. You’re a terrible liar, now spit it out.”

“He just...he helped me out with something. It’s nothing bad- look can we talk about this later?” Peter begged, his face glowing a bright pink. As much as Tony wanted to press further he relented. He was satisfied for now knowing it wasn’t something bad like Peter and the other man had had some kind of argument when he wasn’t there.

“Okay. Later it is.”

Peter breathed a visible sigh of relief and resumed his usual excited nature. He was itching to spar with someone but much to his disappointment a dummy was placed in front of him.

“Aw, come on! What the hell is-“

“Language!”

“...heck is this?!” Peter cried indignantly. “I thought you said I was gonna train with you guys today?!”

“You are just not with us.” Natasha said as she strolled past him nonchalantly.
Peter stood there with his mouth open looking from adult to adult hoping someone would fight his corner. “Bruce- Thor, come on!”

“Sorry bud, we just don’t want you to get hurt.” Bruce shrugged but gave him a kind smile.

“Well I’m all for it! But Captain Rogers threw his shield at my head last time I suggested it so-“

“What happened to resolving things with our words Steve?” Peter quipped sassily, looking at Steve with his hands on his hips.

“Save it. You’re observing and practising. You’re not ready to run with the big dogs yet, sport.” Steve laughed. He wasn’t about to let Peter get a rise out of him, even if he was a little mirror image of Tony.

“Well you guys weren’t saying that when we were back fighting the Kree!”

“Yes we did.” All the adults other than Thor chimed in.

“That’s exactly what we were saying.” Tony continued. “And Peter stop sharing space memes on Facebook.”

“Why?! Besides I’m not sharing I’m just tagging Ne- Hey I don’t have you on Facebook?”

“No but you have one of my associates who I asked to keep an eye on things.”

“You hired someone other than Happy to stalk me?! What the hell?!”

“You accept friend requests from people you don’t know and I’m the one in the wrong here? Have you never been taught internet safety at school? You should’ve known better.”

Peter let out a noise of frustration, letting Tony know the issue wasn’t over. “Anyway! You all have to admit I held my own out there!”

Thor went to say something but he was cut off by Natasha. “You survived on pure luck and instinct, that can only get you so far. You need the training too.”

Peter folded his arms over his chest. “Well you weren’t even there so-“

“Watch it.” Tony said and came up behind him to punch the boy’s shoulders. “Nobody is saying you can’t fight Pete you’re just not ready to spar with any of us. Your reflexes are impeccable but you lack foresight- you need to guess what strike someone’s gonna give next and act preemptively, not just reactively.”

“Well how am I ever gonna be able to learn if you guys won’t teach me? I can’t learn how to react preemptivey-“ Tony sent daggers around the room to make sure no one called him out on his pronunciation-“on a doll.”

“That’s not just any doll, Pete. You think I’d put you up against some boring old mannequin?” Tony moves away from him to fiddle with the white severed torso, which at the flip of a button transformed; different panels sliding and twisting until there was a full sized robot, that towered over Peter by a solid two feet, standing to attention in front of him.

“Woah…” Peter said in awe as he gazed up and down at the droid.

“Yeah, woah. So have fun kid.” Tony grinned and slapped the robots chest twice before he went back over to where the others were warming up.
“Tony is that thing really safe?” Steve asked him in a low whisper.

“Of course it’s safe, I’d never put him in any danger-“

“WOOA- ow!” In the background behind the man’s head Steve saw Peter fly across the room and slam into the wall, before he slid down it and landed to the floor with a thud. Peter stuck his arm up in a thumbs up a moment later. “I’m okay!”

“I just programmed it to rough him up a little.” Tony shrugged, having completely ignored the scene behind him.

“Tony.” Steve growled warningly. He could see this going very badly very quick and he wanted to avoid the boy having to take a trip to the hospital wing. Of course he trusted Tony to know the boy’s limits but he couldn’t help but worry when he saw Peter get picked up by one of his legs and swung around into a support beam.

“You’re doing great kiddo!” Tony called. He turned back to Steve gesturing to Peter with a thumb over his shoulder. “The kid’s a natural.”

Steve made another angry noise before he began to spar with the man, knowing if Tony wasn’t going to listen to him he could still vent his frustration that way. It wasn’t until they heard Peter yelp and fall silent that anyone (other than Steve) truly got concerned. Whilst the boy had suspended himself from a beam the robot had cut his webbing and he fell a good distance without managing to stop himself. He hit the floor hard making everyone else in the room cringe in empathy.

“You alright, Kid?” Bruce called over to him when he didn’t get up right away. Peter only laid still for a second but it was a second too long for the elders in the room and they all took a step towards him just as he sprang up.

“Whoo- yeah I’m good! Did you see tha-” He was cut off as the droid made yet another swing at him, making him have to duck back quickly to avoid a hard hit to the face. Tony was the only one who remained completely unphased, not even looking in Peter’s direction as he spoke.

“Stay on your toes, Underoos.” He wasn’t the least bit concerned. He trusted his own machinery and Peter’s abilities fully. He knew both of their limits so he was completely comfortable. The droids programming was foolproof having been trained to avoid giving the boy any serious injury and to keep in tune with the boys vital signs at all times; tracking his heart rate, blood oxygen levels and so forth. He knew the boy was in no real danger.

“Tony I really think you should take it down a notch.” Steve stressed once again. “That was a hard hit.”

“His suit is shock absorbing Mama Bear, does he look hurt to you? He’s gonna have to learn if he’s ever gonna keep up with the likes of you.” Tony still kept his eyes on Steve the entire time not stealing a glance towards his young charge (who was currently kicking and spinning around the mammoth machine). Tony took advantage of Steve’s preoccupied state and got a solid punch to his ribs, semi-winding the super soldier before he had a chance to react. “Come on Rogers, I thought you could ‘do this all day.’” He mocked.

Steve was already delivering a kick in return. “Well excuse me if I don’t trust your robots after the whole Ultron situation.”

“Ooh, low blow.”
At the other side of the room Peter was starting to get a little tired. Every time he gained some kind of leverage the machine immediately gained it back. He was pinned down under one of its arms once again when he yelled out in frustration, “Aw come on, this guy just won’t quit will he?!”

“You’re taking it way too personally there, munchkin.” Nat snorted. Peter looked in her direction and became distracted at how well he saw Bruce fighting. He knew the man was required to train with the rest of them, should he ever find himself needing to fight when he couldn’t let Hulk take over for whatever reason, should it be unsafe for him or others, but he was impressed at just how good the man was. That moment of distraction cost him dearly though as he completely forgot to brace himself or make any attempt to dodge out of the way when the droid delivered a punch straight to his abdomen. Even with the shock absorbency his suit had it wasn’t enough to stop him feeling the full force of it, in both his bladder and his lungs, as it forced all the air out of him.

“Mm, ow, okay, time out.” He croaked out quietly as he curled in on himself clutching his stomach. Maybe it was time to take a rest break and visit the bathroom. He’d never been winded quite that badly before and he wasn’t enjoying the burning sensation he felt in the bottom of his lungs as he gasped to get his breath back. Much to his horror the giant white, plastic thing didn’t stop moving towards him.

“Training Wheels, pause.” Tony said calmly as he held a hand up to Steve to make him pause their fight. He strolled past the now frozen droid and offered Peter a hand to help him up, which he took gratefully.

“Wait? Training wheels?” Peter wheezed. He looked up at Tony and steadied himself with his hands on his knees, trying to take deep even breaths.

“Thought it was appropriate.” Tony smirked and shrugged. He couldn’t see Peter’s expression under his mask but he was sure the teen was giving him a death stare. He patted his back gently. “You catching your breath now?”

“Not really.” Peter huffed out honestly. The pressure in his lower stomach wasn’t helping and he was starting to feel light headed, little black dots were appearing in the corners of his vision. The sensation was too similar to a severe panic attack he’d had before where he’d actually passed out, with that memory in his head he was finding it increasingly difficult to calm himself down. “I think I ought to sit out for a minute.”

“Okay, that’s okay come on.” Tony started to lead him to a nearby bench and he started to worry that he’d maybe programmed the droid to push him too far. He shot a worried look over to Bruce who was still currently fighting against Thor alongside Natasha. He managed to catch the man’s eye for a moment, which turned out to be a big mistake.

“Peter are you-” Before the doctor was able to finish his question Thor’s fist made connection with his nose, with a sickening crack. The stumbled back for a second in shock before his eyes started to turn.

“Banner I’m so sorry old friend!” Thor apologised quickly, seeing the mans breathing start to pick up speed. They’d all seen that look many times before but it still managed to strike fear in them, especially as they were in a confined space. It had been ages since Bruce had last turned accidentally but the small man was obviously struggling to keep himself in check, the sudden shock combined with the pain from his now broken nose having obviously tipped him over the edge.
“Bruce, baby look at me, it’s okay.” Nat rushed in front of him and grabbed him by his shoulders. She spoke calmly but the panic in her face was obvious. Bruce didn’t look at her, his eyes staying transfixed on Thor. “Look at me, look at me. It’s okay.”

Even with Nat now grabbing his face Bruce didn’t react. He put a hand up to his face, which was starting to tinge green, and pulled it away again now covered in blood. As soon as he saw the blood he saw red. Nat knew better than to stay that close to him and promptly backed away.

“Thor, move.” She said quietly but with heavy warning. The god either didn’t listen or was too shocked to react as he stayed standing directly in front of the man as he transformed, growing impossibly huge impossibly quick.

“Woah.” Peter said under his breath, seeing the man transform this close was both exhilarating and terrifying.

“Shit- JARVIS engage tantrum protocol!”

“Right away, Sir.” The AI’s voice boomed just as Hulk roared in Thor’s face, blood still dripping from his face.

“Now, Bruce, my old friend let’s just talk-” The god was cut off as he was violently thrown against the wall, being sent through several support beams on his way, including the one Peter and Tony were currently standing under. There was a deafening creak as the structure started to cave in, sending dust and rubble cascading onto the gym floor. The large brick pillar started to lean closer in on them. Without thinking Peter pushed Tony away from him, making him fall and slide across the smooth vinyl surface and tried to skid out of the way himself, as the beam fully collapsed on top of him.

At first he thought he’d moved out of the way in time, just having fell in the process. It wasn’t until he scrambled to get up that he realised he couldn’t move his arm. It was pinned between the ground and a mountain of brick, steel and plaster.

“Peter, you idiot!” Tony bellowed as he ran back over to crouch next to the now trapped boy. “Are you okay?! Are you hurt?!”

“No, I’m fine, really it doesn’t hurt I just can’t pull myself ou- ow!” Peter twisted his arm the wrong way in an attempt to free himself, putting pressure on his shoulder joint that threatened to dislocate.

“Stop! Fucking stop! Just say still, hold on.” Tony tried to calm himself but it was difficult when Hulk was still having a field day throwing Thor around the room, further smashing the walls and equipment to pieces. He peered around, his suits were starting to fill the room to help try and coral Hulk to a safer area, a bunker Tony had built specifically for when Hulk made an appearance and needed somewhere to have a meltdown. Unfortunately, it was proving to be much more difficult as the green giant had a target he was locked on this time. He considered reawakening Training Wheels to help lift the pillar off of Peter, but he doubted even the bot would be strong enough to do so.

Peter was still writhing around and tugging at the trapped limb. He knew had he been at a different angle he would have no issue lifting the stone off of him he just couldn’t get the right leverage behind him. Tony was growing more than impatient with his efforts.

“Will you stop it?!”
“Well you’re not exactly helping!” Peter snapped. He was too uncomfortable to take any of the man’s anger directed towards him. He was lucky the metal fibre his suit was made out of was taking the pressure enough to avoid the debre cutting into his flesh, but the pressure was still excruciating.

“You’re gonna lose your damn arm!”

“Well, I’m losing control of my bladder so can you just fucking help me?!”

Tony sat back on his heels and sighed. “For christ’s sake Peter just go-”

“Don’t be disgusting!” Peter growled. He didn’t understand why the man would tell him to deliberately ruin the suit they had just spent several hours on upgrading.

“There’s a filtration system, I would’ve thought you’d have figure that out by now!”

Peter stopped fidgeting. “What?”

“Do you think I’d send you in the field without one? We don’t exactly have the chance to run off in the middle of combat and you can’t have any distractions when you’re fighting the enemy-”

“Does your suit have one?” Peter was struggling to wrap his head around it, though he did pick up on the man’s comment about him already using it, which he resented; yeah, he had a small bladder, but he’d always managed to get the suit off in time! Well, mostly-

Tony sighed at him again. “Yes, Peter-”

“So you’ve peed your pants in the Iron Man suit?” Peter snickered.

“You know why I didn’t give your suit a mouth hole? I thought it would encourage you to keep it shut every now and then!” The man looked really angry now but Peter couldn’t help but notice how Tony’s cheeks looked a little pinker than usual after he’d asked that question.

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry!” Peter said still trying not to laugh.

“You know you’re not one to be making fun of-”

“I said I’m sorry! Now can you just do something so I don’t have to test this thing out?”

“For that comment, I don’t think I will.” Tony said sorely, sitting back and folding his arms. “I want to make sure that feature works anyway-”

“Dad, please!” Peter begged and crossed his legs for added effect. “I really gotta go!”

“Okay, fine. But only because I don’t want you throwing another bitch fit.” Tony sighed before peering around again. He could still see suits flying around as Hulk did his best King Kong impression with one arm and was slinging Thor around with the other. Natasha was still standing strong in the centre of all the chaos, trying to soothe Hulk long enough for Bruce to regain control. “Where the hell is, Rogers?”

“You called?” The supersoldier appeared behind them breathlessly.

“Babysit Underoos for a minute, I think we’re gonna need to pull out the big guns for this one.”

Tony said as he stood up.

Steve nodded in agreement and crouched beside Peter in Tony’s place.
“I don’t need babysitting, thank you very much!” Peter yelled at him angrily as he took off, jumping in time for one of the suits to take him wherever he was going.

“How you holding up?” Steve smiled sympathetically. Peter didn’t need to know that he overheard his conversation about his bladder situation.

“I’m fine, my arm’s just starting to go numb.” It wasn’t a complete lie, he really couldn’t feel his fingers anymore. He didn’t want to admit that he also really had to pee. He was struggling not to squirm too much, he hoped the ones he couldn’t suppress would be chalked up to loss of circulation.

“Tony will be back with Veronica soon kid, don’t worry.” Steve was right, not five minutes later Tony bust through what was left of the wall leading out into the hallway in the Hulkbuster suit. Peter was irritated that from his current position he couldn’t see the rest of the action unfold, he could only hear it. He heard the Hulk scream in rage as he was dragged into a massive reinforced metal cage which Natasha bravely joined him in, still muttering words of comfort the entire time. After what felt like forever Tony finally made his way back over to where Peter laid trapped.

“Oh thank god, get this stupid thing off me!”

“Hold your horses, do you want to end up with compartment syndrome? Or toxic shock? The blood supply in your arm might’ve been cut off for too long for me too-”

“I don’t care! Chop it off- turn me into the winter soldier! I don’t give a fuck just get me out!” Peter screamed, both because his bladder was hurting and he was starting to get a flare of extreme claustrophobia, having lost control of his breathing again when Tony left him. He finally understood how people could chew off their own limbs because if he could reach he would’ve tried it.

Steve opened his mouth to comment on the swearing (and Peter’s flippency about Bucky’s prosthetic limb) but Tony stopped him. “Let him have that one. Peter you need to calm down, elevating your heart rate isn’t going to help anything.”

“I’m trying damn it!”

“Alright, it’s alright. We’re gonna get you out everything’s okay.” Tony kept muttering words of comfort, though they mostly fell on deaf ears, as he started to slowly lift the crushing weight off of him.

Thor had since come over to help too and was hurtling piles of rubble off of the top of the main culprit, a massive steel bar, trying to speed the process along. Steve’s job was to keep Peter as still as possible. After a couple minutes he was finally free and he managed to slip Steve’s grasp long enough to rip his arm from the gap just a bit too early, making all the adults cringe as he almost degloved his entire arm. Even his suit ripped under the strain. He jumped up despite the extreme dizziness and started to rush towards the destroyed exit. He only made it about five steps before he stopped, his whole body tensing and his knees locking together. Both Steve and Thor ran to him expecting him to pass out but he put his arm up before they touched him, warning them not to do so.

“Pete are you-” Peter held one finger up to silence him.

After about a minute his shoulders relaxed, his head fell towards the ground and he sighed.

“Did you just-” Tony smirked.
“Shut up, Tony.” Peter snapped and whipped around throwing his mask at the man. “At least we know your stupid filtration system works!”

Peter stormed off not listening when the men called him back.

“Kiddo, I’m sorry!” Tony yelled but he was still laughing. “We still gotta check you over!”

His laughter however earned him the bird, but at least Peter was able to do it with the arm he had trapped.
Chapter Summary

This ones a bit of a filler chapter as I made the mistake of writing chapter 21 before I’d finished chapter 20- giving myself self induced writers block oops XD

When Tony found Peter after his micro-tantrum, he was hauled up in a corner of the lab fiddling with the canisters they’d been working on that morning, with a blanket draped over him and a giant bowl of M&M’s.

“What was wrong with what we did earlier?” Tony questioned, speaking softly so he didn’t startle Peter as he sat down beside him.

“Viscosity was off, the bot cut through it too easy.” Peter said shortly through a mouthful of candy.

“Fair enough. Can I have some?” He pointed towards the bowl. This was his way of testing whether or not the boy was holding a grudge with him.

“No.” He hissed and pulled the bowl towards him protectively. So that answered that question.

“Aw, come on. Please?” Peter just grunted at him. “Pretty please with a suit upgrade on top?”

“Fine, but don’t take the blue ones! They’re my favourite.” Peter relented and watched in horror as Tony deliberately took a handful full of blue candies. “You’re a monster.”

“But you love me. Besides they all taste the same.” Tony shoulder bumped him. “I didn’t mean to embarrass you earlier, bubby.”

“Well, you did.” Peter pouted though his cheeks pinkened at the nickname. “I do that enough myself, I don’t need you doing it for me.”

“Hey, don’t be like that.” Tony wrapped his arm around him. “Don’t get down on yourself, it wasn’t your fault you got trapped, you wouldn’t have had to use the suit if that didn’t happen.”

“Was too my fault- it was my fault Bruce got distracted. Is he okay?” Peter asked guiltily.

“Peter, none of this was your fault so quit that now. And yeah, Bruce is fine. Pretty worn out so we may not see him for the rest of the day but he’s fine.”

“Does it hurt?” Peter looked up at Tony for the first time since he came in the room.

“I don’t know kiddo, I can never get a straight answer out of him. He’s pretty sensitive about it.”

Peter nodded understandingly still looking incredibly guilty. He imagined it was excruciating to have all your bones and muscles grow and shrink like that, so the idea that it had happened because he wasn’t able to fight a simple robot made him deeply upset. If he was the cause of that much chaos at home, how would he ever be able to help people out in the real world? Tony seemed to read his mind once again and continued to console him. “Peter it’s alright, it wasn’t your fault. And nothing bad happened, it was just an accident. Thor was the one who
should’ve paid more attention as well as Bruce. It’s a big part of training not to let yourself get
distracted, because things like this can happen.”

Peter simply nodded again and sighed. The look on his face was breaking Tony’s heart. “Come on,
what can I do to cheer you up, hm?”

“Well you did promise a suit upgrade in return for my M&M’s…” Peter smiled innocently.

“You brat! What do you want?” Tony rolled his eyes but chuckled nonetheless.

“Well remember what I said about some proton-”

“No energy weapons. Not gonna happen.”

Peter pouted but decided not to push his luck. “Fine what about jets so I can like-”

“You don’t need to be able to fly, you’ve got the whole swinging and scaling walls thing going on.
Besides that’s me and Thor’s schtick.”

The two went back and forth for a while before they landed on something they could both agree
on. The whole interaction having put Peter in a considerably better mood, they started sketching up
ideas together and prototyping aspects of their designs. It got rather competitive, having opposing
ideas on how to tackle a particular issue. They still laughed and joked the entire time, Tony was
glad that he’d got the boy to stop sulking at last. Though he still had a niggling thought at the back
of his head that wouldn’t go away.

“Pete, can I ask you something without putting you in a bad mood?”

“Uhm, depends what it’s about I guess?” Peter laughed nervously but remained suspicious. He
didn’t want to be in a bad mood again, not when he’d just started to feel better about the
embarrassment he’d endured earlier.

“Oh, well if you don’t wanna talk about it just say so and I’ll move on, okay?”

“Oh, but spit it out cause you’re making me nervous.” Peter chuckled again.

“What did Thor help you with?” Tony regretted asking immediately as he watched Peter’s face
fall.

“Uh, well..”

“It’s okay, we don’t have to talk about it.” Tony tried to back track, feeling guilty about having
spoiled the teens mood yet again. He wished he had waited or worded it a different way or
something-

“No, it’s alright. It’s just uh…embarrassing. And I don’t want you to get mad.” Peter shifted
uncomfortably in his chair, his face going a familiar bright red.

Tony wondered what could make the boy act such a way, and why would it make him angry? “I
won’t get mad, just tell me the truth.”

“I peed my bed last night.” Peter grimaced hearing himself admit it outloud made him want to rip
off his own ears.

“Oh.” Was all Tony said at first, before it caught up to him that he had to give Peter some kind of
response. He’d never expected to hear Peter admit to something like that so quickly, which he
supposed was a good thing. He found himself feeling a bit awkward to be having this conversation with a teenager. It was one thing comforting the boy after he’d had an accident, after being desperate for a time and not making it to the bathroom but it felt different hearing Peter’s admission to wetting the bed. Of course he didn’t blame him at all, it was just strange for him to find the right words. Especially considering it was now an historic event, had Peter come to him immediately after his fatherly instincts would’ve probably kicked in long before he had to consciously think of the right thing to say. As that thought crossed his mind he realised he still hadn’t given the red faced boy any kind of tangible reaction and his fatherly instincts did just that. “Did you have a bad dream or anything?”

Somehow this question only seemed to make Peter feel more ashamed, as though he didn’t have a legitimate reason to be having an accident. He shrugged his shoulders and shook his head. “No I think I just slept really deep or something..”

“Yeah, you did crash pretty hard last night. Why didn’t you come and get me, bud?”

“That’s what I thought you’d be mad about.” Peter gave him a sheepish look. “I was gonna just clean up by myself, but Thor caught me as I was sneaking off to the laundry room…”

Tony nodded understanding what the boy had meant about the man helping him. He knew better than anyone that Thor was a big softie so he had no doubt the god was nothing but kind to him. What surprised him was Thor’s ability to have kept the matter private, which he appreciated and made a mental note to thank him later. “I’m not mad Petey, I promise. You don’t have to deal with it by yourself you can come and tell me. I’d rather know when it happens anyway.”

“It doesn’t happen often.” Peter said quickly, blush deepening. “It’s not a big deal, I won’t do it again anyway.”

“I wasn’t insinuating that you planned on making a habit of it, Pete. I’m just saying I’d like to know when it does. I know it can be an indicator of other things.”

“What do you mean?” Peter started to put his guard up, he wasn’t sure where this conversation was headed and he didn’t much care to find out. He felt himself physically pull away from the mad as he sank further into his chair.

“I know it can be a sign you’re stressed, or like you said about last night, over tired. I just wanna make sure I’m not pushing you too far that’s all buddy.” Tony could sense the boys hesitation so he tried to reassure him. “It’s not a problem when it does happen. I won’t make a big deal of it, I just don’t want you having to go through anything alone anymore.”

“It’s just some sheets Tony.” Peter shrugged. He didn’t like the idea of the man thinking he was that pathetic to need help after an accident. Yeah, he wanted comfort sometimes, but he didn’t need it. He was old enough to take care of it himself and he resented the idea that Tony thought otherwise. Though he thought back to how he acted last night when Thor found him and he cringed. The god must’ve thought him such a baby.

“Fair enough. Just letting you know it doesn’t have to be a big thing, that’s all.” He dropped the subject and was quick to move on to another topic of conversation, lest he dampen the teens mood even more. He’d tried to broach the subject the best way he could he felt pretty disheartened by the fact that he’d once again managed to say the wrong thing.

The mood in the room grew less tense at time went on, the two of them slipping back into work mode and competing with each other. Their focus wasn’t broken for the next few hours until they were called for lunch, much to Peter’s grievance.
“Come on, you know the rules. No skipping meals.”

“But I’m not hungry! You can’t force me to eat when I’m not even hungry.” Peter whined.

“You’ve never heard of a GI tube?”

“Hilarious- I’m serious.” Peter said dryly.

“It’s not my fault you ate half your body weight in M&M’s, P.” Tony laughed.

“Well, you didn’t tell me not to!”

Tony gave him a blank stare. “Really? That’s your argument?”

Peter huffed in response and folded his arms. He continued to pout through the entire meal.

“Come on, Peter. You have to eat something decent.” Steve encouraged, not letting the glare he was getting from the teenager phase him.

“I’m fifteen, I’m old enough to decide when I’m hungry or not.”

The adults in the room weren’t sure why Peter was suddenly putting up such a fight about meal times, considering the structure of their days hadn’t changed since he moved in. He was well used to their routine at that point, so Tony saw this as a sign of teenage rebellion as opposed to about the act of eating itself. “What’s wrong Pete, want me to make airplane sounds when I spoon feed you?”

“Want me to make train noises when I punch you in the face?” Peter scowled. He wasn’t in the mood to be made fun of.

“Oo, feisty.” Nat chuckled making Peter send daggers her.

“Does someone need a nap?” Tony asked innocently, knowing full well he was teasing the boy more.

Peter made an effort to ignore him and continued trying to finish his meal, lest Steve ban him from going back down to the lab. But both Tony and Nat were really starting to work on his last nerve. He could usually take the teasing, but he was coming off of a sugar crash and a nap was starting to sound good right about now (not that he was about to admit that). After he’d finished eating he got up to clean his plate and go to his room.

“Hey, I thought we were working?” Tony called after him frowning a little. Maybe he’d gone too far with his joking.

“Oh, yeah. I was just gonna grab some homework I gotta do..” Peter trailed off. It was a pretty lame excuse but at least it sounded better than ‘leave me alone for a while’.

“You can do it in your room if you’ve had enough of the lab for today, Pete, it’s okay.” Tony assured him. The man could tell when the boy was lying and it was clear that his mood was dropping as much as his energy was.

“You sure? I can come down in a bit?” Peter felt a pang of guilt. He didn’t want Tony to think that he didn’t want to spend time with him, even if he didn’t at that moment.

“You can do your own thing for a while it’s okay.” He said with a smile.
Peter nodded and headed off to his room where he promptly passed out on his bed.

He woke up about an hour and a half later in a much better mood than he had been upon leaving the kitchen, but when left his room he couldn’t find anyone. He made his way around the common floor and even down to the lab but he didn’t see a single soul.

“Hey, JARVIS?”

“Yes, Master Peter.”

“Just Peter- where is everyone?”

“They’ve been called into a meeting with Mr. Fury.”

“Oh.” Peter frowned a little. He figured after going on an official mission that he was part of the team now so he felt a little disappointed that he hadn’t been invited.

“It’s regarding an issue with breaking protocol, Peter. Master Tony asked me to make sure you do not have any doubts about your standing with in the group. They’re in a meeting as they did something to break the rules, you did not so you have no need to attend.”

“Oh, okay. Thanks JARVIS.” That made him feel a lot better, though he couldn’t help but wonder what the adults had done to get pulled into a meeting. “Is Bruce in there?”

“No, Dr. Banner is still resting.”

“Is he okay?” It had been hours now, Peter was starting to worry something might be wrong with the man.

“All of his vital signs appear normal.”

“Hm, okay..” Peter didn’t sound fully convinced but he knew that the AI was incapable of lying. Though Tony had programmed it to be smart enough to bend the truth a little. “Can you leave a message with Tony for me?”

Peter was scrolling through his phone as he spoke. He had three missed calls and two texts from MJ. She wasn’t the type of person to double text let alone call.

“Yes, what would you like it to say?”

He bit his lip before answering. He wasn’t sure whether he should leave without permission but the rule had been to notify anyone before he went anywhere and that’s what he was doing. It wasn’t his fault that nobody was there for him to ask.

“Uh, can you just tell him one of my friends need me. I’ll be back before dinner and he can call me home if he’s mad that I left without asking?”

“Very well Master Peter. Can you tell me the location where you are headed in case Master Tony asks?”

“Yeah, tell him I’m meeting MJ at a coffee shop down park avenue.”

Peter left soon after that, making sure not to forget his phone charger lest Tony explode if he didn’t answer his phone. He also waved to Happy as he saw him leave just as he did, knowing the man wouldn’t be far behind him. For once he was glad he had the man following him, maybe he’d be able to stop Tony from freaking out once he got Peter’s message.
Once he got to their meeting place he was surprised when the taller girl ran up to hug him. He was stunned for a moment before he reciprocated, not liking the blood rushing in his ears. “Oh, uh, hi.”

“Hey dick for brains.” Okay, there was the MJ Peter knew. So she hadn’t been replaced by a nicer clone.

“Hey, are you alright? It’s not like you to text like that- or you know, contact me outside school ever.” He shrugged and chuckled nervously.

“Yeah, my dad was just being an asshole and I was scared you still hated me.” She said nonchalantly, kicking her feet up on the small table in front of the armchair she’d collapsed into. Peter sighed and moved her boots back onto the floor, trying to ignore the disgruntled look from the store worker.

“When did I hate you?” Peter asked, genuinely confused.

“Well, when you stormed off after Mrs. Bitchtits gave you detention and then Ned called me freaking out that you’d ran away.”

“Oh, that. I didn’t run away and I wasn’t mad at you guys-“ Tony really had called everyone looking for him, god he was so embarrassing. Peter had texted with Ned that night to let him know he hadn’t been kidnapped or anything, but clearly his friend hadn’t passed on the message.

“Peter I don’t get you.” MJ cut him off as she leaned forward to study him.

“What do you mean?” He shifted nervously.

“You’re really hard to read. Which is odd, considering you’re a terrible liar.” She sat back and crossed her legs. She didn’t give Peter anything other than that comment to go off of as she continued onto something else. “So, how’s your aunt?”

Peter was taken off guard by the question, he figured MJ did that on purpose to throw him off so he’d answer truthfully. “She has good days and bad days. I usually go and see her on weekends but she’s recovering from surgery and I don’t wanna risk giving her any germs.”

His friend nodded, seeming satisfied with his answer but offering no sympathy, which Peter actually preferred. He hated all the pity looks he was given, especially from his teachers, whenever his home situation was brought up.

“Anyway, what happened with your dad?”

“Oh he’s a controlling, manipulative, piece of shit.” She said simply, her tone of voice not changing at all. “Guess that’s where I get it from.”

“You’re not like that.” Peter frowned. He didn’t know much about MJ’s home life, same way she didn’t know much about his. She wasn’t very forthcoming about personal aspects of herself, which at times made it difficult to be friends with her. He sometimes felt like he didn’t know her at all despite spending nearly everyday with her.

“You’re sweet.” She smiled making his stomach do that fluttery thing again. “But I am, it’s not necessarily a bad thing, it can get you pretty far in life if you’re willing to use it.”

Peter went to make a comment about how not all Slytherin’s were bad but for once he bit his tongue, not wanting to sound lame.
“You were going to make a Star Wars reference weren’t you?”

“You actually—“

“Dork.” That smile again, ugh MJ stop you’re killing him.

“Anyway, don’t say stuff like that. You’re not a bad person, MJ.”

“How would you know that?” She laughed challengingly.

Peter thought for a moment before answering. “Because I just do.”

“Oh, you’re psychic or something now?”

“No. Because a bad person wouldn’t have called Flash out for being a prick to me, or stopped Marissa getting all touchy feely—“

“Or thrown gum in your hair?”

He laughed. “Okay, you got me there you’re a bit of an asshole. But I’m serious. I wouldn’t be friends with someone who wasn’t nice, look at Ned.”

“He’s a walking, talking teddy bear.”

“Literally. Maybe I needed someone a little bit evil to help balance it out—“

“Oh so we exist for you now? A little egotistical aren’t we there Parker?” She smirked seeing his face go pink.

“No, no. Don’t even start you’re worse than my—“ he caught himself just as he was about to say Dad. “Mentor.”

“Not using his name now?” She quirked her eyebrow suspiciously. When Peter didn’t answer and looked away from her she decided to drop the subject but she made sure to store that little bit of information in the back of her mind. “I’m surprised he let you leave the tower. We usually never see you outside school these days.”

“Yeah, he doesn’t exactly know yet I don’t think.” Peter laughed nervously and rubbed the back of his neck.

“You did not sneak out just to come see little old me?” She grinned, somewhat flirtatiously and Peter struggled to breathe for a second with the pounding in his chest. There was no way he’d ever admit to himself that he liked the girl sitting in front of him, he knew she was way out of his league so he was trying to save himself the heartbreak.

“I didn’t sneak out! I left a message.” He offered, but he was starting to think maybe this was all a bad idea. He should have waited to get expressed permission before he left, but surely JARVIS wouldn’t have let him leave the building if Tony wouldn’t be okay with it?

“Don’t freak out, wonder boy, Tony can afford to lose you for a couple hours. Come on.” She stood up and grabbed his hand, pulling him out of his seat and out of the shop with her.

“Where are we going?” He asked as he stumbled along the sidewalk beside her. He hated how his brain never seemed to function at full capacity when MJ was around.

“Well, since I’ve got you alone for once we might as well do something fun.” She laughed. Peter
wasn’t exactly sure what her idea of ‘fun’ was but he didn’t much care. He was too focused on how much he liked the shape of her ears. Her ears? What was wrong with him, who thinks about liking someone’s ears?

Apparently MJ’s kind of fun meant a lot of walking around, window shopping and loitering, as well as her taking a lot of good photo opportunities. She even asked Peter to model for some of them to which he so graciously obliged.

“More like this? Or like this?” He asked pulling a range of ridiculous expressions to get the girl to laugh.

“Ugh, you’re such a dork!” She tried to contain herself to her usual stoic manner but it was impossible when Peter was standing in the middle of the street making a fool of himself by doing an impression of a gorilla.

“No look! If you get the right angle we can recreate a budget version of King Kong!” He said, taking the signature pose.

“More like Godzilla.” MJ snorted but she crouched anyway ready to take the snap. “Move your foot back.”

They walked all around downtown eventually finding themselves at a park. MJ linked her arm through his the same way she’d done that day at school and Peter couldn’t help but feel the butterflies start up again.

“See what fun you can have when you do normal teenage stuff, Parker?” She smiled at him.

“I guess I should make more of a habit of it, huh?”

They wandered around MJ still snapping photos every now and then, getting a particular candid photo of Peter that she was enamoured with. Apparently everything about the lighting and the angles were perfect. The only thing that would have made it better was if Peter wasn’t moving around so much. She pointed not looking up from her cameras display. “The bathrooms are over there, dweeb.”

He blushed profusely having been called out on his squirming. He hesitated feeling that prickling sensation on the back of his neck again, he didn’t want to leave MJ sitting alone especially after potentially being spotted with him.

“Go, Pete. I’m not walking around with you if you pee yourself.” She snorted.

He nodded and pulled out his phone.

Peter: Mr. Hogan can you keep an eye on her while I run to the bathroom, please?

Happy: You got it kid.

He breathed a sigh of relief, both because he wouldn’t have to worry about MJ’s safety and because he realised he didn’t have any missed calls or texts. Either it was a long meeting or his dad had finally allowed him some freedom. He hurriedly used the gross park bathrooms refusing to touch any door handles, electing to do so only with his feet (a skill you develop quickly when you grow up with a small bladder in Queens). He was met with MJ bent over double laughing at his display of acrobatics.

“Shut up! Those bathrooms are nasty, alright?!” But he couldn’t help but join in her laughter. She
linked arms with him once again and they continued down the path.

“Not to alarm you or anything baby Stark, but you realise that cars been following us all day?” She pointed directly to Happy’s unmarked vehicle.

Peter sighed. “Yeah, he’s not very surreptitious. You think he’d be a little more covert about it.”

“Oh, So we’re not gonna be body snatched then? Cool.” She shrugged.

“How are you so cool about that? I flipped my stack at Mr. Stark when I found out he had his bodyguard stalking me.” Peter muttered grumpily.

“Aww, it’s okay he just wanted to make sure nothing happened to his wittle Petwr.” She teased pinching his cheek for added effect making the teen scowl more. “Besides I feel privileged to be hanging out with such a celebrity.”

“You are so annoying.” Peter huffed trying his best not to crack a smile.

“Yet you’re friends with me anyway.” She skipped happily for dramatic affect. It got to around five thirty when Peter was about to suggest they start making their way back when his phone starting ringing. He sighed as soon as he saw his dad’s icon picture light up his screen

“Gimme one second, Hey Mr. Stark.”

“What happened to being home for dinner?” The man didn’t even greet him he went straight for an accusing tone.

“It’s not even six yet?”

“Well I know you’re more than half an hour away so that makes you late.” Peter could hear a bite to Tony’s voice, clearly leaving a message was not an appropriate way to notify the man of his departure.

“Okay okay, I’m leaving now, I’ll get Happy to drive me.” He sighed looking shyly at MJ who no doubt could hear the man chastising him on the other end of the phone.

“Damn right you are, what happened with your friend? Are they okay? Are you getting into any trouble-“

“I’ll see you in a minute.” Peter stressed, begging the man to stop talking so embarrassingly loud. MJ wasn’t helping matters either as she was pointing and miming the words ‘ha ha you’re in trouble’ repeatedly. He poked is tongue out at her and unfortunately Tony misinterpreted the lip smacking noise as Peter sassing him.

“Are you making faces at me young man?!”

“Wha- I- no!” Peter’s panicked face made MJ howl with laughter. “No I swear I’m- no sir- yes I. No, yeah okay. I’ll see you in a minute. You too. Bye.”

He turned to his friend who was now red faced with tears streaming out of her eyes from laughing so hard. “Aw, did I get you in trouble?”

“You really are an asshat.” He huffed and started stomping away from her.

MJ grabbed his arm and pulled him back. “Noo, come on Petey, I didn’t mean to get IronDad on your case.”
“You know what your problem is? You’re cute so no one ever told you to shut up.” He grumbled
“You think I’m cute, Parker?” She smirked and batted her eyelashes at him enjoying the shade of pink he was turning.
“Ugh, shut up and get in the car.” He growled opening the door for her.
“Such a gentleman.” She playfully batted at his chest and flicked her hair at him, purposely hitting him in the face.

Peter ignored her and hopped in the other side of the car. “Hey Mr. Hogan, can you drop my friend off first?”

“Sure but who is she?”

“No one.” Peter said quickly. God forbid Happy rum and tell Tony that he was out with a girl, he’d never hear the end of it. “Can you not tell Mr. Stark that I was hanging out either a girl? If he asks can you say I was with Ned or something?”

For once Happy seemed to take pity on him. He could understand the boy not wanting Tony asking questions, especially considering the teen clearly had a crush on the girl he was with. “Okay, but I’m not gonna say Ned, it’d be too easy for him to check.”

“Thanks Happy.” Peter said gratefully. He was surprised the man had agreed to keep anything from Tony let alone something that would help him out.

“What’s so bad about him knowing you were with me?” MJ piped up. She wasn’t genuinely offended but it was fun for her to make Peter think that she was. She was more so curious whether or not Peter had told Mr. Stark about her, and whether or not he’d told him good or bad things.

“Nothing, it’s just, he can be a little- I don’t know, uh-“

“Overprotective.” Happy finished for him.

“Right, overprotective. Like he’s worried about security stuff a lot, I mean you know that already since I can’t have friends over-“

“So why would hanging with Ned be different to me?” She raised one eyebrow at him, almost daring him to try and get himself out of that one without bringing up race or misogyny. She knew the real reason, he didn’t want Mr. Stark to assume they were dating or something, but oh how she enjoyed making the curly haired boy squirm. It was just too easy and he was too adorable.

“Uh, well. He- he’s met Ned! Yeah, he’s met him so he’s already like, made sure he’s safe for me to be around and stuff.” Peter seemed proud of himself for thinking so quickly but his face fell again when MJ leaned in real close and whispered in his ear, making a tingle go down his spine.

“Well, do you think I’m safe for you to be around Peter? Or am I too dangerous?”

His mouth gaped like a fish and he felt his face get incredibly hot. He stuttered for a few seconds as his brain buffered trying to think of an appropriate response. Luckily for him MJ laughed and pulled away from him before he had to give an actual answer.

“I’m kidding, I know I’m a bad influence.” She went to hop out of the car as it slowed to a stop. “Thanks for the ride secret agent dude, I’ll see you Monday Pete.”
She shut the door before he could say goodbye and Happy pulled away just as she waved from the unlocked door of her apartment building. He waved to her just long enough to see her duck out of view before he faced the front of the car and sighed. He was glad to finally be able to get a hold of himself, his head clearing and his heart starting to slow down.

“So, who’s the girl?” Happy asked as he made eye contact with Peter in the rear view mirror. Though his face didn’t show it Peter could swear he heard amusement in the man’s voice.

“Just a friend from school.” He shrugged, trying his best to look casual though the quavering in his voice betrayed him.

“Just a friend huh? Don’t worry kid, I ain’t gonna go airing your laundry to Tony. So long as you promise me something.” Happy saw the perfect blackmail opportunity.

“Anything, just please don’t tell him.” Peter begged. He wasn’t sure what he was signing up for but he didn’t care. Anything to stop his Dad from jumping to conclusions about his love life- not that he had one, just that...nevermind.

“No more snooping in my car, got it? I find out you’ve been touching any of my stuff again I’ll go straight to Tony and tell him I saw you kiss that girl-“

“But I didn’t!”

“Oh didn’t you? Who do you think he’ll believe?”

Peter gave the man a dirty look, this was a nasty game he was playing. He knew better than to argue as he was sure Happy would’ve taken some kind of videographic evidence to back up his claim. He sighed and threw himself back in his seat. “Fine. Deal.”

When they got back to the tower Peter ran upstairs as fast as he could (and as fast as the elevator would allow) and made it just in time for when dinner was being served. He felt accomplished since he had technically kept the promise he’d made but Tony looked less than thrilled.

“Have fun?” He asked, though it didn’t seem like a genuine question.

“Oh, yeah, it was fine. Sorry I was almost late I didn’t expect to be out that long…’” he trailed off when he felt all eye on him.

“Uh huh.” Tony clucked his tongue. Steve however was all smiles.

“It’s good that you went out to cheer your friend up Peter, and thank you for leaving a message and not just running off. You didn’t eat yet did you?”

“Uh no, we just got coffee earlier.” He took a seat at the opposite end of the table from Tony and dug in.

“Are they okay now? Your friend?” Steve asked, Tony did seem interested in the answer to that question though.

“Yeah, it was nothing big. They just had an argument with their dad.” Peter was very careful to use gender neutral pronouns to avoid both lying or cluing in any of the adults in on who he was really seeing.

Peter didn’t notice but Tony frowned slightly. Did Peter really mean that he’d asked his friend to meet him because they’d had an argument? Was the kid just covering up the fact that he was still
angry with Tony about the suit situation? He didn’t voice these questions however, and he elected to remain silent as the rest of the room continued their conversations. He kept his mouth shut for once as he didn’t want a repeat of their past argument over Tony being too overbearing, he didn’t want to hear Peter call him controlling ever again. He’d learnt his lesson and Steve was right; Peter had done the right thing in both confiding in his friends and letting Tony know where he was, he even made it home before dinner (though Tony had had to remind him). He relented that he didn’t have any reason to be upset, other than the fact Peter was starting to seem less like a little boy and more like a young man. He didn’t like it.

He knew he was being selfish which only added to the guilt. Of course he wanted Peter to have friends and enjoy what he had left of his childhood, but he’d wanted the boy to spend time with him, especially at weekends since he was always so busy during the week and Peter was at school all day. He knew he couldn’t keep the boy isolated just out of jealousy however, and he realised that he had up until this point. No wonder the boy lashed out sometimes he was probably stir crazy from being cooped up in the tower all the time, only leaving Tony’s (or at the very least JARVIS’) sight for school. Maybe he should let Peter have more time to do normal teenage things, he wasn’t just an apprentice anymore. He had to be mindful of all of Peter’s needs, not just his physical and academic ones but his emotional and social as well. He sighed audibly as he got lost in his thoughts, raising a teenager was a lot more difficult than he’d ever imagined even with one as well natured as Peter.

“You alright, Tony?” Thor asked gently, seeing the man stare off into space.

“Yeah. What are we talking about?” Tony was back in the room and managed to join in the current conversation (“who’s a better actor, Hugh Jackman or Ryan Reynolds?”). He was good at hiding his emotions after years of self neglect and he was able to snap himself back into his usual persona easily. But he kept his inner monologue going, wanting to make sure he gave Peter as normal a teenage experience as he could, thinking about how he could do so. He wanted to give Peter something he’d never had; a good childhood.
Don't Drink The Kool-Aid

Chapter Summary

Poor Ned causes a scene at a high school party and IronDad and SpideySon have to rescue him

“Please dad?”

“I don’t know Pete, lemme think about it.” Tony had honestly thought he’d never have to face this kind of issue with his son. Peter was never the kind of kid who wanted to go to parties let alone one as big as this. But every time Peter called him dad it tugged at his heartstrings and made him want to give into whatever he wanted- which he was pretty sure the boy knew at this point.

“Everyone’s gonna be there though! And if I don’t go there’s no one to stop Ned from making a fool of himself!”

“Since when did you care about what everyone else was doing? You’ve always been happy to do your own thing.” Tony furrowed his brows. It was true, despite the money Peter now had access to he’d never asked for the newest trend in clothes or the best phone, he even denied them when Tony offered. He’d never seen the boy cave into peer pressure either, May had told him about the times where neighbourhood kids had tried to pressure him into smoking; he just came home and told her what happened, proclaiming himself that he wouldn’t be hanging out with them anymore. It was a trait he’d always admired as he didn’t develop it himself until his late twenties. He was hoping this wasn’t the start of a new phase.

“I don’t care, I just thought I should give it a chance, you know? How can I say I don’t like parties when I’ve never really been to one?” The kid made a fair point. It was just one party after all.

“Don’t you trust me?”

“Don’t play that card.” Tony eyed the pouting boy in the rearview mirror. “You know I trust you or I wouldn’t be having this conversation, I would’ve straight up said no. It’s the other kids I don’t trust.”

“I get that, teenagers are pretty dumb. But it’s not like I’ll be myself. I’ve got Ned and MJ said she might come too.”

“MJ is a girl?” Tony raised his eyebrow.

“Yeah, why?” Peter asked defensively and raised his own eyebrow at the question.

“No reason, you just never mentioned that before.” Tony shrugged. He didn’t want to draw too much attention to it, knowing full well people of the opposite gender could have platonic relationships and it wasn’t an issue. But he couldn’t help but hear Peter’s voice raise in pitch and his face go red when Tony asked that question. “So this is a whole school kind of thing?”

“Uh huh. One of the seniors is holding it at his house and invited everybody.”

Tony didn’t like the sound of his fifteen year old going to a party with a bunch of seniors, who no doubt would be drinking. However, he knew he had to give Peter a chance to make the right
decisions and that he couldn’t baby him forever. He meant what he said, he did trust his son. He
wanted to show Peter that. Maybe this was a good opportunity to show some of that ‘mutual trust’
they’d been talking about. “Okay. You can go-“

“Really?!”

“Yes, but I’m dropping you off and picking you up! And no drinking.”

“Duh. I wouldn’t touch the stuff anyway- you really mean it?!”

“Yes, give me Ned’s moms phone number too.”

“Why?”

“Just in case.”

“Dad, I know you could click one button on your phone and find that out.” Peter deadpanned, but
read the number out anyway.

“Thank you, next Friday you said?”

“Uh huh cause it’s the last day of the semester.”

“Okay I’ll make sure I’m free that night in case you need me.”

Peter grinned and hugged the man round the back of his seat before hopping out of the car.

“You’re the best, Dad!”

“Hell yeah I am.” Tony muttered to himself as he dialed the number Peter had just given him.

He was met with a cheery woman’s voice on the other end of the line. “Hello?”

“Hi there, is this Mrs. Leeds?”

“Yes, speaking.”

“Hi Mrs. Leeds it’s Tony Stark. I was just calling to ask if you’d heard about this party next
week?”

He heard her gasp at the other end of the phone but she quickly tried to regain her composure. “Uh,
yeah, yeah Ned told me about it. I wasn’t sure about letting him go though, until he said Pete was
gonna try and convince you.”

“Yeah, he managed to.” Tony chuckled. “He can be pretty persuasive.”

“Oh, I’m sure he can be. I’ve seen him give May those puppy dog eyes.” She laughed.

“They’re killer. So, I was planning to take them there and back is that okay with you?”

“Oh no, Mr. Stark I couldn’t have you make both trips.” He could hear her earrings jingle as she
shook her head feverishly.

“It’s no trouble, Ma’am.”

“No, they’re both our boys we can share the responsibility, I’ll pick them up- lord knows how late
it’s gonna be anyway. Then Peter can stay here and you don’t have to worry about waiting up for
him.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes sir, I love having him over here.”

“Then it’s a plan, I’ll see you on Friday Mrs. Leeds. Thanks again.”

“Thank you too, see ya!”

The next week went by without incident. Peter got his grades back from his mock tests and of course he got full marks on every single one. He had to stop Steve from literally pinning his report card to the fridge. As Friday rolled around he started to get less excited about the party and more anxious. He had been sure that Tony would say no and it would’ve given him an out to stay home but he was glad that Tony was giving him a little bit of freedom. He tried to confide in Ned about his nerves but every time he mentioned it his friend just tried to hype him up.

“Peter it’s gonna be the biggest night of the year for us we can finally make people see how cool we are!”

“If you run around talking like that cool is the last thing anyone will think we are.” Peter rolled his eyes. He was looking forward to the experience to but something in the back of his mind kept telling him not to go.

After school that day Tony picked Peter up to save time on his usual journey home and the boy was noticeably quiet. Tony turned the radio off to show Peter he was giving him his full attention.

“What’s up Underoos? I expected you to be bouncing off the walls today.”

“Nothing’s up.” Peter shrugged. He didn’t want to admit to Tony that he was anxious in fear the man wouldn’t let him go, though at that point he wasn’t sure he hated the idea.

“Uh uh, come on. I know you better than that. You getting nervous about the party?”

Peter sighed. He should’ve known better than to think he could hide anything from his dad for any period of time. “A little. I still wanna go, I just. I don’t know it’s stupid.”

“Keep talking bud, it’s not stupid.” Tony encouraged.

“It’s just, I’m not really sure what to expect. I mean yeah, I’ve seen movies about high school parties and stuff but..I don’t know.” He trailed off not liking the way his stomach was churning.

“You know what? It’s okay to be nervous. It might seem like a small thing for most people but it’s an unfamiliar environment for you.” The man wasn’t sure how best to prepare him for the night ahead, so he just tried to reassure him. “Like you said last week, you don’t know if you’ll like it if you don’t try it. And hey, if you get there and you hate it? You can call me and I’ll be there in a heartbeat. There’s no pressure here Pete it’s meant to be fun. It’ll be good for you to let your hair down a little.”

“You’re right. I’m overthinking it. It’ll be fun.” Peter allowed himself a small smile and Tony felt proud of his own pep talk. “But Dad?”

“What is it, P?”
“What am I supposed to wear?” Peter grimaced, embarrassed by his own question.

“Jeans, a T-Shirt and a button down. If you get there and everyone’s wearing shirts you button it up, if not you’re still smart but casual.” He answered immediately. Many years of attending various events he knew the dress code for almost any situation.

“Oh. Okay thanks.” Peter hadn’t expected an answer that easily but he visibly relaxed. Maybe tonight wasn’t going to be a disaster after all.

They head out to pick Ned up at around seven that evening, after Peter had a meltdown about his hair not sitting right (then having Tony fix it for him) and Steve had a sit down talk with Peter about the importance of saying no to drugs. The teen was in a considerably better mood than he had been a few hours earlier, showing that excitement that Tony had expected. He waited patiently in the car while Peter ran in to collect Ned (and use the bathroom, all his bouncing wasn’t just down to excitement). He too was starting to feel a bit nervous but he made sure not let any of that rub off on the two teenagers he had in the back of the car.

“Hey Mr. Stark!” Ned greeted him happy as he climbed in the backseat.

“S’up Ted.” Tony said as he gave a wave to Ned’s mom who was standing in the doorway of their house.

“Ma said thanks for picking me up- and I do too, obviously!” Though Ned was getting better he was still pretty tongue tied around the famous man.

“It’s no trouble, just make sure you boys call one of us if you need picking up okay? No walking home or getting in strangers cars.”

“We won’t.” The teenagers chorused. They filled the car with excited chatter through the entirety of the car ride.

“Nah, I think he’d definitely be a Slytherin.”

“No way! There is no way- a Ravenclaw maybe but no way is he a Slytherin! What do you think dad?”

“I have honestly no idea what you’re talking about Peter.”

“What?!” The boy cried incredulously. “You’ve never read Harry Potter?!”

“Or seen a single movie.” Tony said flatly, trying to keep his face blank but he was struggling not to laugh at the kids reaction.

“Muggle!” Ned hissed.

“I’m so disappointed Tony, I thought you were cool.” Peter folded his arms.

“I’m so sorry!” Tony laughed. “Well go ahead, you two sort me, right now.”

“Ooo, you’re a tricky one.” Ned ribbed his chin. “I mean the obvious answer would be Ravenclaw-“

“Like me!”

“You are not, Hufflepuff.” Ned sneered.
“I am too!”

“Oh please, you almost pissed your pants when we joined that gardening club!”

“You were in a gardening club?” Tony raised an eyebrow.

“Shut up Ned!”

“But I could also see you as a Gryffindor. Or a Slytherin.”

“Aren’t Slytherin the bad guys?” Tony asked, deliberately to get a rise out of them.

“Ugh! Dad it’s not that simple! That’s like saying there’s only the dark and light side of the force!”

“Well isn’t there?” It was fun for the man to tigger Peter’s inner nerd. He often avoided such conversations around the man but when he was with Ned it was so easy to tempt him into letting his Dorky side out. The teens came to the conclusion that Tony was a Gryffindor but could’ve totally been placed in either of the other two houses. They continued that conversation until they pulled up outside the mansion that the party was being held at, sure enough they could already hear the music and screaming from down the street.

Peter swallowed nervously, but smiled confidently anyway as not to worry his dad or Ned. ‘This is gonna be fun.’ He told himself. ‘No pressure.’

“Alright boys well I’ll see you two tomorrow, have fun and be safe.”

“See you later Mr. Stark! Thanks for the ride!” Ned called as he clambered out of the car.

Peter day for just a moment longer taking deep breaths. “Bye dad!”

“Wait Pete,” Tony said just as Peter was grabbing the door handle. “Try and have fun okay. I’m just a text away.”

Peter nodded and quickly hugged Tony through the gap in the front seats before jumping out to join Ned. Tony sat and watched the boys walk into the house and silently prayed for everything to go according to plan. He’d hate for Peter’s first real teenage experience to go down any less than smoothly.

Unfortunately, it did. Though not at first. Initially both he and Ned managed to mingle quite well if not just a bit awkwardly, making conversation with a lot of their peers and of course avoiding Flash and his band of idiots. They even built up the courage to dance with a couple of college girls, even if they were doing it out of charity they were nice to them all the same. It was after they’d found somewhere to sit and they’d had several cups of soda when Peter’s bladder decided to pipe up. Ned was busy talking to some kid in the grade above them when Peter tried to tell him where he was going.

“I’m gonna go find a bathroom.” He said into Ned’s ear as he stood.

“Huh?” Ned yelled, clearly not being about to hear him over the music.

“I gotta go to the bathroom.” Peter said louder, he didn’t exactly want to announce it in front of everybody in the vicinity.

“What about homeroom?”

“Oh for Christ’s sake- I have to pee!”
“There’s a bathroom just down the hall there, little man.” A couple seniors were standing behind him and one of the larger, but friendlier looking ones pointed him in the right direction. They all were chuckling but not meanly, purely amused at the interaction between the freshman and his hard of hearing friend. Peter blushed brightly but thanked him before hurrying off in that direction. When he got to what he assumed was the restroom there was a massive line.

He joined the back of it at first, but after about ten minutes of the line barely moving he decided he’d be better off finding another one. He considered asking someone if there were any other available bathrooms but he assumed if the people there knew of one they would’ve left the line too. He found himself wandering the quieter areas of the house, hoping that he wasn’t overstepping any boundaries by doing so, he just really had to pee. Finally after around twenty minutes since he left Ned he found one with only a couple people in line for it.

The line moved quickly and he was finally able to relieve himself without incident (minus one or two leaks when he heard the toilet flushing). He exited the bathroom and started to make his way back to Ned when he felt someone grab his shoulder.

“Hey, youuu.” He heard a high pitched voice drone.

“Hi, Sissi.” He turned around and sure enough there she was with enough makeup on to have covered the whole cast of cats. She seemed a little tipsy, her ankles turning over on her large platform heels and Peter held his arm out to steady her. “Woah, careful there. You okay?”

“Yeah.” She slurred her eyes not really focusing on him and she was swaying slightly. “My friends ditched me around an hour ago.”

“That’s not right, you’ve been standing by yourself?” Peter asked concernedly. As much as Marissa could be a pain he didn’t think it was okay for anyone to leave an intoxicated teenage girl on her own at a party.

“Nah I’ve been walking around and making new friends.” She giggled and suddenly grabbed his upper arm, squeezing it. “Wow, Parker. I always remembered you being a skinny little thing, when did you start filling out?”

It was true he’d always been a ‘beanpole’ ever since he could remember. Since the bite he’d remained on the lithe side but he had definitely broadened quite a bit, especially in his chest and shoulders, his biceps were pretty prominent now too. He didn’t, however, appreciate Marissa commenting on that or grabbing at him. He gently tried to pull her hand off of him, whilst still holding her upright, but she used that as an excuse to feign a loss of valence and fell clumsily on his chest.

“Marissa I think we should get you some water or something—“ he started, still trying his best to be kind to the pushy drunken girl.

“Hmm, I’m not thirsty for that.” She giggled again and run her hand up his chest resting it at his neck, her acrylic nails digging into the sensitive skin. “We could have some fun tonight you know Peter, some of these bedrooms still aren’t taken.”

“Sissi, no. You’ve had a little too much to drink.” He said more forcefully this time, pulling her hand away from his neck. “Come on, you can come and sit with me and Ned for a while. I’ll grab you some water and something to eat while you sober up.”

“Come on Peter, don’t be such a pussy. I know you like me too I’m not stupid.” She was still falling into him and now she had started to raise her voice causing a few of the people around them
to look over at the scene. She slapped his chest in frustration and tripped over one of her bow
legged feet, her full weight pushing Peter up against a wall. “Don’t you think I’m pretty?”

“Yes, yeah you’re very pretty. That doesn’t mean I’m gonna take advantage of you when you’re
drunk, so can you please let go of me?” He was trying not to panic but he didn’t know what to do.
He couldn’t push her off of him, the poor girl would probably hurt herself let alone the fact she’d
be distraught at the rejection and no doubt mortified later when she was sober. But he was getting
really uncomfortable with all of her groping and she wasn’t taking no for an answer. He didn’t feel
threatened by her behaviour, just incredibly embarrassed for the both of them. “Please, Sissi you’re
gonna remember this later and get so upset, just let me get you some water or something—”

“Everything okay here, little man?” He heard a voice next to him. It was the same senior who had
pointed him to the bathroom earlier and he was accompanied by a girl he assumed to be his
girlfriend. Apparently they’d been standing there the entire time and witnessed Marissa start
bombarding Peter as soon as he came out of the toilet.

“Oh yeah, my friend just needs to lie down for a little while I think.” He laughed nervously. He
was still trying his best not to humiliate the girl while she was in such a state.

“Only if you’re planning on joining me.” Marissa giggled burying her face in his chest, smearing
her makeup on his shirt.

“I’ve got it, Jay. Hey, hon, why don’t we go fix your lipstick. You’re starting to bleed a little.” The
girl who was standing with the guy, Peter now only knew as Jay, left her boyfriends side and
wrapped her arm around the shorter girl, gently pulling her off of him and leading her into one of
the bedrooms off to the side of the hall they were standing in.

“Oh my god, really? Oh no.” Marissa covered her mouth in embarrassment. “Do you think Peter
saw?”

“I don’t think Peter noticed, sweetie, boys don’t notice that kind of thing.” The blonde girl
comforted.

“Peter I’ll be right back okay?! Don’t go anywhere I just gotta- jus gotta fix my makeup!” Sissi
called to him as the nice older girl managed to steer her into the other room.

“Okay, Mars- I hope you feel better soon!” He felt bad for her he truly did, he just hoped she didn’t
remember too much later. “Thanks for saving me.”

“No problem, kid.” Jay smiled at him. “I was hoping to run into you anyway. You’re friends with
that Hawaiian kid right? At least I think he’s Hawaiian—”

“Ned? Yeah, why what’s happened?” Peter didn’t mean to cut him off but he didn’t like where the
older teens line of questioning was heading.

“Well, you might wanna get him some water too, he’s looking a little worse for wear.” Jay
shrugged not sensing Peter’s obvious concern.

“What?” Peter asked seriously following the larger boy, who helped pave his way through the
crowds, to get to Ned. “Oh god.”

He looked over to see his friend in no better condition than he’d just seen Marissa. He was leaning
against a wall with one hand, talking loudly at two girls who were trying their best not to laugh at
him. He was swaying and Peter didn’t like the lopsided look he had to his face.
“Ned, what are you doing?!” Peter hissed, rushing up to his inebriated friend. He'd been gone for half an hour, how did Ned manage this level of intoxication in such a short amount of time?

“Peter!” Ned cheered loudly clearly not picking up on the seriousness of his friends tone. “Ladies this is who I was talking about- he’s like best friends with Tony Stark and he’s my best friend so like, I’m basically an avenger-“

“Ned let’s go!” Peter attempted to pull him away but his friend remained solid. “I’m so sorry about this girls-“

“No it’s fine, don’t be silly!” One of them said sweetly. “Ned was just keeping us company, weren’t you sweetie?”

“Yeah, we remember our first beer too. Have fun with, well all that.” The other laughed while gesturing to the drunken mess that was Ned. They gave Peter a wave before going off to find something else to do.

“Ned man, what the hell are you doing?! We weren’t supposed to be drinking!” Peter grabbed Ned by the shoulders forcing him to make eye contact with him. Jesus Christ, how were they going to get out of this one? They’re parents were never going to trust them again.

“Whaa?” Ned blinked slowly clearly confused. “M’not! I didn’ Pete it’s just punch, look!”

Ned thrust the red solo cup he was holding into Peter’s face accidentally spilling it on his shoulder.

“Oh, Ned.” Peter sighed sympathetically and started rubbing his friends back. He was just glad he’d got him outside before he decided to evacuate the contents of his stomach, avoiding not only a huge mess but the embarrassment of it happening in front of everyone at the party. “You’re okay, man. Just let it out.”

“Dude, don’t apologise it’s not your fault. It’s Flash’s fault. It’s okay, just try and breathe.” He sat Ned on a nearby bench. He was furious at the bully for doing this to his best friend and ruining their first real party experience. He couldn't understand why someone would be so cruel. “You
okay to just chill here for like two minutes while I grab you some water and some paper towels?”

Ned nodded sullenly and rested his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.

“Okay, don’t go anywhere I’ll be right back.” Peter was back out within a minute and luckily for him Ned hadn’t attempted to go anywhere on his own.

“I’m sorry P, I really didn’t know.”

“Shh, it’s okay. Really, it is. I know you wouldn’t do this on purpose.” Peter said gently as he wiped the barf away from his mouth. He didn’t trust Ned to sit upright and do it himself without falling over or puking again.

“Do you think that girl with the nose ring liked me?” Ned asked dreamily. Clearly his puking his guts up hadn’t put a damper on his mood.

“Oh for sure, she called you sweetie remember?” Peter said cheerily. Who was he to crush a drunk teenage boys dreams? He sighed knowing he had no other option but to call Tony. There was no way he’d be able to deal with Ned alone for the rest of the night and there was no way in hell he was going to call Donna. Ned would be grounded until he went to college. He took a deep breath and called the man.

Tony’s heart leapt into his mouth the second he felt his phone vibrate; the panic that had become second nature to him now making his heart pound. “Petey? What’s wrong are you okay?”

“Hey dad, yeah I’m fine. I’m okay it’s just uhh..”

“What is it, what’s the matter?” Tony tried to keep the panic out of his voice but it was difficult when the boy wouldn’t just spit it out already.

“It’s Ned he uh, I think we need to take him home.”

“Is he alright?” Tony was already up and grabbing his keys ignoring the questioning look the other adults in the room were giving him.

“Yeah he’s just, he’s just really drunk. We can’t take him home though, Dad his mom will kill him-”

“Who the fuck are you talking to Parker? We all know you’re a pathetic orphan, who d’you think you’re calling dad?!” Tony could hear another voice he didn’t recognise call out in the background. Whoever the voice belonged to that person also sounded very drunk, and Tony didn’t like the idea of Peter being alone and surrounded by drunk abusive idiots.

Peter showed little reaction in his voice, just giving a small sigh before he said “Hold on a second.”

It was obvious that Peter slid the phone back in his pocket but Tony could still hear as the other boy approached.

“Flash, I’m not in the mood man. Just go somewhere else before-“

“Before What Parker? You gonna get your daddy on me?” The voice sneered and Tony could tell by the sound of footsteps that the other person was approaching rapidly.

“I’m warning you, I don’t have time for this right now.”

“Oh I’m so scared! Scared of little Pissy Parker and his fat fuck friend-“ the voice was cut off by a
deafening smack and all Tony could hear was Ned cheering.

“Woo! It’s about time! Kick him in the dick while he’s out Pete!”

“Ned shut up!” Peter snapped before picking the phone back up and speaking calmly once again. “Sorry about that. Can you come and pick us up?”

Tony was both amused and shocked by what he just heard but he decided now wasn’t the best time to address it. “Sure thing Underoos, I’ll be there in about twenty minutes. Can you hold down the fort until then?”

“Yup. Thanks, Dad.”

“I’ll see you soon.”

True to his word Tony pulled up in front of the house not twenty minutes later. And what he saw was his son trying to support the full weight of his friend who at this point was almost a foot taller and at least double his size. He quickly got out of the car to help him.

“Ned will you- Ugh, stop it! Move your le-Ned!” Peter grunted. Ned didn’t have a care in the world he just stood there giggling.

“Hey boys, fun night?” Tony asked sarcastically as he helped Peter by grabbing the intoxicated teen on his other side so they could both support his weight.

“Hey, Mr. Stark! A girl called me sweetie, it was awesome!” Ned slurred out happily.

“That’s great bud, did you get her number?” Tony laughed looking over at Peter’s face. He looked less than impressed.

“Oh noooo! Wait, wait we have to go back!”

“We can find her on Facebook or something later, dude, just get in the car!” It was clear that Peter had had enough of babysitting Ned by that point. They managed to pour Ned into the back of the car and get him strapped in.

“Do you have a plastic bag or something? He’s been puking.” Peter grimaced.

“No I’m fine now honestly! I think I got all the bad stuff up-“ Ned was cut off by a burp.

“I’ll run back in and grab one.” Peter rolled his eyes before heading back off into the house.

“Good idea.” Tony said. “So did you have fun at least, Ted?”

“I did Mr. Stark I feel bad that Peter had to take care of me though.”

“Ah, that’s what friends do. There’ll come a time for you to return the favour.” Tony said kindly. He’d been where Ned was countless times before he knew that guilty feeling all too well. Plus he didn't want to make the innocent teenager feel any worse than he would undoubtedly feel tomorrow. It wasn't his place to be chastising the kid for his poor decision making.

“Did you hear Peter knock Flash out?! That was so awesome he was like whoopaw and Flash’s jaw was all like kachow!” Ned gave Tony a small dramatic reenactment; Peter opened the door just as Ned was doing so.

“Edward! Sit still and hold this, do not puke on the floor, I swear on Christmas!” Peter barked as he
looked at Ned’s seat belt. Tony struggled not to laugh at how Peter chose to avoid cursing. “Did you unplug yourself?! Oh my god, that is it, I am never leaving you alone at a party again- hell I'm never going to a party with you again!”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry I’ll be good!” Ned gave Peter a cheesy smile completely disarming him.

“Boy, you test me everyday.” Peter shook his head and tried not to laugh. “You’re gonna feel so rotten in the morning.”

“That’s a tomorrow Ned problem!”

Peter climbed in the front seat after he made Ned swear not to touch his seat belt or he’d web his hands behind his back. He sighed dramatically as he strapped himself in. “Well, that was fun.”

“What happened to the Flash kid?” Tony asked, he was mildly concerned people may have seen his son assaulting the boy but it wasn’t as though he couldn’t make it all go away with a snap of his fingers.

“He was still passed out before you got here so I carried him to one of the empty rooms and put him on his side. I left a bowl and a bottle of water too, everyone just assumed he was drunk.” Peter was red in the face and it was clear that he felt pretty guilty about what he’d done.

“Good boy, Pete. You did the right thing.” Tony tried to console him.

“No I didn’t. I hit him, oh my god I hit him.” He leant forwards and put his head in his hands.

“Yeah ya did! I think you broke his nose!” Ned said excitedly from the back.

“Not helping!” Peter snapped. “Why did I do that?”

“Because he was being an asshole.” Both Tony and Ned said simultaneously, albeit in different tones.

“Yeah well, he’s been an asshole for years and I never hit him then!”

“P, it’s okay he was picking on your new dad that’s why you got so mad.”

“Thanks for the pearl of wisdom Mr. Kool-aid guy back there.” Peter slouched in his seat.

“Let’s not worry about that right now huh? Let’s focus on what we’re gonna do with Mr. Kool-aid guy.”

“We can’t take him home, Dad. His mom will kill him.” Peter said seriously, his eyes going wide.

“I’m too pretty to die!”

“Ned. Take a nap. Can’t we take him to the tower? I’ll take care of him I swear-“

“Pete, you know you taking care of him isn’t the issue it’s a security thing.” Tony cut him off. He was trying to think of the best thing to do, what would be the most responsible but also what would be the most moral. He knew he should just take Ned home and let his mom deal with him but Ned didn’t deserve to receive consequences of something he hadn’t done intentionally. Maybe if he spoke to his mom and explained it wasn’t the boy’s fault...though he could imagine that he’d still be upset with Peter had the same thing happened. He took a second to glance back at Ned, who was currently amusing himself with the button that controlled his window. “Right, okay. We’ll take him home with us. I hope you understand how much paperwork I’m gonna have to fill out for
“We appreciate it very much,” Peter turned his neck to talk to their other passenger. “Ain’t that right Ned?”

“Peter? You know you’re like, my best friend right? I love you so much.” Ned let himself slump forward so he could link his arms around the headrest of Peter’s chair to hug him. “Like so much and I’m so glad you got yourself a dad who’s this awesome.”

“I love you too buddy. Now can you let go cause you’re kinda strangling me.” Peter choked out patting the not-so-gentle giants arm.

Ned was slowly becoming more drowsy and ended up nodding off for a while so Tony had a chance to talk to Peter about what happened with Flash.

“I could hear him coming up to you Pete. I don’t think you were unjustified in what you did to him.”

“Yeah, he was getting up in my face, so what? I couldn’t walk away because of Ned but I know he wouldn’t have actually done anything. Even if he wanted to he wouldn’t have been able to physically hurt me, I have way too much combat training on him. I let my anger get the best of me- Ned’s right it’s cause of what he was saying about you. I hate losing control like that, Tony, I hate it.” Peter moves his hands around exasperatedly as he spoke.

Tony thought for a moment before answering. “No I don’t necessarily condone you hitting people, let alone civilians who you know couldn’t fight back. But you didn’t beat the crap out of this guy, you knocked him out and you left it there. You didn’t lose it completely and kept on hitting him, hell you even made sure he was in a safe spot before you left, that’s more than I would’ve done. The fact that you feel so guilty about it shows that you’re not a monster Peter.”

“I just hate the idea of using my powers in the wrong way, you know? Like I could’ve really hurt him—”

“But you didn’t Peter. You did enough to send him a message and get him away from you when you felt threatened, this hardly constitutes a developing god complex.” Tony chuckled but stopped when he saw Peter’s face fall. “I’m not disregarding how you feel bud I understand, I just don’t want you worrying yourself sick over one little scrap.”

“It’s not that.” Peter bit his lip and for a second Tony was worried he was gonna throw up.

“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing..” Peter turned to face the window. “I’m just a little warm.”

Tony didn’t press the issue. He just turned the AC on figuring Peter was just tired and emotionally exhausted after the failed evening. “You lemme know if you need anything bub, you can catch some shut eye too if you need to.”

Peter took the opportunity to close his eyes but he still didn’t look very comfortable. Though it was fairly late at night by this point they were still hitting traffic, probably due to other people being out on the town too. Ned woke up and started chatting with Tony about nonsense again, which the man went along with though he had to keep reminding him to lower his voice so he didn’t wake Peter up. The boy to the right of him was looking increasingly uncomfortable.
“He ain’t sleepin’.” Ned giggled.

“Oh? And how can you tell?” Tony quirked his eyebrow, not believing the drunk boy knew what he was talking about.

“’Cause he’s doin’ the twitchy eye thingy.”

“Ned, shut up.” Peter grumbled.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Peter hissed. “Why are we stopped?”

“Red light, now tell me.”

“Do you want my puke bag?”

“No I’m fine.”

“Then what’s-“

“I have to pee okay?! Now can we drop it?!”

The car felt silent for a moment before Ned gave out a little giggle.

“Shut up, Ned!” Peter’s face was slowly turning a deep crimson.

“Why didn’t you tell me Pete?” Tony asked gently, not wanting to upset him anymore.

“Because I didn’t want to set off pukey back there by stopping and starting the car. Besides, I didn’t think it was gonna take this long to get home.” Peter snapped.

“It shouldn’t have but there’s a lot of traffic-“

“How was I supposed to know that?!” The teen yelled, the building desperation in his bladder making his patience wear thin.

“Hey, cool it. I get it you’re uncomfortable but yelling at me isn’t gonna help anything.”

“M’sorry.” Peter looked down ashamedly and tensed his thighs together. "I'm just tense after everything tonight."

"I know bubba, it's okay."

“You sure you don’t want my puke bag? I’m sure it could-“

“Ned!” Both Tony and Peter said at the same time (though Tony replaced the N with his preferred T).

“We passed a gas station a while back I’ll find a way to turn around.” He noticed how Peter wrinkled his nose. “It’s better than no bathroom at all.”

“I don’t know Mr. Stark. Peter can be rather particular-“ Ned chimed in, in a singsong voice.

“Ned! Say one more word and I’m webbing your mouth shut I swear to god!”

The other boy finally seemed to take the hint as they were able to maintain a tense silence in the car for around ten minutes, save for Peter’s various grunts and groans. He was doing okay
suppressing his wiggles until Tony suddenly swerved the car to avoid hitting a dead animal in the road.

“Mmph, I hate you.” Peter groaned through gritted teeth. He wasn’t sure who he was cursing, Tony or the deceased rabbit, but he definitely loathed them both in that moment.

“Sorry, bubby.” Tony cringed. “Do you want me to just pull-”

“Don’t even say it.” Peter said sharply making Tony regretting having opened his mouth at all. After what felt like an eternity for everyone in the car, they finally pulled into a little desolate gas station, which both fortunately and unfortunately for Peter had a sign saying no key was needed for entry. He wouldn’t have to waste precious time running inside to get the key and possibly have to buy something, but that probably meant the bathrooms were in a less than pristine condition. He started to regret not taking Tony up on his earlier offer to go on the side of the road.

As he was hopping out to run to the restroom Ned cried out, “Wait!”

“What? What’s the matter?” Peter stopped halfway getting out of the car and was bobbing in the awkward position he was in to look back at him.

“I gotta pee too.” Ned said sheepishly tapping two of his fingers together in his lap.

“I’ll get him, you go Pete.” Tony said as he prepared to get out of the car himself.

“No, no it’s fine, I’ve got him.” The desperate teen said quickly, knowing full well Ned would be absolutely devastated in the morning when he realised one of his childhood heroes had to help him go to the bathroom after he’d gotten accidentally drunk on fruit punch. He helped drag Ned out of the back of the car and picked him up when his legs gave way and he laid on his back laughing hysterically. “Ned please, I don’t have time for this, I’m gonna pee my pants.”

“N-no, shh shh shh, no you’re not I’ve gotchu.” Ned said as he started staggering forward, falling back into protector mode automatically after hearing the desperation his his friends voice. Though he was in no state to be helping anyone else.

“Oh wow, thanks. Whatever would I do without you.” Peter said dryly, half carrying his much larger companion to the restroom. It wasn’t too disgusting but there was only one stall next to the wall of urinals. “Ned are you okay to stand cause I really can’t wait-”

“I’m good, I’m good, I promise. Go on.” Ned nodded, knowing full well Peter wouldn’t use one of the troughs in fear of someone else walking in. Peter didn’t wait to be told twice, rushing inside the stall and bolting it shut. After he’d relieved himself and gone to was his hands he was surprised to see that Ned was still going.

“Jesus.” He laughed and shook his head embarrassedly.

“Hey, shut up I had alotta punch okay?” Ned slurred grumpily.

“Yeah I know, half of it ended up on my shoes- Ned!” He glanced at his feet only to see that Ned was dangerously close to watering his own sneakers, where he had started to tip backwards. He rushed over to push him into a more upright position. “You’re such a messy drunk, good god. I’ve changed my mind I don’t wanna go to college together.”

He couldn’t help but laugh at his friend’s perplexed expression. He clearly didn’t understand why Peter had pushed him. He finally finished emptying his bladder and went to stumble back out into the parking lot.
“Boy your mama is a nurse, I know you know better than to not wash your damn hands. This place is probably crawling with MRSA.” Peter chastised him in disgust. After getting him appropriately situated he managed to lead him back to the car where Tony was on the phone with Ned’s dad.

“Oh yeah they’re both fine, Pete just had a bit of a panic attack and Ned called me to come and get them. Yeah he’s alright now thank you sir, your son was a really big help. He’s a sweet kid.” Tony paused and gave both the boys a wink. “Yeah I think Pete would like it if he spent the night, as long as that’s alright with you both? Of course. Great, great, so I’ll drop him home at around lunchtime tomorrow? That way I can show him around my lab a little. Awesome. And a very good evening to you too, sir.”

Tony hung up with a sigh and gave the boys a thumbs up. “Saved him.”

“Thank god. If you had got Donna it would’ve been a different story.” Peter laughed knowingly.

“Oh I don’t doubt it.” Tony grinned. “Let’s get Tinkerbell home and to bed.”

“To Neverland, Peter!” Ned cackled wildly as though it was the funniest thing in the world. The two in the front couldn’t help but laugh as Ned pointed them in the direction of ‘the second star to the right’.
It was quite an effort but eventually they managed to drag the drunk giggling Ned up to the common floor. Between the two of them they managed to avoid any members of staff seeing him, with JARVIS’ (or “the sky guy” as Ned had renamed him) help; guiding them as though they were blind folded through a maze. It would’ve been a lot easier if Ned wasn’t stopping every two minutes to gawk at something.

“Woah what’s that?!”

“That’s a water cooler, Ned.” Peter sighed. It’s not like they’d passed four of them already.

“Woah!”

Somehow they got him to the living room before he fully passed out, and much to Peter’s relief, none of the other Avengers were in the immediate vicinity to see it happen. They did however, walk in not long after Peter had managed to pry Ned’s shoes off and cover him with a blanket, him and Tony turning him on his side with a bowl beneath him should the boy get sick again in the night.

“Tony! You’ve adopted another one?!” Thor cried when his eyes fell on the unconscious child nestled on the sofa. "What powers does this one possess?"

“No Thor, I can assure you that this one is a temporary guest. And for the love of god please don’t wake him up.” Tony sighed rubbing his temples.

“Oh my god, is that child drunk?!” Steve cried. “Peter what on earth-“

“Save it cap, they’ve been through enough tonight okay? Peter didn’t touch a drop and Ted was tricked into it by a bunch of bullies.”

“You alright, sport?” Steve looked at Peter who was positively grey at this point.

“Yeah. Just been a long night.” He laughed tiredly.

“Looks like you still had fun though youngling.” Thor winked. The other adults in the room gave him a quizzical look. Nothing about the scene in front of them looked remotely fun. “Well look at his shirt!”

Peter looked down and wrapped his overshirt around himself quickly to cover what Thor was referring to. He'd forgotten about the make up stain Marissa had left on him after their sloppy encounter, and he'd rather avoid having to answer questions on the matter. The last thing he wanted was anyone thinking he had somehow enjoyed or even actively took part in any of that mess.

“What? What’s on your shirt?” Tony leant over and pulled at one of Peter’s arms that were clutched to his chest protectively. He'd been so preoccupied with carrying Ned he hadn’t noticed anything unusual about his sons outfit. Peter refused to move.

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“Nothing!” He cried indignantly. He stayed strong until Tony’s hand brushed over a sensitive spot on his ribs causing him to laugh involuntarily. “H-hey!”

Tony’s face took on a devilish smile and he deliberately dig his fingers into Peter’s side again.

“What was that Petey? I didn’t hear you.”
“Ah! S-sthap sthap it!” He tried his best to keep his arms locked but his laughter was weakening him. “No! N-not fair!”

“What’s not fair? I’m not doing anything.” Tony grinned. He’d never noticed the boy was ticklish and this was definitely new information he could use to his advantage.

“No-ho-ho!” The boy was thrashing around and attempting to throw himself onto the floor to evade Tony’s tickling. But every time he managed to slide his way off Tony held him firm against the seat.

“Why are you doing a Santa impression?” Tony was laughing himself at how red Peter was going.

“Uncle! Uncle! T stop- I’m gonna pee my p-ah-ah-ants!” Peter cried as a last resort. The man had grabbed both of his wrists in the hand he wasn’t using to torture him, so he’d given up hope trying to conceal the make up stain.

“Come on Tony I don’t feel like scrubbing the couch tonight.” Steve grinned at the paternal display, he never thought he’d see the day where Tony Stark was using tickling as an interrogation technique. He made a mental note to bring it up at their next briefing.

Finally Tony relented and he lifted both the boys arms above his head immediately spotting the streaks of orange and chartreuse. “Oo, what’s this?”

“Get off!” Peter huffed still recovering from his laughing fit.

“Did somebody get some attention from a lady?” Steve smirked.

“Not that I wanted it.” Peter grumbled and covered the marks again. “She was very drunk, I wouldn’t have done anything even if I did like her back.”

“A noble stance indeed my young friend, did you make sure the young girl was alright?” Thor clapped him on the shoulder.

“Uh huh, this nice senior couple saved me and the girl got her put to bed- I didn’t have time to do much else before I had to go and deal with this lump.” Peter laughed and gave Ned a light kick, the boy not even stirring.

“Well I bet the ladies were just throwing themselves at you huh, stud?” Tony laughed. “Must’ve been the impeccable outfit I picked out for you.”

“Leave me alone, dangit!” Peter blushed but laughed all the same.

“Do you want me to help move him to a bed or..?” Steve offered, gesturing towards the lump under the blanket.

“Nah, leave him. I don’t wanna risk waking him up, not that that’s likely at this point. Seriously what was in that punch?” Tony laughed.

“I have no clue. Poison apparently.” Peter said dryly.

“Well whatever it is I want some.” Tony chuckled, earning disapproving looks from both Steve and Thor. “Well, we ought to leave you boys to get some sleep, you wanna go to your room buddy? I can watch over drinks here?”

“No it’s fine, I got him. Besides he snores like a wild boar I don’t want you suffocating him when
you can’t sleep.”

“Okay, goodnight underoos.” Tony made his way behind the sofa and kissed Peter on the top of his head, which made him blush especially as it was in front of the other two men. Tony has no such issue with it, he was getting much more comfortable showing physical affection to the boy, no matter who the audience was. He felt that Peter needed that extra bit of reassurance after the night he had. “I’m sorry things didn’t work out like we’d hoped.”

“It’s no big deal, it wasn’t so bad at the start.” Peter smiled. “Nunight.”

They all said their good nights and left Peter to keep a watchful eye over his inebriated friend. He slept fitfully that night, waking up every time Ned so much as twitched in his sleep. He was paranoid if he fell asleep that he would choke on his own vomit, even though Ned hadn’t thrown up since they left the party. Just as he managed to fall into a semi-decent sleep Ned turned and threw his legs over Peter, inadvertently kicking his friend in the bladder. Peter woke up with a start.

“Mmf, Ned move.” He groaned as he doubled over clutching himself. But Ned was a dead weight and dead asleep, he wasn’t budging quick enough for Peter’s screaming bladder. “Ned come on!”

Peter pushed him again and the other boy tilted precariously on the edge on the couch threatening to fall off, which would lead to him smacking his head on the glass coffee table beside him. Luckily for him Peter pulled him back towards the back of the sofa, which also rolled Ned’s legs further into his lower tummy. He shimmied his way out from underneath them barely keeping control of himself as he ran to the bathroom. He took a short moment to think about all the trouble his bladder had caused that evening. He was glad he’d had the foresight to take off his belt before he got settled on the couch as it saved him from disaster. His relief was short lived though. Whilst he was washing his hands he got a sudden wave of that prickly feeling in his neck just before he heard a crash from the adjacent room.

“Ned?!” He called, rushing out of the restroom without even drying his hands. He spotted his friend of the floor in a ball clutching his head and groaning. “Shit- you okay?!”

Ned didn’t give a response, at least not one Peter could understand. This worried him even more, was it still the punch talking or had the boy concussed himself?

“Hey hey, move your hands let me see.” Ned obliged sluggishly, falling forward and leaning on Peter. He checked the spot underneath his hair that he’d been clutching and he couldn’t see any blood, though a nice sized bump was already forming. “Jesus, Ned, are you alright?”

“Think, m’gonna puke.”

“Ah, okay, it’s alright. Can you stand?” Ned nodded. Peter wasn’t sure whether he should try and get him to the bathroom or if he was better off letting Ned use the bowl. He opted with the former, bargaining with himself that he’d take the bowl with them in case Ned didn’t make it.

He pulled Ned along and the boy was considerably easier to manage than he had been earlier that evening, which he surmised was a good thing. He still wasn’t sober by any means but it was less like herding a newborn deer and more like corralling a sleepy toddler. Ned was about two feet away from the toilet when he collapsed onto his knees and started throwing up for the second time that night. He didn’t make all of it in the bowl at first and Peter cringed realising he was going to have to clean his friends puke once again. He couldn’t find it in him to be angry, all he felt was sympathy for him, but that didn’t mean he still wasn’t just a little grossed out.
“It’s alright Ned, don’t fight it.” He hummed and started subbing small circles on Ned’s back. He was still trying to mutter apologies in between mouthfuls of bile but Peter did his best to console him. “Sh, don’t say sorry Ned none of this is your fault okay? I’m gonna get Flash back for this don’t you worry.”

Peter’s early feelings of guilt towards hitting the boy had long since dissipated. He felt as though he should’ve let go of five years of repressed anger and beaten the living shit out of him. The logical side of his brain told him that he’d regret it for the rest of his life if he ever really hurt someone, let alone a kid his own age, but as he was sitting on the bathroom floor covered in his best friend’s vomit as he was being violently ill in the toilet his emotional side was quickly taking over.

“Pete, I’m so sorry. I was so dumb, I should’ve known better. You shouldn’t have to take care of me like this–” Ned started to break down in sobs, still gagging and hiccuping.

“Stop it Ned, come on it’s okay. You weren’t dumb, you’re not dumb and hey- this is no different than the time I threw up on you on the field trip to the MoMA, remember?” Peter shuddered at the memory. That was the day he found out that milkshakes, hotdogs and anxiety attacks do not mix, as did everybody else on the bus.

“Yeah, that was pretty gross–” Ned managed a strangled laugh before he was cut off by another wave of nausea. Not a minute later there was a rapid knocking on the bathroom door.

“Pete? You both in there?” It was Tony and he sounded worried. Shit. “Open the door.”

“No, dad it’s okay, we’re fine–”

“No! Dad please don’t, he’s never gonna forgive himself if you see him like this! He’s alright he’s just getting sick again.” Peter begged. As dramatic as it sounded Ned would honestly be heartbroken if Tony saw him in his current state and Peter knew he wouldn’t be able to face the man ever again. He wanted to spare what little dignity he had left, hoping Ned wouldn’t remember any of this in the morning.

On the other side of the door Tony sighed. Peter had basic medical training and he’d had JARVIS run scans for any signs of serious head injury, all of which came back negative. He knew that Ned wasn’t in any immediate danger but he didn’t want Peter having to deal with it by himself. He was a kid it wasn’t his responsibility. It was at that point he considered calling Ned’s mother but the boy himself interrupted his thought.

“Mr. Stark I’m so so sorry, if you wanna send me home that’s fine I’m just so–” Another wave of vomit. “-sorry. Let my mom deal with me it’s all my fault anywa–”

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“Hey, no, kid it’s alright. Don’t worry about it. I’m not gonna kick you out unless you wanna go home.”

“Mom’s gonna- HHHRRGH- kill me.” He moaned bitterly, seemingly to no one as he was still zoning in and out of lucidity.

“Dad, please don’t send him home. I can manage I promise.”

“Hmm, okay.” Tony said hesitantly. “Do you need anything?”

“Uhm, can you get a glass of water? And a new shirt for him, he’s kinda puked everywhere- no,
"You got it." Tony hurried off to grab what Peter had asked for whilst wishing he’d had a friend like that when he was his age. Whenever he came home that drunk his father would demand that he be left to deal with things himself and ordered no one to help him. He spent many nights covered in his own waste, sprawled wherever he’d managed to crawl to before passing out, then having to clean everything himself the next morning, especially after the real Jarvis died. It wasn’t until he got older and he could pay people to be his friend that he got any kind of care, which unfortunately only fueled his addictions. He tried to shake away the childhood trauma before he returned back to the bathroom, pushing it deep down where he hoped it wouldn’t resurface until the next time he had to deal with a crisis. So, you know, a very healthy coping strategy. "You wanna open the door so I can give these to you?"

"Nice try, Dad. Leave ‘em by the door I’ll grab them in a sec. Thank you.” Peter chuckled, speaking very softly.

"Okay, I’ll be in the living room okay? Yell if you need me.” Tony sat 'patiently' for half an hour before he got concerned about the lack of noise coming from the bathroom. Just as he was about to get up he heard the woosh of the sliding door and Peter appeared supporting Ned with one arm over his shoulder. Tony had no idea how he’d done it, but somehow Peter had managed to shower and change Ned’s clothes with no assistance. He, however, was still covered in what seemed to be several body fluids, a few of which were his own.

Peter looked the picture of calmness, being so relieved that Ned’s episode of sickness was finally over. Though he was anxious a majority of the time he had always had a knack for staying calm in serious situations. Peter smiled and spoke in the same quiet, gentle tone Tony had heard him using in the bathroom. “Hey, can you help me get him comfy again?”

Tony stood up quickly and much like they had done before the two nestled Ned in on the sofa, looking a lot less sickly than he had been hours before. Peter sighed and looked gratefully up at Tony. “Thank you for being so cool about all of this, Dad.”

“Pete, it’s honestly no problem. I’m so proud of you for coming to me and being so mature about the whole thing. Anyone would be lucky to have you as their friend. I’d hug you but frankly you stink.”

Peter laughed softly. "Yeah, he got me pretty good. I made the mistake of leaning in between him and the toilet to grab something. I used his shirt to clean the bathroom though so it should be all good in there-"

“You didn’t have to do that bubba I would’ve-”

“I know. But he’s my friend it’s my job to take care of him.”

“It’s not but it’s amazing that you think that way, Kiddo. Now please, go shower and change your clothes before you have to clean up my puke too.” Tony wrinkled his nose causing Peter to giggle.

“Okay- can you make sure he’s-”

“I’ve got him, go.”

Peter did as he was told, mulling over the nights events as he stepped under the hot water. All in all he didn’t find himself to be as miserable as he thought he would be. Yes, the night had been far less than ideal especially for poor Ned, but he has happy that he’d been given an opportunity to show
Tony how grown up he could be when he had to. He couldn’t help but feel pride beam in his chest when Tony told him how lucky someone would be to call him their friend. He agreed, Ned was lucky but also very much not at fault in this entire thing. He pushed down the anger he felt towards Flash and his goons, he wasn’t about to let him keep winning by spoiling Peter’s now calm mood and he had to admit to himself- the party before the punch hadn’t been half bad. All he wanted to do was snuggle on the sofa and sleep. So that’s exactly what he did.

“Mm, move over, I’ve earned that hug now.” Peter yawned as he plopped down on the sofa next to his dad. Under normal circumstances he would’ve been far too embarrassed to ask the man for a cuddle like that but he was past the point of caring and these were not normal circumstances. He’d spent the last three hours being kicked, cried on and puked over. He deserved some damn snuggles.

“Come here you.” Tony chuckled lifting his arm up for the boy to curl up next to him. “You gonna let yourself get some sleep now, Underoos?”

“Mhm.” Peter hummed, his eyes already closed. “Your turn to babysit.”

“Okay, you go night night I’ll babysit.” Tony chuckled, expecting at least a whine of protest from Peter for the babyish term but the boy was out like a light.

Peter managed to get a few hours of decent sleep in. In that time people had already started getting up and ready for the day, filing in and out of the living room to the kitchen and connecting hallways. Only the adults who hadn’t seen their unexpected entry last night questioned the chaos on the couches.

“Uh, who is that? And also, why is that?” Nat asked, looking at Ned as though he was some kind of alien.

“Peter’s friend, he got tricked into drinking by some bullies at that party last night. Ended up getting super drunk and Peter called me to pick them up. Mom would’ve grounded him for life if I took him home.” Tony yawned absentmindedly as he scrolled through his twitter feed.

“High school kids are such jerks.” Was all she said as she exited the room to get herself and Tony a cup of coffee.

“Yup.” Tony agreed simply. He was too tired to make much conversation. He gratefully accepted the coffee though.

Bruce had much the same reaction though he went through all the usual medical questions that Tony was used to hearing from the man by that point. Once Bruce was satisfied that he wasn’t needed urgently he left the room to grab some pedialyte for when the boy woke up.

Tony was content to let the boys sleep in for as long as possible after their rough night, so he only woke peter up when he felt the boy start squirming against him. When he looked down Peter’s face was scrunch up and he was biting his lip. He took a moment to monitor him to see whether or not he was having a nightmare or if it was something else. His suspicions were confirmed, however, when one of Peter’s hands disappeared under the blanket.

“Pete, hey, Pete.” He shook the boy gently but he didn’t stir. He shook him a bit harder and Peter still didn’t move a muscle. Now he understood how the teenager could wet the bed when he was over tired, the boy was sleeping like a rock. “Kiddo, come on you’ve got somewhere you need to be.”
He had to forcefully sit Peter up for the boy to even open his eyes. “Mm, good mornin’.”

“Good morning.” Tony chuckled, waiting for Peter to notice the urgency his bladder which he did almost immediately.

“Oo, I think I gotta pee.” Peter moaned, his eyes still half lidded as he dug both hands into his crotch.

“Yeah, I think so too buddy. Why don’t you do take care of that?” Tony laughed. He helped keep Peter steady by pushing on his back as he stood up before watching as the boy hobbled to the bathroom. He passed by Thor who greeted him warmly.

“Hello there, youngling!”

“Hi Thor, I gotta pee.” Peter said sleepily hopping from foot to foot.

“Well best you go and do so then, little one.” Thor smiled fondly and stepped aside to let the dancing teen go past. “And how is our befuddled guest doing this morning?”

“He’s still sleeping so keep your big mouth shut.” Tony snapped. He really didn’t want Ned to be woken up by a big blond god looming over him. That would be bad enough without the hangover he undoubtedly had. Besides, Thor was well known for his rude awakenings.

Peter returned not five minutes later fully dressed and hair brushed out, giving him what could only be described as a cloud of brown fluff. Bruce took one look at him and almost spat tea all over the dining table.

“Look at what that stupid hair gel you used did to me.” Peter scowled. Tony tried his best not to laugh but it was hard to take him seriously when he looked like an overgrown cherub; the plume of soft curls making his face rounder than usual, making his cheeks look chubby and dare he say it, very pinchable.

“Well did you use conditioner in the shower last night?”

“I was scrubbing barf off of my scalp do you really think I was focused on doing an intense hair care routine?!”

“I hardly think five minutes of letting conditioner soak into your hair counts as an intense routine but hey, if you like the weird Al look you do you.” Tony held his hands up defensively making Peter want to cross his arms and stomp his feet but he refrained from doing so. Just as he was about to say something snarky back Ned started to stir.

“Mm, ow.” Ned groaned and covered his eyes before he even opened them. “Mom the sun is too loud. Turn it off.”

“Boy, I ain’t yo mama.” Peter laughed evilly as he sat cross legged on the floor next to the sofa.

“Huh? Oh, it’s you.” Ned managed to open his eyes a little which was when Peter jumped back.

“Ah! Oh god, ew what happened to your eye?” Ned had dark red dots surrounding the whites of his eyes, though they were pretty small they were very noticeable up close.

“What?” Ned said groggily. He blinked a couple time and learnt on Peter’s shoulder to sit himself up which his friend didn’t object to. “God my head, what happened last night?”
In an instant Bruce appeared next to the couch holding a glass of pedialyte and a couple tabs of Tylenol. “Here, Ned. And don’t worry about the spots in your eyes, you just burst some blood vessels.”

Ned accepted the two before it dawned on him who was handing the medicine to him. “Thanks I-Oh my god! You’re- and- holy-“

Ned started looking around the room in shock finally realising his surrounding and Peter covered his mouth before he had a chance to curse. “No swearing, Steve doesn’t like it.”

“Did you just call Captain America STEVE?!”

The man in question took the opportunity to pop his head into the room as though he thought someone was calling him, taking on his signature trademark smile. “Am I being summoned?”

“Oh my god, I’m still asleep. I’m gonna pass out oh my god.”

“Please don’t.” Peter cringed. “I’ve had enough all of that.”

“All what? What happened? Why am I at your place I’m not allowed at your place?”

“Uhh...well..” Peter looked desperately to Tony who offered no such excuses for him, prompting Peter to tell his friend the truth. “Well, you got sick last night, I think you ate something bad at the party and I didn’t want your mom to get mad at you so I begged dad to let you stay over-“

“You know my mom wouldn’t get mad at me if I got food poisoning, P. Tell me the truth.” Ned said seriously, though his face fell and he looked ashamed already, having connected the dots in his head. “Did I drink?”

“Not on purpose!” Peter rushed to Ned’s former self’s defence. “It wasn’t your fault you got tricked into it!”

“Oh my god, oh my god.” Ned put his head in his hands and looked as though he was going to start crying again, having realised that Tony Stark had seen him make a fool of himself. “How much did I drink I can’t remember anything?!”

“I don’t know, you did it when I went to the bathroom…” Peter said guilty, placing an arm around Ned in an attempt to comfort him. “You didn’t do anything embarrassing, I swear.”

“Liar, you’re just trying to make me feel better.” Ned said miserably, but he still leaned into Peter’s hug.

“Yeah, true. But hey, it’s not a big deal. No one saw you just me and dad-“

“You did not use just and your dad in the same sentence- Mr. Stark I am so sorry you had to see me like that-“

“Kid, don’t worry about it. I mean it, don’t beat yourself up. I’ve been and seen people a lot worse. You just threw up a couple times and got insanely giggly. Count yourself lucky you weren’t a maudlin drunk.” Tony placed his hand on Ned’s shoulder. “I don’t want you beating yourself up over this Ned. It happens to the best of us, I’d know I’m one of them.”

“I guess but it’s so- hey, you said my name right!” The shock of Tony actually addressing him appropriately snapping him out of his self loathing.
“I knew your name the whole time I’ve been waiting for you to correct me.” Tony shrugged making Peter sigh and roll his eyes. Ned just ‘oh’ed in response. “How are you feeling anyway?”

“Uhm, kinda gross. Feels like my head is full of cotton balls.” He admitted.

“Yup, that’ll fade don’t worry we should probably get some food in ya too. Come get something to eat you two.”

The idea of eating made Ned’s stomach turn initially but as soon as he smelled the bacon cooking on the stove his stomach changed its mind. Peter was less enthusiastic.

“After what I saw last night I don’t wanna see food for at least a week.” He grimaced causing Steve to give him a look and point at him, tea towel still in hand.

“You don’t eat you don’t get to train or go down to the lab, it’s as simple as that.”

Ned was busy chatting with everybody, whilst badly covering up how starstruck he was. He was still in disbelief that he was actually getting to meet these people let alone have breakfast with them like any other family. It was so surreal- his best friend was living in this modern tower with superheroes. He forgot that Peter was Spider-Man most of the time but seeing how well he fit really brought it home for him. He’d never seen Peter so comfortable around a group of people that large, even his own family. It was when Ned asked about where Hawkeye was that Peter joined in the conversation- having been arguing with Steve about his lack of appetite.

“Oh he goes home to his wife and kids on the weekends-“

“Pete!” Tony gave him a look as did the rest of the people at the table, other than Thor who was taking the opportunity to steal a sausage off of Bruce’s plate. He didn’t manage to however, as Nat stabbed his hand with a fork, not breaking eye contact with Peter.


“I didn’t hear anything please don’t shoot me.” Ned begged freezing in shock. He didn’t want to be exposed to any classified information that could potentially get him killed.

The adults in the room chuckled at the boy’s fear and Steve reassured him that no one was going to be shot. “But Pete we’ve been through this, security is-“

“I know I know, I’m sorry. Just give Ned some Kool-Aid he won’t remember a thing- ow!” Ned punched his arm.

“Dude! Too soon!”

“Tony he hit me!” Peter pointed childishly at his friend while pouting.

“You deserved it.” His dad didn’t look up from his phone and continued to slurp his coffee.

Peter gaped his mouth open in horror. “Rude!”

“You’re rude.” Ned pouted. He was still rather sore on the subject and he didn’t appreciate Peter making light of it so soon.

Peter could sense this, he didn’t mean to go too far. So he did was he always did when he made Ned mad at him; he batted those big brown eyes and pouted. “Sorry Ned.”

“Ugh you’re such a brat.” Ned sighed but grinned. It was impossible to stay mad at Peter for too
long. “You’ve at least gotta fill me in on what happened last night, I literally don’t remember getting out of the car.”

“Well, we did pretty good for like the first hour. We were dancing and everything- a couple college girls took pity on us I think but they were hot so- I mean pretty, they were pretty nice.” He backtracked seeing the look Steve was giving him. “And uh, I had to go to the bathroom and I was gone a while cause you know who stopped me and tried to kiss me cause she was super drunk-“

“Oh god, again? Does she not take a hint?” Ned sighed and rolled his eyes, inadvertently gaining everyone else in the rooms interest.

“No dude, I mean she was really drunk. It wasn’t her fault she could barely walk straight, all her friends left her too it wasn’t right. She could’ve got hurt or something.” Peter said seriously. As much as he knew Ned hated Marissa he wanted to drive home that she wasn’t to be held accountable for her actions, same way he shouldn’t be. He made a mental note to text her to make sure she’d gotten home safe.

“Yeah, that ain’t right.” Ned nodded.

“So who’s the girl?” Steve asked.

“N-no one-“

“This girl who’s been obsessed with him all year and won’t leave him alone.”

“Ned shut up!” Peter hissed and shoved him with his shoulder, making Ned turn to him and shrug in confusion.

“Who, MJ?” Tony seized the opportunity to get more information out of Ned about this mystery girl his son had been spending time with. He still found it fishy how Peter had never mentioned that she was of the opposite sex and got defensive as soon as Tony drew attention to that fact.

“No, no, no, no!” Peter said a little too quickly. “You don’t know her.”

“Her names Marissa-“ another smack to Ned’s arm.

“Dude! Shut up!”

“Who’s MJ?” Nat asked, also noticing the blush in Peter’s cheeks as soon as that name was mentioned.

“No one!”

“His girlfriend.” Tony deadpanned making Ned snicker and Peter’s face get even redder.

“No she is not!” Peter cried indignantly.

“Then why are you so pink?” Thor smirked.

“I’m not!” He was red up to the ears now. It was Steve and Bruce who came to his rescue.

“Alright, enough teasing the boy.” Steve chuckled.

“Yeah, his night was bad enough without you load of bullies.” Bruce’s tone was equally light but still serious and he gave Peter a wink.
“Oo, speaking of bullies, tell Ned what you did to Flash Gordon, Pete.” Tony said, finally taking a visible interest in the conversation as he looked up to watch Ned’s reaction.

“What? What happened with Flash?” Ned turned to his friend who looked as though he was about to leap over the table and punch his father.

“Can we not do this here.” Peter said through gritted teeth, looking straight past Ned directly into Tony’s eyes. He looked from Tony to Steve and back again to show the man why he didn’t want to share the story in front of the entire group, knowing Steve would go ape shit if he found out that Peter had hit someone. He’d then go double ape shit if he found out that someone had been bullying Peter for the past five years.

“Why, what happened, sport? Who’s Flash?” Steve has caught the look Peter was giving him and it only seemed to spark his interest more.

“No one.” Tony, Peter and Ned said at the same time. It only made Steve more suspicious but he took the hint and backed off.

They were able to finish their meal in relative peace, though Ned was still asking all kinds of questions to various members of the team. They all did their best to indulge him and make him feel welcome, all being used to answering similar questions after their years in the public eye. After they’d eaten Tony took Ned for a proper tour around the tower (one he’d actually remember and wasn’t full of water coolers). Tony only showed him very select parts of the lab that had displays of his old suits, as not to endanger both his secrets and the boy’s safety should anyone find out what he’d potentially seen. Peter loved being able to show Ned his room and some of the smaller projects he’d been working on. He wasn’t trying to show off or brag about what he had, he was genuinely happy to be able to share it with his best friend after so many months of keeping everything a secret.

Ned felt the same way, he was over the moon that his friend finally had what he felt he deserved. The only thing that sparked jealousy in him was the size of Peter’s bed, something he’d never be able to possess if he valued having a floor in his own room.

“So, since Ned’s been here once does that mean he’ll be able to hang out with me now?” Peter looked to Tony with those big doe eyes that made him give in to anything he wanted.

“I don’t know buddy, it’s something I gotta talk to some people about before I can make a decision okay?” Peter nodded sadly making Tony’s heart melt. “But you know I’d love for him to come over again okay? So don’t think it’s that.”

That made Peter perk up a little and Tony had been telling the complete truth. He saw a different side of Peter that day when he’d been hanging out with his friend, somehow he seemed less but more mature at the same time. He’d always viewed Peter as a child though he often acted like an adult, but that day he looked and acted like such an average teenager that Tony was convinced someone had swapped his son out for another boy. He seemed so much more extroverted and goofy, much like he used to be when Tony was first getting to know him before Peter let on what an anxious wreck he really was most of the time. The whole experience reinforced that feeling like a normal dad thing that he enjoyed so much and he was glad he got to interact with Peter on that level, seeing his boy be a real teenager and not a mini adult for once. He’d enjoyed spending time with Ned too, finding the boys company a lot more enjoyable when he wasn’t intoxicated. He found him to be really witty, he almost managed to keep up with him especially when it came to lightly roasting Peter (though he wasn’t sure that his son valued that part of their quality time quite as much).
It got to be around twelve o’clock when Tony decided they had to take Ned home, much to the two boys disappointment.

“I know I know, but Ned’s parents probably think we kidnapped him already after last night.” Tony chuckled.

“Oh god I forgot about those.” Ned buried his face in his hands.

“You forgot you had parents?” Peter laughed. “I mean same but mine are like dead so-“

“Peter, Jesus.” Tony chastised him giving him a look of deep disapproval. Now he understood why his dark humour made other people uncomfortable, that level of morbidness did not suit Peter's sweet face.

“I meant that I have to face them, genius. You know my mom's gonna know what happened in a heartbeat.”

“You’re not even hungover anymore though-“

“My eyes, P, look at my eyes!” Ned turned around pointing at the affected orbs, opening his eyes unnaturally wide to prove his point.

“Blech! Gross Ned!” Peter turned away biting back a gag. He’d always had a thing about eyes.

Tony looked back at Ned for a second, who was sitting in the seat behind him, before taking off his sunglasses and handing them back to the boy.

Uh, why are you giving me these, Sir?”


“No, Mr. Stark I can’t take these! I’ve already taken your shirt-“

“Keep them. They suit you better anyway.” Tony shrugged, his authoritative voice leaving no room for argument. “If your parents ask you to take them off make a big thing out of them being mine or me having touched them or something. You know, something you nerdy kids do about collectables.”

“Dude, I’m never taking these off anyway. Thank you so much Mr. Stark.” Ned was staring at his reflection in the window as though he’d found the holy grail.

“Don’t mention it kid.”

After they dropped Ned off and Peter clambered in the passenger seat, he got a text almost immediately after they started driving home.

Ned: Mom called me out straight away lol you still gotta fill me in on what happened with Flash. Thank you for taking care of me I’m sorry about ruining the party for you. But it was awesome to get to hang at your house and your dad is honestly the best :)

Peter smiled at his phone before he turned to his dad, still smiling. He was so overwhelmed with gratitude and love for he man that he didn’t know how to express it all. Fortunately for him Tony managed to ruin that feeling very quickly.

“So, about this MJ girl. You gotta a crush on her or-“
“UGH!”
Panic Attacks

Chapter Summary

A very short, very rushed chapter I wrote on the bus to set up for the next bit of story line I have planned so I'm sorry that it's so difficult to read! The next one will be back to my usual standards I promise, please bare with me!

The week Peter had off from school was a godsend. He spent the entire time relaxing, which for him meant spending as much time as possible in the gym, the lab and out with Ned and MJ. It was his literal heaven. He even got to take Aunt May out for lunch for the first time in months as she was finally well enough to do so. He hadn’t realised how badly he needed to recharge his batteries.

Since he’d always found academics ridiculously easy, he never stopped to consider how draining school actually was for him, especially since he got the internship. But a week spent away from the constant crippling anxiety, that had become second nature to him now, it made him take a step back to look at the bigger picture. Since both the bite and the internship, Peter’s life had become non-stop action. Literally and figuratively. When he wasn’t doing something physical he was having to use his brain, if he wasn’t having to use having to his brain he was doing something emotionally taxing. The constant stimulation and the go-go-go of his day to day life was so unbelievably exhausting he was shocked that he hadn’t noticed it before. Between school, home life, superpowers, lab work and just being a teenager- he was surprised he hadn’t had a mental break down. In fact the idea of going back to school after having such a great time off was making him feel like he was close to having one. Every time he thought about walking through the school gates he felt a deep sense of dread loom over him. It had been weeks since his last bad panic attack and he was desperately trying to stave off another one.

He’d managed to keep the feeling at bay for most of that week, but as the days went on it became harder and harder to ignore. When he had distraction he found it easier to do but anytime he wasn’t in conversation or being stimulated by some other external source that was when the thoughts starting to creep back in and take him. The Saturday before he was meant to start back he couldn’t fight off the feeling any longer. He and Tony were working in the lab and during a lull of conversation all the thoughts he’d tried to push to the back of his head resurfaced at the forefront of his mind. He felt that familiar sickly feeling take over him, making his lungs start to contract involuntarily and he struggled to control his hands when the minor convulsions started. He was more frustrated than anything, why did this have to happen now? Everything was fine, he wasn’t in any danger. He knew he was being illogical but that didn’t do anything to stop the emotional side of his brain from taking over, at the most least opportune time possible.

When it started he wasn’t sure what to do. Usually he’d lock himself away in his room for a while but he was in the middle of calibrating something in the lab and he couldn’t just walk away. Besides, Tony would definitely know something was wrong if he just up and left. He considered lying and saying he had to go to the bathroom or that he had to grab something or he felt sick but every time he went to open his mouth with some excuse his voice betrayed him. All he could do was swallow thickly and try to do his breathing exercises. He’d been lucky up until this point, managing to regain control of his anxiety before it built up to that point of no return, but when the realisation hit him that he only had two days until he went back to school it all hit him at once and there was no stopping it; two days until he had to go back to the crowded hallways, two days until
he had to go back to completing asinine tasks that were beneath him, doing schoolwork that he
could’ve completed back in fourth grade that was so mind numbing he had to stop himself from
falling asleep half the time. But worst of all two days until he had to go back to the constant teasing
from his peers, most of which came from Flash. He had to face Flash after he knocked him out. Oh
god what had he done? He couldn’t do this.

“Hey Pete what do you think about-“ Tony swivelled in his chair to show Peter a small device he’d
been working on, looking at the object in his hand as he did so. When he looked up he saw his son
had gone pale white and was visibly shaking, his chest going up and down much quicker than it
should’ve been and his jaw was clenched so tightly he was surprised he hadn’t broken his teeth. He
was out of his chair and by Peter’s side within a split second. “Bubba what’s wrong?”

“I-I. I can’t.” Peter shook with each syllable and he was staring off into space. If he hadn’t have
verbally responded to Tony’s question the man would have assumed Peter didn’t know he was
there.

“Can’t what? Petey look at me, you can’t what?” Tony cupped Peter’s cheek with one hand trying
to gently turn the boy to look at him. Bruce has given him a brief run down on grounding
techniques and he knew that gently touching the boy’s face would hopefully help bring him back
down from wherever his head was at, to the present moment. It had always worked before but this
time Peter didn’t even blink. Instead his eyes filled with tears as he answered Tony once again.

“I can’t. I can’t do this.” He finally seemed to break his trance and his eyes snapped to meet Tony’s
as tears started running down his face. His chest started falling up and down even more rapidly and
rather than being tense his body seemed to give up supporting his weight at all and he fell limply
forward. The corners of his vision were starting to blacken as he was hyperventilating to the point
of oxygen deprivation.

“Peter. Peter look at me. You’ve got to breathe, buddy. You’re okay, everything’s okay. You’re
safe.” Tony was on the verge of having a panic attack himself. He didn’t understand, everything
had been completely fine. They’d been having a good day and all of a sudden Peter had just
snapped, he didn’t know what had caused it. That was more scary to him than the panic attack
itself, had he missed something? How could he help calm him down and comfort him if he didn’t
know the source of the problem in the first place? What changed in the boy’s head so suddenly to
go from being completely fine, laughing and joking to being on the verge of passing out? “I’m
right here, baby, you’re okay. It’s just you and me, you’re safe, Petey. I’m not gonna let anything
bad happen to you.”

Tony fought the urge to wrap Peter in a bear hug, which was his immediate reaction. He wanted to
show him that he was safe and make him feel protected but he also knew that crowding him would
probably only worsen his symptoms.

“I can’t go back- please don’t make me go back!” Peter cried. The harder it got to breathe the less
he could think or make sense of his surroundings. Everything in him was telling him to run, but he
didn’t know where. All he knew was he had to get away and that he wasn’t safe. He felt as though
something was clawing in his chest trying to get out- at that point all of his critical thinking went
out the window. He tried to rip himself away from Tony and run away but he made it two steps
before he started to fall. Luckily for him the man never actually let go of his wrists and he
narrowly avoided busting his head open on one of the metal countertops. He did however manage
to slide himself onto the floor, still trying to crawl away from the man who was trying to help him.

Tony had no choice but to wrap his arms around Peter then, even as the boy tried to throw him off.
He’d never seen Peter panic this bad in the year he’d known him, it was as though the boy didn’t
know where he was or even who Tony was. He was about to ask JARVIS to send for Bruce when Peter finally stopped struggling against him and collapsed, sobbing hysterically. He had no idea what was going on, it had all happened so suddenly and he was at a loss for what to do. Surely this wasn’t just a simple panic attack, it had to be something much worse. He’d seen plenty of soldiers with PTSD and other such ailments but he’d never seen someone turn so quickly with no discernible cause. “Peter what are you talking about? I’m not making you go anywhere- what’s wrong?”

“I can’t go back Dad please don’t make me.” Peter curled in on himself, hugging his knees to his chest. He stopped struggling to get away from him but it was still as though he was terrified of the man behind him. “I’m sorry, I’m trying to- I’m trying- I can’t breathe make it stop, please make it stop I want it to go away-“

“Hey, hey, hey. Shh, Petey it’s okay. You’re alright, sweetheart I’m right here. Stop fighting it just let it happen. It’s gonna pass I promise you, I’m not going anywhere.” Tony found himself with tears in his own eyes as he gently rocked back and forth. What in the actual fuck just happened?

It took around half an hour for Peter’s breathing to finally even out, by that time both of them were exhausted. Even though the hyperventilating has passed Peter was still shaking from all the adrenaline his body had pumped into his system. Tony didn’t stop hugging him the whole time and just sat there, brushing his curls out of his face and whispering words of comfort.

“I’m. I’m so- I’m so sorry I don’t- I don’t know where that came f-from.” At this point Peter was too emotionally worn out to cry but he wanted to. He was so embarrassed that he’d let that happen in front of Tony and he’d clearly traumatised the man. “They don’t- they’re not usually so bad. I-I can usually make ‘em st-stop. I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t apologise, you didn’t do anything wrong. But please, please tell me what you were talking about. Let me help, I don’t know what to do.” Tony croaked and he looked as though he was on the verge of tears himself. Peter had never seen Tony admit to something with such raw emotion. In fairness he’d never seen Tony express any emotion other than happiness or anger and frankly, seeing his dad so upset was scary to him. He was meant to be the one in control Peter had just pushed him to the brink of crying.

“No, no please don’t get upset. I’m sorry I-I didn’t mean to.” Now Peter could feel fresh tears starting to well up in his eyes, Tony looked so hopeless in that moment. How was Peter meant to help fix what he had just caused when he couldn’t even keep his own emotions in check. “It just kept building up and building up. I thought I was okay and then it was just like bam all once-“

“What’s going through your head Pete? What do you mean you don’t wanna go back?” Tony took a deep breath and regained some of his composure. It was unfair of him to let his emotions get the best of him when Peter so clearly needed him to be strong and support him. He continued to rhythmically rub the boy’s back, prompting him to stay present and aware of his surroundings in the hopes that he wouldn’t start to descend into another attack.

It took Peter a minute to find the word, but eventually he managed to struggle out the single syllable. His lower lip trembled. “School.”

“Oh, sweetie. Is that what this is all about? Come here, why didn’t you tell me, eh?” Tony pulled him into another tight hug. He made sure to keep his voice soft and unaccussing, not wanting to belittle or blame Peter for what he was feeling. He didn’t expect a response for his questions having already known the answers. “You don’t have to go back if you don’t want to you know.”

“Of course I do.” Peter pulled out of the hug to look at his father and wipe his nose.
“No you don’t. We both know you could sit all of your college entry exams right now with no problem. If you say the word I can have you pulled out of school like that.”

Much to Tony’s surprise Peter smiled and shook his head. Trust his dad to think he could solve everything using his Tony Stark status. “It’s not that simple.”

“But it is Pete-“

“No it’s not. It’s not school it’s just. Ugh, I don’t know- it’s me. I’ve just been- god I don’t know.” He started to lose control of his breathing again and he bent forward to put his head in his hands.

“Hey hey, no P, stay with me. You’re doing good, it’s okay. We’re just talking. You’re doing so good, buddy, keep going.”

Peter managed to confide in Tony about the recent issues he’d been having in regards to controlling his anxiety. How it had escalated rapidly over the past week and he felt as though he was losing all control and how he didn’t feel like he could tell anyone without sounding insane. He knew how illogical he was being but no matter how much he told himself he was being stupid he couldn’t stop fretting over how much he didn’t want to go back.

Tony sat and listened patiently, asking questions here and there to make sure he understood the full severity of what Peter was trying to tell him and that he wasn’t taking anything the wrong way. Peter admitted to having struggled for the past few months in general with managing his anxiety, but he’d been putting off doing anything to really handle the situation, instead ignoring it in hopes it would fix itself. Well, didn’t that sound familiar.

Once Peter was finished explaining, he felt a lot better. That was until Tony suggested going to talk to Bruce. “Why? I just told you everything why am I still-“

“Hey, it’s not like that. You’re not in trouble at all I promise. You’re never gonna get in trouble for something out of your control, remember? I just know how you feel about seeing any doctors other than Bruce, but I think now may be the time to get someone else involved.”

As much as Peter was reluctant to admit it, he knew the man was right. He clearly wasn’t able to deal with it on his own anymore, he just really didn’t want to go down the medication route. But he knew he had tried all of the coping skills he’d learned from both Bruce and the school councillor, as well as various sources online, and none of them seemed to be working. They talked a little more about it and Tony agreed to talk to Bruce for him, to save him having to go over the whole thing again.

“You really scared me bud. Please just tell me what’s going on before it gets to this point next time, okay?” Tony pulled Peter in for another hug, mostly to comfort himself. He hated knowing he couldn’t do much to help. His instincts as a father were making him want to go out and fight whoever was hurting his son, but how was he meant to do that when the demons were in his own head? He felt so guilty for not having realised how much Peter had gone down hill in such a small space of time, he’d truly thought everything was fine.

“I know, I’m sorry it’s just- it’s always when things are going good, you know? I don’t wanna ruin them cause I’m being stupid-“

“Enough. Not going down that road with you again. Lemme talk to Bruce for you okay? We’ll see what we can do for you.”

Tony wasted no time going up and having a conversation with the doctor, using security footage of
the boy’s episode to help demonstrate what he was explaining. Bruce was clearly just as concerned as Tony as he immediately started suggesting things that he thought could possibly help. They discussed a few different options and came to the conclusion that Peter ought to start on medication as well as go to a therapist to help learn some better coping techniques and strategies, in hopes that the combination of the two would benefit him the most. Peter was less than thrilled by this decision but he was willing to try anything at this point.

“Peter just remember this is nothing to be ashamed of okay? Mental health is just as important as physical health, especially in our line of work.” Bruce gave Peter a kind smile and continued to give him a general motivational speech that didn’t do much to make him feel any better. Though he appreciated it all the same. Tony set up an appointment with his own counsellor the very next day.

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The next few weeks went better for Peter than he had expected. The talking therapies and the medication had helped reduce his anxiety from being a constant issue to an occasional nuisance. He still struggled with certain things, such as excusing himself to the restroom or asking for help with things, but that base level of nerves that he had grown accustomed to had fallen dramatically. He found everything was a lot easier when he wasn’t in a constant state of panic and with the help of his councillor, he was starting to identify his triggers and find ways of working around them or managing the anxiety they caused. He still struggled with the fact that the logical side of his brain seemed to have matured a lot quicker than his emotions had, but he was coming to terms with that with the help of his therapist, who helped him realise that it wasn’t his fault, that it was just the way his body and mind worked. Everyone had noticed the change in him and things seemed to be looking up, especially in contrast to the pure unbridled terror he’d had in the days before his return to school.

Much to his surprise, Flash had actually left him alone, for the most part. If it wasn’t for the dirty looks and graffiti left on his locker, Peter would have forgotten about him all together. Though he couldn’t help but feel a severe pang of guilt every time he saw the boy’s black eyes and crooked nose. The punch seemed to have finally knocked some sense into him though, as Flash didn’t dare bring up or tease Ned about his accidental intoxication, not even once.

Even Marissa had finally stopped pestering him constantly. Those two things alone managed to make Peter’s days seem to go by much easier, leaving him with more energy and just generally brighter. Everyone had noticed the change in him. It was almost as though Peter had returned to his normal happy go lucky self that he’d been before his life became so utterly complicated. Tony couldn’t be any prouder with how quickly Peter had improved and he made sure to remind him every day.

The weather was starting to warm up a lot which posed an issue when you had a tendency to dehydrate yourself to avoid using the bathroom at school. That was one hurdle Peter had yet to overcome but hey, one step at a time right? Combined with the fact that his new medication made him incredibly thirsty a majority of the time, Peter resigned himself to the fact that it was going to be a long torturous summer. He had made it part of his routine to go to the convenience store everyday after school and chug a few bottles of whatever liquid took his fancy, to avoid passing out from dehydration (which actually happened once and he had to beg Ned not to call his dad, the other boy made him swear it wouldn’t happen again). On a particularly sweltering Wednesday Peter was making his way down the alley next to his usual store when a sudden wave of anxiety washed over him.

At first he brushed it off, using his new skills in CBT to rationalise his thinking. But when he felt
the hairs on the back of his neck start to tingle and he saw two shadows appear on the ground in front of him, he stopped walking. His combat training kicked in before he had a time to react, as soon as he felt a hand on his shoulder he pivoted on his heel wrapping his own arm around the assailants and twisting it naturally until it’s owner fell to their knees before him. He then struck them in the face with his knee and used their chest as a springboard to launch himself at the other attacker. He punched them in the face and partially scaled the wall to the left of him to give him more momentum as he kicked them to the ground as well. Just as the other masked figure went to stand up and Peter readied himself to deliver another hit he heard two loud bangs, all of this happening within the space of about fifteen seconds.

The two people suddenly fell motionless to the floor and before Peter had a second to process what had just happened he heard a familiar gruff voice call from behind him.

“Get in the car kid!” He turned to see Happy at the other end of the alleyway with his gun still drawn.

“You- you just- what the fuck?! You just killed-“

“No I didn’t I shot them. Now get in the car.”

Peter was in utter shock. “No way I’m not going anywhere with you, you psycho!”

“What? They just tried to kill you but I’m the- you know what nevermind, Peter we don’t have time for this just get in the fucking car now!”

He didn’t move a muscle. He’d just witnessed Happy shoot two people and now the man actually expected him to get into a car with him? While he still had his gun out no less? His mind was racing and he had no idea what was going on. He’d assumed he’d just been the almost victim of a run of the mill mugging, which wasn’t an uncommon occurrence in the area he’d grown up on. It wasn’t until Happy came forward and lifted one of the unconscious bodies arms that he realised this wasn’t any sort of unfortunate coincidence. The agent pulled their sleeve down to reveal a tattoo of a symbol that Peter didn’t recognise.

“See? Now come on.” Happy grabbed the frozen boy’s arm and dragged him to the car, stuffing him in the passenger seat before speeding off.

“Should- shouldn’t we call an ambulance or something? They were- there was a lotta blood.” Peter spoke in a quiet voice staring straight ahead of him.

“Are you serious? Kid they were trying to kill you and you’re worried about them?” Happy said in disbelief. He shook his head. “They’ll be fine. We need to ask them some questions anyway.”

“Happy what’s going on..?” Peter asked in the same quiet voice that was starting to crack, the gravity of the situation starting to set in. “Who were those people?”

“The less you know the safer you are. Don’t ask questions just listen to what you’re told, got it? I’m gonna hand you over to Tony.”

“You’re speeding.” Was all Peter could think to say. His mind was going a mile a minute trying to absorb all of the little information he could gather about what was going on. He could feel the familiar spasms in his chest that meant a panic attack was brewing and he was trying desperately not to let that happen in front of the man he’d just witnessed possibly kill too people.

The man didn’t dignify Peter’s observation with a response and continued to make a fifteen minute journey in under five, weaving dangerously in and out of both normal and oncoming traffic. As
soon as they pulled up outside the tower Peter was met by both Tony and Nat who were piling bags into a run down ford galaxy that he’d never seen before. He stumbled out of the car shakily, his dad rushing over to him.

“Pete, are you alright? Look at me, you okay, you hurt?” The man said hurriedly, checking Peter all over before hugging him for a split second then pushing him towards the beaten up car.

“N-no, I’m fine. What’s going on?” He asked wide eyed as he clambered into the backseat. Everything was moving far too quickly for him, as though he was stuck in slow motion whilst everyone else was going at high speed.

“I’ll explain on the way but we’ve got to get going. Put your seatbelt on.” Tony called back to him, buckling himself up in the driver’s seat. Natasha joined him getting into the passenger seat, not saying a word. The pulled out of the driveway not two seconds later with Tony driving no less erratically than Happy, leaving Peter in the back with a million questions and a moderate case of whiplash.
The silence broke out once again, even tenser than it had been before. Peter couldn’t help but start to panic once again as his emotions towards their current predicament starting to flood into him all at once. The numbness he’d been experiencing due to shock had begun to fade letting all the fear and anxiety start flowing into him freely. He tried his best to calm himself, distracting himself by playing stupid games on his phone but it soon became obvious to the two adults in the front of the car that he was losing the battle. When his breathing started becoming shaky Tony spoke once again, in a much calmer voice.

“P, it’s okay. Everything’s gonna be okay, I’m sorry for snapping at you.”

“It’s alright.” Peter swallowed quickly. He was starting to feel not only the panic washing over him
but the effects of having drunk nothing but a singular bottle of water all day.

“It’s not bud, I shouldn’t be taking this out on you. It’s not your fault we’re in this mess, I should’ve done more to keep you safe.” Tony said guiltily.

“Tony it’s not your fault either. Blaming yourself isn’t gonna do anything now anyway, so nip that shit in the bud. Both of you.” Nat said flatly. Tony knew she was right and couldn’t help but crack a smile at how blunt his friend was, especially at a time like that. Though it didn’t surprise him, the first time he’d had a near fatal injury around her, her response had been “suck it up buttercup” as she was helping him of course. Her words didn’t do much to curb his guilt but he knew from the start that something like this was inevitable and he had prepared for it in advance. Someone was bound to find out about Peter sooner or later. He was just glad that Happy had caught up with him when he did. He looked back in the rear view mirror once again to see his son looked visibly pale and sweaty, more so than if he was just falling victim to an anxiety attack.

“Underoos you okay?”

“Yeah.” Peter croaked unconvincingly causing Natasha to turn around in her seat.

“You gonna hurl?” She asked bluntly though concern was evident in her voice too as she shoved a plastic back under his nose. “If so do it in here.”

He allowed himself to chuckle a bit at that as he pushed her hand away. “I’m not but thanks anyway.”

“Then what’s wrong? You’re grey.”

“I’m just a little hot.” He shrugged, not lying completely. He just wasn’t in the mood to be fussed at should he admit to barely drinking all day, not on top of everything else. Luckily for him Tony suggested something that would solve both of his problems.

“Well according to my intel we should be out of the woods enough soon for us to stop somewhere. Do you need to use the bathroom?” He made a point of looking back at Peter when he asked that last question, knowing his son was unlikely to admit to needing to go in front of Natasha. He’d always been particularly shy around the redhead and he couldn’t say he blamed him, she was rather intimidating.

“No I’m good.” Peter answered truthfully much to both his and Tony’s dismay. He hadn’t been to the bathroom since lunch and he usually would’ve wet himself twice by now had he gone that long without a bathroom break any other time. But he was genuine in his answer which was slightly concerning to him, though he found it to be very convenient considering their current situation. He would not have liked to have a full bladder whilst they were on the run.

“Okay, well, just lemme know if you do.” Tony dropped the subject, assuming the teen had used to bathroom before he left school though he had to admit he was still surprised he didn’t need to go, given the fact he knew how the kid was when he was anxious. “There’s some water and snacks in one of the bags back there in case you get hungry.”

With that Peter wasted no time reaching into the trunk to retrieve a case of water bottles, offering one to each of his chaperones before downing almost a whole one without taking a breath. He sighed dramatically, wiping his mouth and screwing the cap back on before noticing the amused/worried looks he was receiving from the front of the car. He blushed and chuckled sheepishly.
“Thirsty?” Nat laughed.

“Okay, note to self. Let the kid know where the snacks are as soon as we get in the car.” Tony shook his head.

By the time they stopped at a gas station that water had worked its way into Peter’s system and it wanted out again. He got out of the car quickly to use the facilities, Tony following closely behind. Of course, the door was locked and Peter had to wait for Nat to run inside and get the key. He hopped from foot to foot the urge intensifying quicker than he thought possible. He gave Tony a filthy look when he chuckled at him.

“It’s not my fault you chugged your water.” He held his hands up defensively.

Nat returned with the key which Peter snatched eagerly, uttering a quick but grateful thank you before sprinting inside. His relief was short lived however, as soon as he went to empty his bladder he immediately knew something was wrong. Not only did he barely have to go at all despite his urgency, it hurt. Like, really hurt. He felt as though he was peeing gasoline, which made him hiss under his breath in pain.

“You alright?” Tony called, having entered the bathroom to use it himself. The noise Peter made had him worried that maybe Nat hadn’t been quick enough retrieving the key.

“Yeah.” Peter called back, not sounding very convinced himself. Even though he’d finished going he still felt as though he needed to pee. He waited for a minute but nothing came out and the feeling didn’t dissipate either. He figured he was just dehydrated and his bladder wasn’t happy about the concentration of his urine. Hoping the feeling would subside soon he exited the stall to wash his hands. Tony was standing leaning against the wall eying him suspiciously.

“You alright, bubs?” Peter nodded, but he was flushed and looked upset. “Did you get sick?”

“No, I’m fine.” Peter flashed him a smile that disappeared too quickly for Tony to believe it was genuine. Luckily for him the man chalked it up to the stressful day they were having.

“I know this afternoon has been a complete clusterfuck.” Wow, Dad great pep talk about a literal life or death situation. “Come on, before we lose head way.”

Once they were back on the road Peter became hyper aware of the pain in his lower stomach, now that it had the added pressure from him being bent at the waist. He shifted uncomfortably and sighed. He was hesitant to drink anymore water, not wanting to have to stop again any time soon, but he knew he should try and flush his system out if he wanted to avoid peeing three drops of battery acid the next time went.

“How long till we get to wherever?”

“Bout six hours.”

“Seriously?!”

“No Peter. In fact it was an hour in the other direction I just figured you’d enjoy the scenic route.” Tony said sarcastically. He was tired and stressed and he wasn’t in the mood to play ‘Are we there yet?’ with a fifteen year old. The teenager in question three himself back in his seat and crossed his arms. “Play on your phone or something.”

“Do you want me to throw up?” Peter sneered, looking grumpily out of the window.
“Don’t really see how that’s relevant to what I just said but you do you, pal.”

“You’ve never had that?” Nat turned to the other man. “When you’re reading or on your phone or something?”

“I have no idea what you two are talking about.”

“No, because Mr. RichKid road in smooth ass cars his whole life.” Peter quipped snarkily, Tony’s comments combined with the sting in his bladder worsening his already bad mood.

“Alright, put a sock in it.” Tony said warningly. He didn’t understand why Peter was in such a snarky mood with him specifically. Though he knew the boy was probably freaked out by the whole being hunted and kidnapped for political gain thing, he’d half expected Peter to be excited like he usually was whenever he was put in a dangerous situation, especially for the first time. He was stressed up to the eyeballs himself, having been in a state of panic ever since Happy told him the MV members had found Peter. He really wasn’t in the mood for said child to start having an attitude with him.

The awkward silence resumed and Peter found himself deeply regretting making his dad mad at him. He now had zero distraction from the uncomfortable ache in his belly that was only getting worse as time went on. He tried to occupy himself by looking out of the window but it didn’t work nearly as well as it had when they were out in space, he had no interest in staring at the endless stretch of trees they were currently driving past.

The pain was bearable for a while, but without warning his bladder started to contract, telling him he had to get to a bathroom now. He didn’t even feel like his bladder was full this time but his body was screaming at him that he was about to wet his pants. He crossed his legs tightly and bit back the urge to whine, willing his muscles to clench tight despite their protests. The burning sensation came back full force as his bladder fought against him and tried to forcefully release what little contents it had into his underwear. When the wave passed after a few seconds, he wasn’t so sure that his bladder was empty anymore. Now it felt as though it had filled completely and he was bursting. He knew that wasn’t possible, but maybe the pain had distracted him too much for him to notice his bladder filling? Maybe he did really need to go now? It sure felt like he did.

“Uhm..Tony?” He felt his face blush crimson, but he had no other choice. Either he spoke up or he risked wetting himself in the back of the car without warning.

“What’s up?” Tony peered back at him, noticing the boy’s clenched legs. Surely he didn’t have to go that badly, they’d only stopped twenty minutes ago.

“Uh, n-nothing.” The look Tony gave him made Peter back up automatically. He regretted saying anything instantly. There was no way he could voice his need with a lady in the car, especially not when his dad was in such a bad mood.

“Do you need me to stop?” Tony sighed gently, realising he had scared the boy off with his skepticism. Peter had downed that water fast after all he shouldn’t have been so quick to judge, he knew better than to do that when his son was involved.

“N-no, m’fine.” The boy mumbled, starting to gnaw nervously on his thumb. “Sorry.”

Tony sighed again but didn’t reply. He hated when Peter dropped back into his old ways, apologising for everything despite having done nothing wrong. It reminded him of the days where Peter was too scared to ask for anything, a habit they’d only just recently broken. Not to mention Peter going sarcastic and moody to quiet and apologetic in the space of minutes was giving him
emotional whiplash. He slipped out his phone and tapped a couple buttons, letting the guys back home know they were taking a minor detour, so they didn’t think they’d been hijacked. They changed course slightly, allowing Tony to circle back and pull in to a small diner they’d just passed.

“Come on kid.” He got out of the car expecting Peter to jump out the second he put the car in park. But he didn’t, he stayed sitting, not moving an inch. Tony walked back around and opened Peter’s door for him but he still didn’t budge. “You okay-“

“Gimme a minute.” Peter hissed as he leant forward. His whole body stiffened and he was holding his breath. Tony waited, understanding that Peter needed a minute to regain his composure before he could walk, lest his bladder betray him. Once he’d managed to gain back enough control Peter was out of the car and inside the restaurant before Tony had a chance to blink.

“Can you wait up?!” Had the boy forgotten he had a hit out on him? Clearly he was too desperate to care, maybe Tony ought to monitor Peter’s fluid intake more closely for the remainder of the journey.

Unbeknownst to Tony, intake restrictions were the very cause of Peter’s problem. The boy cursed himself for not having drank another bottle of water when he got back in the car, the burning sensation was excruciating.

An angry looking waiter caught Peter as he made a beeline for the restroom. “Hey kid bathrooms for paying customers-“

“I’m sorry- I’m really sorry, it’s an emergency!” Peter darted around the burly man who tried to block his path and continued running.

Tony came in just in time to see the altercation and sighed in frustration. Great, now their location was going to be spread all over twitter once the patrons of the diner realised Tony Stark was with the teenager that almost wiped out their waiter. Time to use his charm. “Sorry about that sir, he’s with me. Kids, you know- once they gotta go, they gotta go and all that.”

“Oh my god you’re-“

“Yep.” He sighed again before forcefully giving his signature smile.

Inside the bathroom Peter was also having an awful time. Once again emptying his bladder gave him no relief and all he wanted to do was cry. He stayed in there for upwards of five minutes before Tony managed to get away from the small crowd that had formed around him (he managed to persuade them not to post anything about them being their in exchange for a few photos and autographs). “Peter what are you doing?”

“What do you think I’m doing- I’m using the bathroom!” Peter snapped, the pain in his tummy making him even more volatile than he had been.

“I thought you had to pee?” Tony snapped back.

“Well I’m sorry I didn’t realise I had a fucking time limit!” Peter yelled, both out of anger and a contraction hit him as he spoke. He bent in half again as another drop of burning urine was forced out of him.

“Don’t swear at me Parker I am not in the mood!” Tony yelled back in a low tone that drove a shiver down Peter’s spine. “Hurry up, or would you rather we have a run in with the people who are trying to catch you? Do you realise how much danger you put yourself in running through a
“Shut up.” Peter grumbled as he flushed the toilet and shuffled out of the stall to wash his hands. He sniffled quietly, now on the verge of crying. The frustration from his bladder paining him and Tony now using his last name in place of his usual terms of address, pushing his already fragile emotions to the brink. He knew the man was right and he’d been stupid to act so rashly but was Tony not aware that he had been seconds off wetting himself? Could he not cut him just a little slack?

“Excuse me? What did you just say?” Tony looked furiously at him. Did he hear correctly or had he just entered the fucking twilight zone where Peter suddenly thought it was okay to talk to him like that?

“Nothing.”

“No come on, you wanna play the big man? You go ahead- go out there and take care of yourself if you’re so tough! Why am I wasting my time trying to protect someone who’s so clearly got everything figured out-”

“Alright! I’m sorry okay!” Peter stormed past him and Tony didn’t see him wipe the tears off of his face. “Just leave it, I’m sorry.”

The man didn’t say another word (though he really really wanted to he knew better than to make a scene- unlike some people), both of them trailing back to the car and climbing back in silently. Nat knew better than to ask what had happened and switched on the radio as soon as they were back on the road to avoid their evident argument from continuing. That and the silence, that was so heavy you could cut it with a knife, was driving her insane.

Eventually Tony was able to calm himself down enough to engage her in conversation, though he was still furious with the stroppy teenager in the backseat. What was with the attitude on him today? He hadn’t done anything to deserve that, he understood that the boy was stressed as well but clearly he wasn’t grasping the gravity of the situation they were in if he was willing to go running through a room of people, causing a massive scene only to haul himself up in a vulnerable area ALONE for five minutes. He had no patience for his rudeness, he wasn’t about to let Peter jeopardise all of them just because he wanted to play the part of bratty teenager, though he was well suited to the role. He decided to make a concerted effort to ignore Peter for the rest of the journey, or at least until he decided to stop being, in his eyes, a little asshole.

They got out onto a main highway, back on course for the safehouse they were going to. This was the most dangerous part of their journey due to the fact they were left completely open and it was a major road, meaning lots of cars which in turn meant lots of possible enemies lurking in said cars. Conversation was a flowing freely between the two adults by that point, Peter still sitting silently in the back. As much as it pained Tony to pretend he didn’t see the boy furiously wiping tears off of his face, he knew he was in too bad a mood to be of any comfort to him in that moment. If he tried and was met with resistance he’d undoubtedly make the situation much worse.

Peter didn’t care that Tony wasn’t talking to him as he had no interest in talking to the man anyway. As ashamed of his own actions as he was he was still furious at the way the man had yelled at him for taking too long in the bathroom. Had Tony stopped for a minute to check if he was okay before assuming Peter was just trying to avoid the car journey, maybe he would have told his dad what was really going on. He doubted that he would have, but he wasn’t even given the chance. He was content to stare out of the window and try and drown out the screaming from his bladder. It wasn’t long until it was begging for release again but there was no way he was about to ask his dad to stop after all of that.
He desperately wanted to down another bottle of water, anything to get the incessant burn to go away, but he couldn’t. He didn’t want to risk losing control of himself when his bladder was actually full. He groaned and curled into a ball in his seat, ignoring the look Tony gave him as he did so.

“There’s a blanket in the back of you wanted to lay down for a while, Pete.” Natasha said to him kindly, turning around in her seat to look at him. She’d never seen the boy look so uncomfortable and she had a niggling fear that she was about to see him vomit, something she never wanted to witness again in her life. The last time had been far to emotionally scarring and it left her on edge.

“I’m okay, thank you though.” He said, his voice audibly tight. She smiled at him and turned back around to face the front of the car, but not before she saw him grimace in pain. She shot a pointed look at Tony, telling him he had to address the issue before she did.

“Pete, what’s wrong?” Tony said, his tone just bearing on the harsh side.

“Nothing.” Peter said quickly with the same bite in his voice that he’d had in the diner.

“I get it, you’re mad at me. But can we stop with the amateur dramatics and tell me what’s wrong? I know you don’t have to pee again so what is it?”

“You think I’m doing this to try and get your attention?” Peter’s voice dropped to just barely above a whisper and he sounded pissed. “Don’t talk to me.”

“Okay, have it your way.” Tony shrugged ignoring the look he received off of his female friend. He wasn’t about to show Peter that he was bothered by what he’d said, if the kid wanted to show out he’d let him. It would only come back to bite him on the ass later and he was not about to pander to him if he was gonna keep up with the attitude. He went back to his earlier assumption that Peter was simply rebelling against having to spend a further five boring hours in the car.

Peter was stunned by what the man had just accused him of and he was fighting the urge to kick the back of his seat. How dare he even suggest that Peter was pretending to be in pain for attention? When had he ever done anything for attention like that? It was usually the last thing he wanted- he’d always gone out of his way to hide his problems and Tony was gonna turn round and say that to him? Fuck Tony. And another thing- how exactly did he know that Peter didn’t need to pee again? Since when was he attached to his nervous system? Maybe if the man asked him nicely instead of acting like a know-it-all prick he would’ve been able to tell him that he was in physical pain. In fact he hoped he did piss on his seats maybe that would show him.

The other person currently in the car with the two furious, stubborn Stark boys was Nat and she had absolutely no idea what she was meant to do. Clearly they were both being too childish to actually do anything constructive or even have a productive conversation but she didn’t want to overstep any boundaries by calling either one of them out on it. That being said she could tell that Peter wasn’t doing anything to get anyone’s attention, he was clearly making an effort not to draw focus to whatever was going on with him and frankly she found the child’s change in demeanor extremely worrying. Had he been hurt during the fight before Happy could get to him and they just hadn’t noticed? He had a tendency to hide such important things from them and Tony knew this, so why wasn’t the man backing down already? She sat in awkward silence for the next few minutes trying to find the right words to say to help resolve the situation but Peter broke the quiet for her.

“Tony pull over.”

“Why?” The asked calmly, with no urgency in his voice whatsoever. He didn’t even take his eyes off of the road.
“Please.” Peter begged, his voice breaking.

“That’s not a reason. Besides, have you cared to look out of the window? On your right you’ll see the bollards lining the road-“

“Tony don’t be a dick.” Nat snapped, not liking the teasing tone she was hearing. Did he not hear the way Peter’s voice cracked or was he just too caught up in his own anger to notice? She turned around to look at Peter whose face was scarlet at this point and had very clearly been crying. He was bent over double clutching his stomach in wincing in pain. “Stop the car.”

Finally Tony looked in the back of the car and saw what had Natasha sounding so deadly serious. “Fuck.”

“Dad, please it hurts I can’t hold it.” Peter whimpered miserably, all embarrassment going out the window. All he could focus on was the waves of pain coursing through him and the screaming ache of his bladder. He dug both hands in his crotch and groaned, now that he’d voiced his need properly he didn’t waste his energy trying to remain discreet. His entire lower stomach was pounding.

“Hold on.” Despite the metal fencing Tony pulled over and stuck his hazard lights on, jumping out of the car and running to Peter’s door to help him get out. “What’s wrong what hurts?!”

“Don’t touch me!” Peter practically screamed and pulled away from him running straight into the woods, unzipping his pants as he went. Not that there was any point, he’d already steadily started leaking as soon as he got out of the car.

“Peter! Fuck- Nat can you-“

“I got it, go.” Nat assured him, cocking her gun to show that she had them covered.

Tony ran into the woods straight after him, panicking when he lost sight of the boy.

“Peter! Peter don’t do this it’s not safe you could get hurt-“

“You’re the only one who’s hurt me you insensitive prick!” Tony breathed a sigh of relief when he heard that infuriated cry beside him. “Still doing this for attention am I?!“

Tony turned to Peter seeing the boy gesture to his pants that were now wet down to the knee on one side. “Peter I’m-“

“Save it, actually fucking save it Tony, I don’t wanna hear shit from you.” Despite how angry Peter sounded his body was still shaking as sobs wrecked through him. Tony couldn’t believe how much his lapse in judgement had backfired. What was wrong with him? How the fuck hadn’t he noticed that Peter was being serious? Or had he noticed and he was too busy trying to prove a point? Whatever the reasoning behind it, he had royally fucked up.

“Peter. Listen to me-“

“Why? You didn’t listen to me.” Peter snapped taking a step back when Tony moved towards him.

“I know. I know. I should’ve listened. I’m sorry.” Tony held his hands up calmly, showing Peter that he was backing down. “I was a complete idiot-“

“Try liar. What happened to never getting mad at me for saying I needed something or never stopping me from going to the bathroom?”
“Pete, you went half an hour ago I seriously didn’t think you needed to again, I thought you were sick of being in the car.” Tony had to defend himself against that last one. He hadn’t intentionally barred the child from going, he genuinely thought he didn’t need to. He knew he should’ve known better than to think that but what else was he supposed to think? Well clearly you were meant to believe your son, Anthony, he’s got the wet jeans to prove it.

“I’m sick of being around you!” Peter lashed out angrily and Tony couldn’t find it in him to dish out anger back. He’d be angry too if he was in Peter’s position. “You’ve been mad at me all day I didn’t even do anything wrong! Yeah, so what I yelled at you cause you were yelling at me for going to the fucking bathroom!”

“I don’t blame you. You have every right to be mad, but P what’s going on? You said it hurt—“

“Like you care. If you cared you would’ve given me a chance to tell you back at the Diner, you’re just mad I proved you wrong. If you think I’m gonna tell you now you really are an idiot.” With that Peter ended the conversation and turned to walk back to the car, leaving Tony to follow silently behind him. When they got back the vehicle Nat was sitting in the driver’s seat and Tony didn’t question it. He just got into the passengers seat whilst Peter retrieved his bag from the back of the car and proceeded to change into clean clothes, standing out of view of passing cars.

“I called Steve, said we’re gonna stop at a motel for the night. He didn’t question it he’s just set us on route for a guarded one but we’ve still gotta take shifts to watch out for anything.” Nat told the man quietly.

“Yeah.” Was all Tony said.

They say for another moment before Nat could no longer contain herself. “So, Dad huh?”

“After what I just did I think my Dad card may have been revoked.”
Against his better judgement Tony elected to leave Peter alone for the remainder of their now short journey. It was obvious that he was still in a lot of pain but Tony couldn’t bring himself to ask him about it again so soon in fear of making the boy even more upset, if that was even possible at this point. When they pulled into the parking lot of the dingy motel Nat was the one who jumped out of the car to get them a room leaving the two males in the car alone.

“Pete?”

“Yeah?”

“Well he answered you, Tony, that’s a start’.

“I don’t expect you to forgive me, so don’t feel like you have to. I know you probably weren’t planning on doing that anytime soon-”

“Correct.”

“But I know you. I know what you’re like. You’re always too quick to forgive especially with me because you’re scared something bad will happen if you don’t. But you’re allowed to be upset with me okay? I fucked up, I didn’t listen to you and I’m sorry.”

Peter sat silently for a second, considering what he wanted to say. Everything in him wanted to say ‘apology accepted’ and forget about the whole thing so he could start pouring his heart out to his dad, tell him what was wrong so the man could help him feel better. But he knew he couldn’t do that and he was still angry. Tony was right, Peter had every reason to be upset, he hadn’t done anything wrong. Maybe it was time Peter realised that he was allowed to show other people they had hurt him and maybe it was time for Tony to realise he didn’t have to try and one up everyone all the time; that and to stop being so stubborn. He was the adult, it was time he started acting like it, especially if he wanted to be a dad. But Peter didn’t like being angry for too long and he knew that Tony hadn’t meant to hurt his feelings. It’s not the man’s fault he’s so sensitive.

“Okay.” Peter said simply, deliberately keeping his tone neutral.

“Okay?” Tony repeated apprehensively. He wasn’t exactly sure to what part Peter was agreeing to and god forbid he start jumping to conclusions for a second time that day.

“Okay. I accept your apology and I do forgive you- But, don’t think I’m just gonna forget about
this, even though I wanna I just can’t. You realise you just undid a bunch of hard work we both put in right?”

“I know.” Tony nodded guiltily. Months of finally getting Peter comfortable enough to admit to needing the bathroom without worrying only to make all the boys fears on the matter realised, in front of Nat no less.

“I’m not gonna hold a grudge, ‘cause right now you’re doing the whole self deprecation thing you always yell at me about and frankly it doesn’t suit you, dad.” Peter smiled for the first time in hours which in turn made Tony feel a lot better than any words the boy could say. “You’re lucky I’m such a nice person. Just remember, you’re still a dick though, okay?”

“Okay. Now watch your mouth.” Tony chuckled, still in shock at how quickly the boy was recovering. “Now we’ve gotten that part out of the way can you tell me what hurts?”

Peter hesitated. Both for the reason he’d just given Tony about the progress they’d made together reverting and the fact that he knew his pain was self induced, and he didn’t want another argument so soon. On the other hand he was still in enough pain to make him want to scream, his bladder having convinced itself it was full again already. “I just...well..”

“P, it’s okay. I’m not gonna be mad. Did you..do something to yourself?”

Peter wasn’t really sure what the man meant by that question but they way he had asked him made him feel as though it was something that was meant to be embarrassing to them both. “No I- well kinda. Uhm, I didn’t go when we stopped.”

The lie came to him quickly, that way he didn’t have to completely tell the truth about why his bladder was hurting but he could at least explain to the man what part of his body was ailing him; which in turn made him more hopeful that Tony would be able to suggest something that would ease the pain, or at the very least be more understanding.

“What? Why not?” Tony’s brows furrowed. That would’ve meant Peter had been holding it for over an hour and given the boys usual thirty to forty-five minute maximum holding capacity that sounded more than unhealthy. Especially given the fact he’d had the opportunity to but for some reason didn’t go.

“Uhh.” Shit, Peter hadn’t thought that far ahead. Think of something quick or he’s gonna call you out Peter, you know you’re a terrible liar why didn’t you just tell the truth- “They were dirty.”

Tony nodded making Peter breathe a silent sigh of relief that he hadn’t been caught out. Tony was used to Peter being fussy when it came to the cleanliness of certain public spaces, especially bathrooms. He had never been too bad but there had been a few occasions where Peter had outright refused to step foot inside the cubicle. He’d also experienced a couple times where Peter’s social anxiety had gotten the best of him and he’d experienced paraurises so bad that they had to leave and find another place for the boy to go before they had to go all the way home with a distraught, sopping wet teenager on their hands. So the excuse came to no surprise to Tony, in fact it made him feel even more guilty about having rushed Peter out of the restroom. It explained his attitude too; he couldn’t imagine if he had a full bladder that he was physically unable to release mere inches away from a perfectly functional toilet he wouldn’t be in the best mood either, let alone the idea of his Father coming in to yell at him halfway through the ordeal. “Pete I’m so sorry. No wonder you didn’t tell me.”

Peter felt a stab of guilt in his own chest. Yes, Tony should feel bad about how he’d entered the bathroom but he saw as the man connected the dots in his head about how Peter must’ve been
bursting the entire time when that simply wasn’t the case. Not that the truth was any better really, he had still felt as though he was nursing a full bladder for the duration of their journey, in fact he still felt as though he was now. Oh well, at least Peter was getting sympathy out of him and not more criticism.

Before they could continue their conversation Nat came out of the motel’s office to beckon them towards their room. Peter helped grab the bags despite feeling as though he was about to wet himself once again.

“Pete, go on, we’ve got them.” Tony shook his head when he saw Peter bobbing up and down out of the corner of his eye. He wasn’t about to allow his son to embarrass or hurt himself again so soon, especially now he was aware enough to prevent it. Peter rushed ahead of them, making sure he was still in their line of sight and slammed himself inside the bathroom, locking the door.

“He’s talking to you?” Nat laughed. “You’re lucky.”

“Tell me about it.” Tony sighed. “He’s still pissed though.”

“Can’t say I blame him-“

“Don’t start, I know okay? You don’t have to make me feel any worse.”

“I’m not your mother or Steve, I know I don’t need to tell you what you did wrong.” She shrugged, though she still didn’t seem particularly impressed with him.

They took their bags into the small room that had two double beds and a busted TV. It was a stereotypical shady motel room, with aged wallpaper, stained carpets and curtains that looked as though they’d come straight out of the nineteen forties. The contrasting yellowed, floral patterns that were on every item of furniture were enough to give Tony a headache and the room was thick with the scent of cigarettes and dust.

“Steve couldn’t have found something a little less Bates Motel?” Tony sighed and threw himself down on one of the beds.

“Sorry, ‘Mr. RichKid’.” Nat laughed, referencing the name Peter had spat at Tony in anger.

“You’re hilarious.” Tony said dryly. “What did you wanna do about the sleeping situation?”

“I don’t care, but I’m assuming the teenage boy isn’t going to want to share a bed with me.”

“Yeah, I’ll let him decide.” Speaking of Peter he ought to have been out of the bathroom by now, though Tony didn’t dare knock and rush him again. He was concerned that he’d done some damage to himself from holding it too long. But knowing how quick Peter’s body recovered from trauma he didn’t allow himself to worry too much. Of course the boy could just be taking his time to avoid having to face him again or have at least a small moment of solitude. “But if I’m bunking with you, you better not take all the blankets again.”

Unfortunately that wasn’t the case, Peter was once again hunched over the toilet trying to force his bladder to empty itself, but nothing was coming out. He tried his best not to make any noise as not to alert the adults to what was happening through the very thin walls, but he couldn’t help but let a few strangled groans out here and there. He was embarrassed enough about what Nat had witnessed earlier, despite knowing that she was on his side about the whole matter. It was still mortifying knowing that Black Widow had practically seen him, a full grown teenager, piss himself. He had to push the thought out of his head before he made himself throw up.
Tony only managed to leave Peter alone for another ten minutes before he had to knock on the door. The quiet coming from the bathroom made him worry that the kid had escaped out of the window or something else equally dramatic. He wouldn’t put it past him. Mostly he just wanted to know that he was okay after all, the day had been as he’d so eloquently put it ‘a clusterfuck’. He ignore the warning look that Natasha gave him and rapped on the door three times. “P, you alright?”

“Yeah.” Came a quiet voice.

“You sure? You still hurtin’?” He knew better than to comment on the amount of time Peter was taking lest he cause another explosive argument. He also didn’t want to be too invasive considering they were in the company of a third party.

“No, I’m fine.”

“Okay..” Tony wasn’t convinced but he was still cautious about upsetting the boy. He backed away from the door and continued setting up the telecommunication system they had to make contact with Steve and their other team members, along with Nat.

“Tony give him some space.” Nat said gently, though sharing his concerns.

“He said his bladder hurt earlier, I’m just worried.”

“I know, but he’s not gonna wanna talk to you about it right now. Let’s be honest he’s not gonna say anything while I’m in the room anyway, even if he wasn’t mad at you. Just wait until I go out to get us some dinner.”

Tony nodded in agreement. It was already gone seven o’clock by the time they arrived, though to him it felt much later. It wasn’t long after they set up their compact computers that Peter silently slipped out of the bathroom looking no more comfortable than when he went in, and sat cross legged on the floor by one of the beds. Nat brushed past him to ruffle his hair as she picked up the car keys.

“Sup, curly. Any requests for dinner?”

“I don’t care, m’not all that hungry.” Peter said quietly, already back to playing on his phone.

“Ugh, and people say women can never decide what they want to eat, Tony wasn’t any help either. Well I’ll hunt us down something edibles. I’ll see you two in a minute.” She laughed as she left the door, locking it behind her. The uncomfortable silence that plagued the car filled the room once again as Peter deliberately avoided eye contact with the man standing feet away from him.

“You sure you’re alright, P?” Tony asked quietly, in as gentle a voice as he could muster. “I know you don’t wanna talk to me about it but-“

“You’re right. I don’t. I already told you I’m fine so quit asking me.” Peter snapped, that same harsh voice Tony had heard earlier.

“Okay, okay. I’m sorry.” Tony held his hands up sighing, backing down immediately. He couldn’t afford to have Peter angry at him again so soon not after he’d already pushed his luck having the kid half forgive him in the car. He knew something was wrong, he wanted to drag it out of him but Peter wasn’t gonna let that happen so easily. If he couldn’t get Peter to open up about what was going on he could at least try and comfort him in some way, it was clear that they were both desperate for a distraction. “Wanna see if we can get this old thing to work?”
Peter looked up to see Tony gesturing the the old TV. He wanted to snap saying no, and continue to sulk like the grumpy teenager he was but his kind nature got the best of him. Being mean to Tony wasn’t going to stop his tummy from hurting and he didn’t want to be rude on purpose, especially since the man had finally dropped the subject and was trying to make up. Besides he couldn’t use his phone forever, the battery was already on twenty percent. He forced himself to stand despite the protest he revived from his lower belly. “You think it’s even got any insides left?”

They made there way over and started pulling apart the boxy television, happy to find out that it still had most of its parts. They fiddled around with it and after a few minutes they managed to get the screen to flickers. As they were tuning it between channels Peter froze and crossed his legs, his face twisting into a grimace.

“Are you-“

“I’ll be right back.”

Tony sighed gently as Peter ran back into the bathroom and barricaded himself inside. Even if Peter had hurt his bladder from waiting too long, surely this was excessive? Peter’s accelerated healing should’ve repaired the minor damage fifteen extra minutes would have done by that point, so what else was the teenager hiding? A million possibilities were runny through his head, each one more unpleasant than the last but what could he do? There was no way Peter was in any mood to talk to him about it. He didn’t feel as though he had any other choice but to wait until the boy came to him, but knowing Peter that could be ages. If ever.

Nat came back before Peter exited the bathroom, with two bags full of junk food which she deposited over one of the beds. “Couldn’t find a decent food joint so a candy feast we shall have.”

“Steve would faint if he saw all this.” Tony laughed but grabbed a bag of chips anyway.

“Eh, well, it’s not like we have access to any of his organic shit right now.” She laughed but her expression changed when she noticed Peter wasn’t in the room. She mouthed to Tony, “is he still in there?”

The man nodded and shrugged his shoulders, trying to convey with his eyes that he’d tried to talk to him but had gotten shut down once again. Nat mirrored his concerned expression but made sure to resume her usual cocky smile when Peter finally came out.

“Hi.” He said casually though he still blushed when the two adults turned to look at him.

“Hey, pick your poison.” Nat gestures to the smorgasbord of trash calories she had laid out.

“Jesus, this stuff is poison.” Peter grinned as he enthusiastically picked the candy with the highest amount of sugar and artificial colouring. He made sure to grab two bottles of water though, which he started drinking quickly, between mouthfuls of blue gummies. “We got the TV to work.”

“I see that. Anything good on?”

“I can only get the news, some weird Scandinavian clock making show and the horror channel.” Tony said.

“Well I guess we know what we’re watching.” Nat smirked and winked at Peter.

“Clocks it is.” Tony said flatly.

“Oh come on!” Both Nat and Peter cried indignantly.
“I don’t wanna hear it! You want him to sleep tonight don’t you?” Tony had been warned very early on by May to not let Peter watch any kind of horror film, no matter how much the kid tried to coerce him into letting him. He never strayed from that rule frightened to find out what the consequences would be and he definitely didn’t want to find out that night.

“Uhm, I’m sitting right here.” Peter scowled. “Come on, it’s a local b-movie network how bad could they be?”

“I said no, that’s the end of it. Now hush, they’re showing you how to carve the cogs out of- what kind of wood is that- hey!” Tony was cut off by a gummy worm hitting him in the side of the head. He turned to look at the pouting teenager who now had his arms crossed and was scowling at him. He bent down and picked up the piece of candy off of the floor and popped it in his mouth. “Jokes on you, you wasted a blue one.”

“Ew! That’s how you get diseases Tony, gross!” Peter faked gagged.

Tony stuck by his decision not to let them watch the horror channel so they had to find other ways to entertain themselves for the rest of the evening. Now that the two men of the group weren’t in a verbal Mexican stand-off it was much easier to make conversation and Nat used the quality time to get to know Peter a little better. He had always been pretty shy around her in particular so it was a good opportunity for her to show him that she wasn’t so scary. They talked about a lot of things, Peter opening up and asking lots of questions about her earlier years and training which in turn prompted her to ask about his childhood.

“So, no siblings or cousins huh?”

“Nope, just me and Auntie May. My grandparents died before I was born and my parents died when I was two so I never had a very big family.” He shrugged nonchalantly. He appreciated that Natasha didn’t give him the same pitiful look that most people gave him when he mentioned the fact that he was an orphan, it had always made him uncomfortable when people tried to give him sympathy. He’d never known anything different so it was odd when people expected him to grieve for something he had never had.

“Did she never marry?”

“Oh yeah, my uncle Ben. He died when I was six though.”

Tony looked up at Peter with a confused look on his face. “You never told me that?”

“I thought you knew.” Peter shrugged again. He knew Tony had done thorough back checks on his entire life, so he’d assumed that piece of information would’ve cropped up somewhere. “He died of cancer when I was in first grade.”

“What about your parents?” Nat asked, Tony shot a look at her that Peter didn’t quite catch. It seemed that the man wasn’t quite as comfortable with the casual conversation as they were.

“Car crash.” Peter said simply and Natasha nodded understandably.

“Can we move on from this conversation?” Tony’s voice was tight. Peter clearly didn’t understand that he’d touched a nerve with that last piece of information and went to question why Tony looked so uncomfortable. He wasn’t upset talking about it so why was he making it weird?

Nat saw the boy’s confusion and cut him off quickly. “So, what about pets?”

“I always wanted a dog but the apartments we moved into never allowed them. I had a hamster
though, until he ran away.” The two adults snickered assuming Peter was joking. “What?”

“What do you mean he ran away?” Tony chuckled.

“Well I came home from school one day and he wasn’t in his cage.” Peter said seriously making the older pair stop laughing. “Aunt May said he got into the vents or something.”

“Pete do you really believe—” Nat started but covered her mouth when Tony shot her another look. “Nevermind.”

“What? What?” Was he missing something? What was so funny?

“When did this happen?” Tony asked, managing somehow to suppress a smile.

“Like four years ago, why?”

“Ah.” Tony said understanding why May had felt the need to lie to the child. Both Tony and Nat turned away from the boy, who was still adamantly trying to figure out what was so entertaining. Neither had the heart to tell him where his hamster had really gone.

They continued chatting for most of the night, Peter still running off to the restroom every half an hour or so. Every time he did Nat made a point of pestering Tony, trying to get him to confront the boy about his obvious issue. But the man refused each time she pressured him. He still believed the best course of action was to let Peter come to him.

Peter’s condition was slowly, painfully slowly, improving though he was still in constant pain. The burning sensation was still there but the painful bladder contractions were getting less and less frequent as the night went on. He was still experiencing that sudden and intense urgency any time his bladder got a drop of urine in it, that made him have to make a mad dash for the toilet to avoid leaking (which he wasn’t able to completely avoid). He kept necking bottle after bottle of water in hopes that the problem would go away as soon as he properly hydrated himself.

It got to around ten o’clock when Peter’s started struggling to keep his eyes open.

“Come on, bubs. You ought to get some sleep.” Tony said gently shoving Peter with his shoulder, jolting him awake.

“Uh uh, m’not tired.” Peter shook himself and opened his eyes wide. He couldn’t risk going to sleep, especially not in the same room and possibly the same bed as the two adults. Not with his bladder in the state that it was, there was now way he’d stay dry the whole night. “Please? Can I stay up a little longer tonight? It’s not like I’m going to school.”

Peter gave Tony his signature puppy dog look which he couldn’t help but cave in to. After the emotional rollercoaster the two had been through that day alone Tony couldn’t help himself. “No not the face, come on. Ugh, fine. One more hour- and if you’re a grumpy little shit tomorrow I’m putting you in the trunk.”

Somehow one hour turned into four, Tony falling asleep halfway through. Peter forced himself to stay awake by guzzling soda which he hadn’t realised was only irritating his sore bladder more. Only when he fell asleep sitting up and head butted a wall he finally gave in to his exhaustion. Tony had fallen asleep sitting in front of the bathroom door so Peter had to gently kick him awake to get past.

“Move it old man, come on, get in bed already.” He snickered at the mans startled expression to his rude awakening.
“Petey why’re you still up?” Tony inhaled sharply through his nose as he blinked himself awake.

“I’m tryna go to bed but you’re in the way.” Peter chortled and held his arm out to help Tony up. “I call dibs on the left side.”

“Alright, go get ready.” Tony yawned. He planned on staying up for a while now after his accidental nap. He hadn’t realised how tired he was but he guessed all the stress of the day had taken it out of him. He sat on the bed furthest from the window, Nat lounged out on the other.

“You’re both a couple of lightweights. It’s like you’ve never been on the run before.” She chuckled, flipping absentmindedly through the static channels on the TV as though more would magically appear.

“You didn’t let him watch the horror channel did you?” He asked warningly.

“Calm down Papa Stark, we just learned the Swedish name for speedometer.”

He sighed and ignored the comment. “Well what was it?”

“Hastighetsmätare.” She smirked at how Tony’s face twitched when she called him Papa.

“Wait till the kids asleep before you grill me please.” He rolled his eyes.

The kid in question then called him from the bathroom. “Uh- Tony?”

Oh boy, was Peter finally going to admit what was going on with his constant bathroom trips? Of course he wasn’t. “What is it bud?”

“Well you forgot to pack pyjamas.” Peter said irritably. Whoops.

“Oh, uh. Well just sleep in your underwear—”

“I’M NOT DOING THAT THERE’S A LADY IN THE ROOM!”
A Cabin In The Woods

Chapter Summary

Okay this chapter is not good. I have accepted and come to terms with it- I wouldn't usually post something I'm not happy with but I owe it to y'all after not posting for a day.
Written in a hospital waiting room so yah, thats all fun

sorry for this rappy filler chapter :(

It took a lot of coaxing, and Nat promising to keep her eyes shut, for Peter to finally exit the restroom and jump into bed. He felt exposed wearing nothing but his underwear and a T-shirt and he didn’t much appreciate the two adults laughing at him. By this point it was one in the morning, way past his bedtime, after a very long arduous day-with no naps! So Peter was very, very tired and very, very irritable.

“Can I open my eyes now?” Natasha giggled. “I’m on look out I can’t do this all night-”

“Yes you can open your eyes- and stop laughing!” Peter snapped burrowing completely under the covers so only a tuft of his hair was exposed.

“Yes sir.” Nat said seriously before her and Tony started snickering again. An arm popped out from under the bundle of blankets and snatched a pillow, dragging it on top of what could only be assumed to be Peter’s head.

“Good. Night.”

“Night grumps.” Tony pulled back the sheets and kissed Peter’s cheek to annoy him even more, laughing maniacally when Peter attacked him with said pillow. In the pillow fight that then ensued Peter failed no notice when the quilt fell off of him, inadvertently exposing his Star Wars underwear to the entire room.

“Hey Darth, you might wanna-” Nat gestured to his bare legs. Peter looked down and shrieked before yanking the entire blanket back to cover himself, face flushing scarlett.

“Hey! I was using that!” Tony laughed trying to pull back some of the sheet to cover himself.

“You’ve lost blanket privileges!” Peter screeched desperately trying to keep the blanket to himself alone. The tug of war ended when Peter fell off of the bed completely, so all the adults could see was two feet sticking in the air. The room fell silent for a second before Nat and Tony broke down in hysterics. Peter scrambled to his feet and used one of the offending pillows to cover his partially bare lower half, his face beet red. “I hate both of you!”

He stormed off into the bathroom to pee for the millionth time that day as the two guffawing baboons he was currently cohabiting with continued to howl with laughter. He used the toilet (with great difficulty) and waited for the laughter to die down.

“P, come out, we’re sorry.” Nat called, though she still had tears streaming down her face. Perhaps it was just because she was overtired but she swore she’d never seen something so funny and well
timed in her entire life.

“No! I’m sleeping in the tub!”

“Underoos, nooo.” Tony wheezed out. He was trying to get ahold of himself, he really was. But it was too funny how Peter always managed to make a fool out of himself when he was being deliberately bratty. He knew he had to stop though, he felt rotten laughing at the boys expense, even if the whole fight had been ridiculous. He breathed out one last laugh before continuing. “Get your butt out here, we gotta get some sleep.”

The door creaked open revealing a scowling, bright red boy. He was clearly exhausted and Tony felt his heart melt at the sight of the overgrown pouty toddler. “Aww, did we make you mad?”

“Not talkin’ to you.” Peter huffed and stomped back over to his side of the bed, laying down facing away from the pair.

“Bubby, we’re sorry.” Tony threw himself back on the bed, laying down too. He rolled so he could turn his face towards the back of Peter’s head. “I love you.”

“Hmph.” Was the reply.

“I looove you.” Tony drew out. “Come on don’t leave me hanging.”

“Mmve you mm.” Peter growled into the pillow.

“What was that I couldn’t-”

“I LOVE YOU TOO-GOODNIGHT ANTHONY!”

After about twenty minutes of tossing and turning (and one last potty break) Peter’s body finally succumbed to exhaustion, like it should have done hours ago; all of the caffeine and sugar finally dumping out of his body and letting him fall into a deep sleep.

“Aaand he’s out. Thank god.” Tony sighed in relief once Peter’s breathing evened out and the boy cuddled a little closer to him.

“Poor kid.” Natasha smiled fondly, watching as Tony started to pet Peter’s curls. “You’re not getting out of this, T.”

“What?”

“How long you been Daddy for, hm?” She smirked knowing she had him backed into a corner and he sighed knowing the same.

“Officially? Only about a month or so.”

“You kept that underwraps, huh?”

“Bullshit, I know everyone knows it.” Tony said bitterly. It wasn’t that he was ashamed or uncomfortable with his team mates knowing, he just hated the idea of him not being able to keep things he wanted private a secret, something he’d been good at all his life. He’d always prided himself on being mysterious, those closest to him not knowing any intimate details but Peter brought out his paternal side too obviously.

“So?”
“So, if our higher ups find out he could get taken away.” He said seriously. It was a deep fear of his and had been ever since the agreement had been made to have Peter come and live with him. He was only allowed to do so if he was enlisted to be an official Avenger and was trained accordingly, despite the fact Tony didn’t think that he was anywhere near ready. That’s why Tony had been prolonging the training process so much, not allowing Peter to join them on missions or take part in other drill exercises. He wasn’t just trying to protect Peter from harm in that moment, he was trying to prolong the inevitable. Slowing down his progress meant it would be longer before he was officially enrolled in the Avenger programme. That and the fear of the situation they were currently in- not only the fact that it put him in physical danger, it also meant that he wasn’t been careful enough in concealing Peter’s identity and the nature of their relationship. If members of MV were able to dig up dirt on them both that meant S.H.I.E.L.D would be able to as well. He had been on edge ever since that meeting where Nick Fury had helped him and Peter after the boys accident, knowing for sure that the agent knew what was going on between the two. He had seen the knowing look he gave him, almost warning him to be more surreptitious in how he treated Peter out in public.

Ever since he and Peter mutually accepted their new dynamic, Tony had been considering coming clean to his bosses about the entire thing. But he knew doing so could risk Peter being excommunicated or taken out of his care, or worst of all both. Yes, if they found out from an external source there was a much higher risk of that happening, but the possibility of never being able to see his son again made Tony want to vomit. He couldn’t let that happen. He wasn’t sure about the best way to go around things, but the predicament the were currently in was forcing him to make a decision that he wasn’t ready for. He just wanted Peter to be a kid, his kid. He couldn’t let them take him away.

“We wouldn’t tell anyone, Tony.”

“I know that.” He snapped. “I don’t think Pete’s ready for everyone to know yet.”

“You don’t have to hide things in your own home, that’s all I’m saying. And it’s his home now too, he deserves to feel comfortable.”

“He deserves more than I can give him. So much more.” Tony said sadly. He should never have allowed himself to get so close, he knew he’d never be able to keep the boy safe. He didn’t know the first thing about being a dad, he’d proved it that day alone. Peter needed someone who was stable and could support all of his needs, especially emotional. He felt the inadequate feeling overtake him once again, the same way it had done the night Clint stopped him from drinking himself to sleep but luckily for him Natasha was there to stop him from spiralling.

“Stark, shut the fuck up. You’re a great dad.” Ah, as comforting and emotionally involved as ever.

Her bluntness did the trick though. It was enough to make Tony realise he couldn’t afford to break down now, not while his boy wasn’t safe. He looked down at the tangle of limbs and curls nestled beside him. There was no way he was going to let anything bad happen to that adorable mess.

“Get some sleep Ton, I’ll keep guard for a while.”

The man didn’t argue, laying back down and closing his eyes. “Wake me up in two hours to take over.”

Nat nodded, but she did not such thing. She waited another four hours before waking him, knowing she could sleep in the car. While she was keeping look out she couldn’t help but notice Peter shifting uncomfortably every now and then. She resisted the urge to go and wake him as he always seemed to settle after a few minutes. She shrugged her instincts off assuming that Peter was just a
The boy himself woke up at around four, sitting bolt upright as the familiar sting in his lower stomach jolted him awake. Nat didn’t get a chance to ask him if he was okay before he bolted into the bathroom. This time he was able to feel some relief, as his bladder had actually allowed itself to fill fully before waking him up, as opposed to making him go with only a drop or two of urine inside him. It still burned when he went but his stomach didn’t feel so achy and distended afterwards, so it was a considerable improvement. The moment of relief he felt dissipated quickly when he realised his boxers were damp.

Not wet. Damp. Meaning the moisture he felt wasn’t remnants of a small accident or leak on his was to the bathroom. “Fuck.”

“You okay?” Nat called quietly having heard Peter curse under his breath.

‘Double fuck.’ “Y-yeah.” He washed his hands and slipped back out of the bathroom avoiding meeting Nat’s eyes.

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, I’m fine.” He climbed back into bed and grimaced as he felt a wet spot brush against his leg. Oh god. He’d just wet the bed with Tony Stark in it.

“Then why did you just yell ‘fuck’?” Nat wouldn’t let it go, not after seeing the boy in discomfort since the incident in the car. She didn’t agree with Tony in letting the child come to them about what was going on. She didn’t know Peter nearly as well as Tony did but she knew him enough to know he wasn’t going to be forthcoming with them, especially about something physical. She wasn’t afraid to have an awkward conversation with him if it meant getting the truth. She’d never been one for social formalities, let alone when someone’s health was involved. “Does it hurt when you piss?”

She couldn’t see his face that clearly in the darkness but she knew he was turning red. He nodded slowly so she continued. “Is it an ache like a bruise or does it feel like you can’t go?”

“It like...burns.” He whispered.

“Okay. Sounds like you’ve got yourself a UTI. You didn’t drink much yesterday did you?” He shook his head. “We’ll fix that tomorrow. Here. Take one of these.”

She threw him a bottle of painkillers which he caught gratefully. He took one before laying down in his now uncomfortably wet bed. He was embarrassed about having been called out but he was too tired and in too much pain for his embarrassment to take the forefront of his brain. “Thanks, Nat.”

“Don’t mention it, kid. Get some more sleep.”

After shifting around to avoid laying on the cold, wet patch on his sheets, Peter allowed himself to drift off again; ignoring the burning sensation that was starting to spread around his skin from the wet underwear clinging to it. He felt guilty about the poor motel cleaner who was going to have to clean up after him, but he supposed they had seen worse things in their time, especially considering the state the sheets had been in when they arrived. Still, he still felt bad about some poor unexpecting, likely underpaid, worker having to clean his urine specifically. He prayed silently that Tony wouldn’t accidentally roll onto his side of the bed or see what had happened, he’d never live
that down. He hoped the man wouldn’t be mad but his confidence was knocked after the incident in the car. Even though Nat now knew he was having bladder problems he didn’t think he’d survive if she found out he’d just wet the bed at fifteen years old- with his father in it no less. He somehow managed to drift off even with all the anxiety running through his head.

A couple hours after Peter fell back to sleep Nat shook Tony awake. “Hey, I need you up and at ’em, I gotta go grab us some things.”

“Mm, everything okay?” The man sat up, stretching.

“Yeah, just gotta stock up for the safehouse. It’d be better if we don’t have to stop on the way.” If the three of them stopped whilst on the road it would leave them more vulnerable to an ambush, so Nat was right in her thinking.

“Allright, lemme wake up first.” Tony stood and walked into the bathroom, finding that his back ached from sleeping on the cheap mattress. Jesus, he really was a spoiled Mr. RichKid. One night and his back hurt already? He was getting soft. “Why’d you let me sleep so long?”

“Looked like you needed it. Besides you two were too adorable, all snuggled and-”

“Allright.” Tony rolled his eyes and cut her off during her sarcastic rant. “It’s too early for all that.”

“Awe, is poor little Tony tired?”

“Bite me, Romanova-” He saw her eyes blaze when he used her birth name as opposed to her anglicised alias.

“No bite me, Anthony.”

The man held his hands up to call truce and took her place by the window, watching as she pulled away in the car. Peter woke up soon after she left and of course he ran straight into the bathroom.

“Morning bud.” Tony called.

“Don’t talk to me while I’m peein’ you’re gonna make it go back in!” Peter whined sleepily causing Tony to chuckle. He couldn’t resist teasing Peter when he was tired, it was just too damn easy.

“Sorry, bubby.”

“Mmm!” He heard a foot stomp with that one. After about five minutes Peter popped his head out of the bathroom door. “Are there any towels?”

“You wanna shower here?” Tony wrinkled his nose. He’d seen the mould lining the tiles inside the tub.

“Well, I wouldn’t have to if somebody didn’t make me pee my pants yesterday.” Peter deadpanned. The pain in his bladder had died down since Nat’s pain meds kicked in but now it was Peter’s skin that was now kicking up a fuss, having not enjoyed laying in wet underwear all night. Now he was more than a little irritable.

“You wanna shower here?” Tony was not about to rehash the argument from yesterday, not after Peter was starting to act normal with him again. He handed the boy the towels wordlessly, and sat back on his perch by the window, listening as the hot water turned on. Or perhaps not so hot water.
“JESUS MOTHER MARY JOSEPH!”

“You alright in there bud?” Tony said failing to keep the smirk out of his voice, watching as Peter ran out in nothing but a towel to grab his clothes.

“Shut up!” Peter growled as he slammed the door shut again behind him, accidentally busting one of the hinges due to his super-strength. “UGH FOR CHRIST SAKES!”

“It’s okay! Calm down! Get changed I’ll fix it.” Usually Tony would’ve responded to Peter’s outbursts with a matching level of anger but he could tell that today was not one of the days to do so. His son was tried and understandably grumpy, the mistakes he’d made the day prior made him realise that he shouldn’t react to it when it wasn’t the boy’s fault. It was time to step back and let Peter deal with his emotions, he needed to stay calm and in turn that would help the mood swing pass quicker. They were all on edge there was no point fighting amongst themselves, especially when he was his sons main support system.

“I wanna go home.” Peter muttered miserably.

The sadness in the boy’s voice broke Tony’s heart. “Soon, bubba I promise. Just a couple days, Steve will get this sorted.”

“But you’re Iron Man, couldn’t you just go in and blast them all and call it a day?”

“It’s not as simple as that Pete, there’s a lot of background politics in this okay?” Tony said softly. There was a long drawn out history between this foreign faction and S.H.I.E.L.D, there had to be a lot of diplomacy in how they went around things in the public eye. Of course behind the scenes Captain and the rest of the team were still infiltrating their bases and hunting down bad guys, whilst simultaneously destroying evidence and files they had on Peter’s existence; but public relations had to remain friendly and any violent reactions covert, the company they were currently dealing with were big. Very big. So, Tony couldn’t go blasting through buildings, even though he wanted to.

“Well I don’t understand it.” Peter said bitterly. “I guess I’m just too young and naive.”

“Hey, come out here.” Tony said gently, not liking the change of tone in the boy. “I know it’s a lot, I know it’s scary. You shouldn’t have to be dealing with my mistakes.”

“Yes I should I’m part of the team but you’re not letting me, I don’t even know what’s going on.”

“You’re my son and a child first, Peter. And no one should have to deal with my mess.” He didn’t like how he was being called out for stunting the boy’s growth where his career was concerned. He had good reason to do that. “That’s the end of it.”

“Fine.” Peter snapped, though it certainly didn’t sound fine. Tony often struggled to remember the fact that Peter was a hormonal teenager, but times like this where the boy’s mood changed three times in the matter of minutes he was firmly reminded. Oh, the fragility of youth.

Peter was more frustrated than ever, why couldn’t his dad just take the time to explain to him what was going on? He was old enough to understand but the man wouldn’t let him. He hated being in the dark about something especially when it was about him. He made a point of ignoring the man for the rest of the morning for that very reason.

Nat came back with more snacks and bottles of various liquids, having been unable once again to find any substantial source of food.
“Any coffee?” Tony asked already knowing the answer.

“Red bull.” She shrugged and threw him a can. She also threw a red carton and Peter which he almost dropped. “Drink it. It’ll help.”

“Thanks.” He said blushing, cracking open the cranberry juice. He took a swig and let the familiar bitterness cover his tongue. He had to bite back the urge to gag or pull a face, he’d always hated the taste of the stuff.

“Help what?” Tony peered over at Peter suspiciously.

“Oh, uh-“

“The UTI.” Nat cut straight to the point.

“Don’t tell him!” Peter groaned and flopped dramatically onto the bed.

“Why not? It’s nothing to be embarrassed about kid, they’re pretty common.” The Russian shrugged.

“Ugh cause he’s all, ugh.” The boy covered his face and groaned again.

“All what? It’s not a big deal, bubs.” Tony chuckled lightly at the trivial conversation. Teenagers behaviour made sense now though he was rather surprised that Natasha had gotten it out of him somehow. He also found himself a bit shocked as he’d always assumed UTI’s only happened in women but he supposed he was naive to assume that.

“It’s a big deal to me, it hurts.” Peter whined, still covering his face hoping he could avoid having this conversation with the two adults in the room. He should’ve known that Nat wasn’t going to keep the matter private but he had hoped she’d at least have told Tony when he wasn’t there.

“Aww honey.” Tony sat down on the bed, feeling guilty about not taking the situation seriously. “Is that why you had an accident yesterday-“

Peter cut him off by making a frustrated noise.

“Is the burning any better at least-“ Nat started but again Peter cut her off.

“Can we stop talking about my urinary tract- this is the most awkward thing ever!” Peter cried out. “I’m serious I’m actually going to die if we keep talking about this!”

“And you call me a drama queen.” Tony rolled his eyes. He wanted to ask what he could do to help but he supposed there wasn’t much they could do, other than make sure he drank plenty and schedule extra bathroom breaks to compensate. But if Peter was going to need to stop as frequently as he was going the night before they’d never make it to the safe house. He turned to Nat who seemed to be mirroring his concerns. She shrugged at him, essentially saying they had no other choice, they both knew they couldn’t stay at the motel another night, it was too open. “Pete are you gonna be okay in the car?”

“I don’t have another option do I?” He snapped. “I won’t ask you to stop again don’t worry.”

“That’s not what I meant-“

“I’ll be fine.” Peter shot him a look warning him to drop the conversation unless he wanted another melt down. So Tony did.
“We’ll stop every hour, I just checked the route. We’ve got three and a half to go, that should help us avoid any major incidents.” Nat chimed in referring to both the possibility of attack and the state of Peter’s pants. The two males nodded and gathered up their stuff. The trio headed out towards the car, just as Nat was about to return the door key Peter called after her.

“Wait! Uh..”

Nat sighed and held the key out to him, which he took gratefully and ran back inside the decrepit room. Tony threw his arms up in frustration and Nat just shrugged at the man in the driver’s seat of the car. She didn’t think Peter would appreciate if she went in with him, so she patiently waited in the parking lot for him to come back out.

She waited. And waited. For around five minutes. That was when Tony got out of the car and she started towards the door. Just as they both reached it, it opened to reveal Peter standing there with white around the corner of his mouth. “What?”

“Oh nothing, just thought you were getting kidnapped, don’t mind us.” Tony quipped as Nat rolled her eyes on her way to take the key back.

“I had to brush my teeth!”

“Just get in the car.” Tony sighed and wiped the boy’s mouth before he pushed Peter in the right direction.

“Alright, alright jeez.”

Once they were back on the road, the first hour passed quickly. Nat finally allowed herself to get some sleep and Tony used the alone time with Peter to initiate some normal conversation in hopes it would help better both of their moods. It worked up and till a point when Peter started to get quiet again and Tony assumed it was because his bladder was paining him.

“Do you need me to stop?”

“No.” Peter answered in a cold voice as though the question was an insult. Tony frowned but didn’t pry. He knew Peter would still be sore about what had happened the day before so he had prepared himself for the eventuality that the boy was going to deny needing the restroom for the remainder of the trip. He stuck to Nat’s plan of stopping every hour, despite Peter’s protests about how he didn’t need to go. Of course every time he denied it he still jumped out of the car before Tony could even put it in park.

After a long boring journey Peter was glad to see them finally pull up to a run down old cabin. That was until he remembered that he had an irrational fear of run down old cabins.

“That’s a SAFEhouse?! Have you ever seen ‘Cabin in the Woods’?!”

“Have you?” Tony raised an eyebrow.

“Well no but I saw the trailer- and the clues in the name! This is the kind of place serial killers hang out in!”

“Don’t all those killers have a proclivity for killing young teens?” Nat yawned having woken up when Tony stopped the car.

“That’s not funny.” Peter said seriously.
“Jesus, this is why I wouldn’t let him watch the horror channel.” Tony laughed as he got out to start unloading the trunk of the car. Natasha and Peter jumped out too and helped carry their various trunks and bags of groceries.

“Pete, go pee before you hurt yourself more.” Tony shook his head disapproving as once again the youngster was squirming uncomfortably by the car. Peter scowled at him but didn’t argue, running off into the crumbling shack leaving the two adults behind him. After a minute or two Peter popped back into view looking no more relieved than when he went in. “What’s the matter? Still hurt?”

“It’s not that, I can’t find it.”

“Find what?”

“The bathroom.” Peter stressed as though it was the most obvious thing in the world. Neither adult had been to this particular safehouse before so they weren’t exactly sure of the lay out either.

Tony sighed before tuning to Nat. “You okay to-“

“I got it, go help SpiderBoy.”

SpiderBoy was currently hopping from foot to foot in the doorway, his irritated bladder getting impatient with him.

“Hold on, kiddo.”

“What does it look like I’m doing?!”

Tony ignored the backchat in favour of finding the restroom sooner. He was stumped after realising Peter was right. He found four bedrooms, the kitchen and living area, but no bathroom. He even went down to the cellar but there was nothing. Whilst he was looking around Peter was getting increasingly more animated and it wasn’t until Nat walked in he realised where the facilities were.

“Look out the back door.” The two men proceeded to the kitchen to peer out the back exit and sure enough there was an even smaller and somehow more decrepit shack at the bottom of a rocky path.

“No.”

“Pete-“

“Uh uh.”

“You can’t-“

“Not happening.” Peter stood as still as possible in his current condition, with his arms folded across his chest and his ankles crossed. There was no way he was using an outhouse. He could only imagine the bacteria that would be festering inside that thing; he’d never considered himself an extreme germaphobe but he had his limits, especially where bathrooms were concerned and that outhouse was sure to surpass all of them.

Tony sighed and pushed Peter through the back door. Now was not the time to be a priss about the hygiene of a bathroom, not when he already had a bladder infection. “Come on, you don’t have a choice.”
“I’m not going in there!” Peter tried to pull away from him but he was using all of his energy to keep his screaming bladder in check.

“Why not? Would you rather pee yourself again?”

“No b- but there’s gonna be bugs!” Peter didn’t appreciate the fact Tony felt the need to say ‘again’ about that statement.

Tony pauses for a moment to let the irony sink in, before he opened the squeaky wooden door and shoved a squeaking Peter inside. “You know you’re Spider-Man right? Now go.”

“Mmf! Gross!”

Tony waited outside the shack, ignoring the various ‘ew’s that came from inside it. Peter stormed out after about a minute muttering something about savages and how he was going to kill the bad guys himself for putting him through this.

“Feel better?”

“Shut up.”

The safehouse had certainly seen better days, though Peter hadn’t expected much. He knew it was important that it was quiet and unassuming but he thought the place would at least have indoor plumbing. He chose the smallest room for himself and threw his things inside. Tony hadn’t thought to grab his laptop or anything, not even his phone charger. He made a note to pack an emergency bag when he got home. He waltzed back into the living room where Nat was on the phone with Bruce and Tony was busying himself setting up their telecom systems.

“So, what now?”

“What do you mean what now?” Tony asked flippantly.

“Well, what am I supposed to do now?”

Tony looked away from the screen he was working on to give Peter an exasperated look. Were teenagers really that lost without technology nowadays? Though he couldn’t exactly comment on that. “Entertain yourself for a while.”

Peter pouted at him. He didn’t feel as though he was being unreasonable in asking what he was meant to do. He didn’t expect the man to babysit him and he didn’t mean to come across as annoying. He slunk back to his designated room, pulled out a notebook and started scribbling.

After a couple hours when Peter didn’t reemerge Tony realised he’d been a little harsh when he told Peter to essentially go away. He actually knocked on the door before he opened it, though he didn’t receive a response. “Pete?”

Still nothing. The silence on the other side of the door made his heart race much like it had back at the Motel. He opened the door. “Hey are you- What the…”

The boy was fast asleep, which wasn’t the issue. The interesting thing was where the boy had elected to fall asleep. Rather than sleep on the rickety wooden loft bed it seemed as though he’d weaved himself a web hammock. Tony laughed at the display which startled the boy awake.

“Huh? Oh, hi.” Peter jumped down landing spryly on his feet.
“Hey there.” Tony chuckled. “What’s wrong with your bed?”

“Nothing, I was just practising! I’m getting better at controlling it.” He said excitedly gazing down at his wrists.

“I see that. It’s impressive.” Tony nodded, making Peter beam proudly. The man sat on the edge of the discarded bed and patted the spot beside him, beckoning Peter forward. “C’mere.”

Peter sat down beside him wondering what this was all about, had something bad happened?

“I’m sorry for being so snappy lately.”

“Oh. It’s okay, it’s been a lot the past couple days.” Peter smiled nervously. He hated it when his Dad apologised to him first, it sounded so unnatural coming. He knew the man meant it but clearly he wasn’t used to it.

“I know, but it’s been a lot for you too. I know it’s frustrating because I won’t tell you what’s going on but I’m not doing it because I think you’re too young.”

“Then why not tell me? I could help-”

“That’s why. I’m just trying to protect you. I know you wanna help but it’s too dangerous this time around, if you got wrapped up in all this and you got hurt, I’d never forgive myself. The less you know the safer you are-”

“Yeah, that’s what Happy said too.” Peter nodded. “I understand Dad, I do. I just...I wanna show you I’m good enough, you know? I know I’m just meant to be the friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man but I wanna show you I can do this and you can trust me with the big stuff-”

“P, no. It’s not that I don’t trust you or that I don’t believe in your abilities. I do wholeheartedly, but I value you more than that.” Tony paused for a moment so ensure he didn’t say anything that Peter could take the wrong way. “You’re not just a colleague to me.”

“Yeah, I know that.” Peter laughed. “I know you want me to enjoy being a kid and stuff too.”

“Exactly, but...I don’t know to explain it. Just know it’s not that I don’t think you’re good enough, okay? I think you’re amazing-”

“It’s okay. I know you’re bad at all the emotion stuff.” Peter shrugged, sensing Tony was stressing himself out trying to find the right wording. He was also very uncomfortable when it came to taking praise. “I’m sorry for making it harder too, I shouldn’t have been such a brat.”

“You weren’t that bad I shouldn’t have taken it out on you-”

“Hey, it’s my turn to apologise!”

“It was still my turn.” Tony laughed. “You’re such a Hufflepuff-”

“You don’t even know what that means!” Peter shoved him. “Besides I am not-”

“Whatever you say, kiddo.” Tony laughed. “How’s your bladder feeling?”

“Ugh, not this again. It’s fine okay-”

“I was just asking, no need to get so defensive” Tony held his hands up. “You know you’re an awful liar though, right?”
“Yeah, you haven’t taught me how yet.” Peter said grumpily. “It’s on it’s way out anyway.”

“So, you don’t need like antibiotics or anything?”

“I don’t think so, it’s clearing up quickly this time.”

“You’ve had them like this before?”

“Yeah, when I was little. I told you that already.” Peter climbed back into his hammock. “Haven’t had one in a while though. They’re not a big deal, just uncomfortable.”

“So, you get them when you hold it too long?”

“Tony I’m not WebMD. Go on google if you’re that fascinated by it.” Peter scowled down at him again. Clearly he wasn’t getting the point that Peter didn’t want to talk to him about it in the first place.

“Okay, okay. Backing off. I just don’t want you to feel like you can’t tell me stuff-”

“Well, if you stop being so pushy I just might so can you-”

“Point noted!” Tony held his hands up once again and went to exit the room. “Door open or closed?”

Peter answered him by shooting a web across the room that slammed the door shut in his face, not even looking in the mans direction. “Closed it is then, dinners in an hour!”

“You’re good at that.” Nat quipped from the couch where she was lounging and doing a crossword.

“What?”

“Pissing people off in under five minutes.”

“It’s an elite skill.” He sighed and sat on the chair across from her.
Peter spent the majority of the day in his room writing various stories and unnecessary essays, in between bathroom breaks to the horrific outhouse (which thanks to Nat’s painkillers and the magic that is cranberry juice were becoming less and less frequent). He convinced Nat to play sudoku with him at one point but the woman became frustrated when he pointed out her mistakes and ended up solving the board by himself. Tic-tac-toe was even more competitive to the point that Tony confiscated the notebook. Now that Peter had nothing to do he was itching to cause some kind of mischief, he knew it was bratty but he couldn’t help himself. He needed some kind of mental stimulation if he was to avoid going completely stir crazy. Besides the lack of distraction only drew his attention the the consistent burning in his nether regions.

He found himself more grateful than ever that his body had developed a faster way of healing. He remembered being trapped in the bathroom for days when he was younger and had given himself bladder infections, and had that been the case with their current situation it would’ve been less than ideal; you can’t spend days locked in a room when you’re on the run especially when the adults you’re with give you zero privacy. It was still humiliating that Nat had been the one to realise what was going on with him. Of course he was grateful for the help but it had always been such a private matter, he’d rarely tell his Aunt unless it prevented him from going to school or if he needed to go to the doctors. He hated being prone to such infections though he knew he was partially to blame for their frequency. Okay, maybe more than partially to blame but he was working on it, alright?

Perhaps the ought to have answered Tony’s questions earlier, but the man wasn’t known for his empathy. His father often needed understand something fully before he was able to offer any kind of emotional response and Peter hadn’t been in the mood to explain his medical history in length. If the man rally wanted to know he could contact Bruce, and Peter had no doubt in his mind that he already had or was at least planning to. He’d wanted to talk to the man about his drinking habits at school too but he’d never found the right time and he felt stupid admitting to something he was doing to himself.

His apprehension had also been down to the fact that he didn’t want Tony to think he was going backwards in his progress about asking to use the bathroom. He was doing a lot better at excusing himself when he had to, but part of that was down to the fact he’d stopped himself needing to go so often. He knew that his Dad would be disappointed and no doubt worried about the effects his dehydration were taking on his body, now he’d seen the results of such effects too he’d definitely use that against him. No, he couldn’t talk to im about it, he’d only overreact again. Or pull him from school like he had threatened to after his panic attack. Now wasn’t the time to talk to his Dad about an issue he’d brought upon himself, not when they had real problems going on. A bladder infection really did seem trivial considering he had people trying to capture him.

“I take it I’m not allowed to go outside?”
“Nope.” Tony popped the P and once again, didn’t look up from the computer he was typing on.

“So, whatcha doin’?” Peter plopped himself down on the couch beside him, knowing full well he sounded like an annoying child.

Tony sighed gently. “See this dot here? That’s Steve. I’m tracking him and controlling some suits with this remote access here, for back-up.”

Peter hadn’t expected the man to actually answer him seriously. He thought Tony would’ve brushed him off but he was actually involving him in something cool and work related. He resisted the urge to point to a large red button and ask what it would happen should he press it, in favour of Tony actually allowing him to be involved in the mission side of things.

“Why, where is he now?”

“Infiltrating one of the headquarters that have information stockpiled on you. It’s actually the facility you were held in after the bite.” Peter shivered at that last piece of information, making Tony realise he may have let on too much.

“So they’re the ones who are after me?” Peter said quietly and started gnawing on his thumb, trying to remain calm outwardly but Tony was more than accustomed to the teen’s nervous ticks by now.

The older man paused for a moment considering whether or not he should continue, but he decided ultimately that he’d gone too far to stop talking now. If he left Peter with only that small piece of information he knew the boy would only work himself up more trying to put a puzzle together when half the tiles were missing. “Yeah. They’ve been doing some genetic testing and they realised they weren’t quite ready to let you go yet. We think they may have gotten ahold of some of the lab results from Bruce’s work on your arm-”

“What from the cut I got?”

“Uh huh.”

“What do they want from me? I know they did enough tests the first time around, god knows they were thorough.”

“Other than leverage to use against me I’m not sure. I know they want you for that reason too, though. But that’s the information Steve and Bucky are in there to find out now. Don’t worry about it, bubs.”

“They’re probably trying to figure out how to make more people like me.” Peter said quietly making Tony turn to look at him.

“What makes you say that?”

“Well, I don’t know...Just some things they said while I was there, I don’t remember it very clearly but-”

“Tell me what you do remember.” Tony’s tone changed making Peter believe the man thought he was onto something. Surely, it was something they had already considered, wasn’t it obvious?

“One of the doctors said about subject seven being a failure, and something about my DNA bonding when the others didn’t...” Peter trailed off, his mind going back to the dingy lit room and the buzzing sound of machines used to poke and prod him. Fuzzy memories of people in masks and
the smell of iodine started flooding back to him. “I-I don’t-”

“Hey, hey. It’s okay.” He felt Tony grab his hand in both of his, making him open his eyes bringing him back to the present. “You’re safe. We don’t have to talk about it anymore, you’ve told me enough.”

Peter swallowed and nodded, glad that Tony was paying attention enough to stop him from slipping into a panic attack.

“That could help us a lot Pete, you did good.” Tony looked him in the eyes assuringly.

“They better not be trying to replicate my mutation, that would mean they were experimenting and killing people. I know that’s what was happening before me.” Peters expression changed from one of fear to determination. He didn’t want anyone else to have to go through what he went through, especially not for the financial or political gain of any company. If he found out that someone was using his DNA to inflict harm on people he wasn’t going to let Tony stop him from getting involved.

“You don’t have to worry about that part, we’ll handle it. Nat can you man this? I’ve got a phone call to make.” With that Tony stood up and stepped out of the room, leaving Pete to wonder what part of the story he told Tony had flicked a switch in the man’s brain. Was it the numbers? That was the only thing Peter could think of that would have been new information.

“Stop thinking about it, squirt. Steve’s got this.” Nat ruffled his hair on her way past, snapping him out of his thoughts.

“This whole thing seems kinda sketchy though…” Peter mumbled.

“Well, duh. We know it’s a trap kid, that’s why we didn’t all go in.” Nat shrugged like it was the most obvious thing in the world. Peter simply shook his head and dropped the conversation, realising that maybe he didn’t want to know the ins and outs of the mission yet, he was starting to get a headache.

“I’m so bored.”

“Go explore the cellar. I think I saw jars of eyeballs and a book made out of human skin.” Nat crunched a mouthful of chips loudly, enjoying the horrified expression Peter took on.

“You’re twisted you know that?” He tried his best to keep his voice neutral but he sounded anything but unphased.

Peter ended up keeping himself entertained by reading his history textbook upside down whilst suspended by the ceiling, ignoring the weird looks he received for doing so. Tony wouldn’t allow him anywhere near the monitors after his realisation earlier, so he was left to his own devices for the rest of the evening. When eleven o’clock rolled around Nat took it upon herself to cut the webbing Peter was using to keep himself above the ground, leaving the half asleep teenager to fall to the floor with a loud thud.

“Hey!”

“What happened to your ‘lightning fast reflexes’?”

“Bedtime, Kiddo.” Tony cut off the argument before it began, holding his hand out to help Peter off of the floor and ignoring when the teenager stuck his tongue out at his female counterpart.
“Fine, g’night Dad.” Peter yawned grumpily still exchanging daggers with Nat. “Goodnight Natasha.”

“Goodnight Peter.” She said with equal bite in her voice before they both broke out into a smile.

“See you in the morning, bubba, love you.”

Peter stumbles down the short hallway and threw himself onto his homemade hammock and tried to relax, listening to the gentle tapping and beeping of consoles and the quiet conversations coming from the front room. He left his door open ever so slightly so he could still see his dad, finding himself feeling oddly scared for no discernible reason. Yes it was an unfamiliar environment and they were in a volatile situation, but nonetheless Peter still found it odd how every time he closed his eyes he found himself jerking awake again; every little sound made him jump, the feeling reminiscent of when he’d experienced his first thunderstorm and found himself running into his aunt's room and jumping into bed with her. He knew he was being ridiculous and that he was far too old to be getting scared by bumps in the night, but having his door open and Tony and Nat in his line of sight was enough to calm him down, letting him drift into an uneasy sleep.

Having neglected to do so before falling asleep Peter woke up after a short time to use the bathroom. He slipped quietly down the hallway not wanting to alert anyone of his presence and snuck out the back door. He did what he needed to do before creeping quietly back into the house, stepping over each creaky floorboard that he had memorised throughout the day. He made his way over to the kitchen sink to scrub the filthy remnants of the outhouse of horror from his hands when he heard a clicking sound from behind him. He turned to see Nat with a gun cocked directly at him.

“Oh it’s you-“

“What THE HELL?!” He whipped his entire body around and fell back onto the sink, smacking his spine against the countertop on the process. “Ow, fluff- what is wrong with you?!”


“You’re insane.” Peter scowled, rubbing his now sore back.

“I didn’t mean to scare you, I thought- get down.” Nat’s face dropped and her eyes turned cold, now starring over Peter’s shoulder.

“What-“ before he could finish his question Nat was beside him pushing him towards the ground by his shoulder. His first reaction was to protest but the look on Natasha’s face made him comply with zero resistance. She crouched in front of him and redrew her weapon, balancing it above the counter and aiming out the the broken window. She knocked twice on the counter and Peter heard movement in the room behind them, seemingly she had given Tony a warning to get down also. That tingly feeling returned on the back on Peter’s neck and he focused his senses. He could hear the crunching of leaves outside but also- “Nat.”

“Shh.”

“They’re inside.” Her eyes snapped to him and he held her gaze seriously, showing her he wasn’t playing around. He heard the screen in his bedroom window get popped open, and the old hinges quietly creak making way for someone to crawl through the gap. She kept staring at him as though she was trying the figure out the best course of action.

But Peter could hear there wasn’t time for Nat to figure out a plan, he could hear footsteps making their way down the hall, towards an unsuspecting Tony. Peter moved to stand up, hoping to
intersect the assailant or at the very least warn Tony of their incoming prescience but Nat pushed him back down before he could rise more than an inch. “Don’t move.”

Clearly she had been told to keep him safe at all costs but if that cost was Tony’s safety Peter wasn’t about to listen to her- he made a move to stand up again but this time Nat kicked his feet out from under him and pinned him to the floor with one arm behind his back, twisting it unnaturally. It was obvious she’d read his mind before he was able to act on his compulsions. He looked up at her desperately trying to get her to look at him, but her eyes were fixed on the shadow that had appeared in the doorway. He was silently begging her to go after Tony, that he’d be able to handle himself but her eyes didn’t budge. He wasn’t given the chance to try and move again as the shadowy figure entered the room.

Nat sprung up and shot the person twice in the chest before whipping round and firing three more times through the window. Peter took the opportunity to stagger up and run into the other room hoping to see his dad ready to fight also, but he wasn’t there. Neither were the computers. The entire room was empty of any evidence that Tony had been there at all bar from the man’s phone, which was silently buzzing. He grabbed the phone and ran back into the kitchen, where three more people were lying on the floor and Nat was currently struggling with one of them. Peter’s mind was racing yet going completely blank at the same time, thank god his combat training decided to kick in at that moment. His eyes darted around the room and fell on a cast iron skillet hanging on one of the walls; he used a web to bring it to him and without hesitating he smacked it down on the masked man’s head, with a sickening crack.

Nat threw herself up, landing on both feet and immediately began firing again, turning quicker than Peter could keep up with. He tried to will himself to tell her that Tony was gone but he couldn’t get him mouth to cooperate. Instead he had to focus himself on throwing the man who had grabbed him from behind, over his shoulder and off of him. He webbed the man’s arms to the floor and Nat shot him, before Peter could realise what was happening. She turned to him and opened her mouth to say something, but he never quite caught what she said. It was at that point where his hearing turned to white noise and he felt hot water start rushing down his face. Before he got the chance to see the crimson gushing from his head his vision slowly faded out to black and he felt his knees give way underneath him.
Here's that longer chapter as promised- thank you all again for being so patient with me!

Peter’s eyes fluttered open and he was immediately made aware of a throbbing ache in his head, along with a stinging sensation on his right temple. The dull yellow lights that flickered in the room didn’t do much for the pain in his head, the reflections only adding to the dizziness he was already experiencing. It took him a few minutes to persuade his eyes to open fully and remain that way long enough for him to gather his bearings and take in his surroundings. It was a sickeningly familiar sight, like a reoccurring nightmare. Fractured memories started flooding back to him, the fuzzy ones with the masked men and operating rooms. The months he’d spend hidden away after being exposed to a radioactive spider and his DNA had been altered. He felt bile rise in his throat which he swallowed down feverently trying desperately to push down the nausea in favour of figuring out what the hell had happened and where the hell he was. He saw flashes of the fight that had ensued at the cabin, but everything felt oddly unfocused as though it was a fading dream and he was just waking up. He didn’t have to wait long to get answers as a voice boomed overhead.

“Subject eight has awoken. Brain activity normal.” A cold robotic female voice resounded around the room, piercing Peter’s ears. It seemed in his semi-conscious state that he had little control over his powers; whereas he was usually able to full down his senses and function normally, only accessing his heightened hearing, sight and smell when he needed it- in that moment he was unable to filter them and everything in the small, concrete room was deafeningly loud. He tried to focus himself through the overstimulation but it was difficult when all he could hear was his own heartbeat and breathing, ear splitingly loud. That combined with the buzzing from the sterile lighting made it near impossible to hear himself think.

At one end of the room there was a metal door, not dissimilar to one in a cheap prison show where the prisoners food and only forms of communication would be fed through a sliding hatch. Much to Peter’s surprise that hatch opened and he could barely make out a spectacle clad figure on the other side of it. Once again Peter could will his mouth to cooperate with him, his indignant cries coming out as muffled groans. He started to feel heavy all over, his body going limp against his restraints and his head dropped towards his chest. He couldn’t fight the blackness as it crepted into the corners of his vision once again.

When he regained consciousness the second time he was in a different room. This room was a brilliant white and well lit, and various monitors and screens lined the walls. He could see wires and bags of fluid suspended to an IV beside him, leading to several entry points in his arm. This time he was laying down, whereas he had been restrained standing up before he was now horizontal, with only his wrists being strapped down. He was able to move his head and legs freely, though he wasn’t very mobile at that point. He managed to loll his head to the side and stare through bleary eyes at the monitor beside him. It took him a moment to realise that he wasn’t alone in the room.

“Subject eight seems to have grown more resistant to the anesthetic designed for his metabolic rate, suggesting that he has again experienced an increase in resistance to the one four x serum. Increase
dosage to twelve hundred milligrams.” A woman’s voice came from a far corner of the room and two people appeared seemingly from nowhere, clad in the same white uniforms that sprang up in Peter’s recurrent nightmares, started moving towards him.

“Wha- what are you doing?” Peter slurred, but he received no answer. The two figures continued to move towards him, one wheeling a small metal table covered in various medical instruments on it.

The woman’s calm voice filled the room again, taking on an almost amused tone. “Subject eight has regained an astounding level of cognitive function despite the effects of prolonged unconscious under the one four x serum, and has even regained the ability of speech in such a short amount of time. Approximately three times faster than he was able to eighteen months ago, progression much quicker than anticipated. Well, Mr. Parker, you really are giving us a run for our money aren’t you?”

Though she had addressed him, it was clear that she wasn’t expecting an answer. “I don’t even know who you are, don’t touch me!”

One of the masked people had begun to fiddle with one of Peter’s IV ports and jumped back when he flinched against them. The worker turned towards the corner of the room where the woman’s voice was emanating from, almost as though they were looking for reassurance or expecting a new order.

“Don’t worry, he won’t have much motor function yet, he won’t be able to harm you.” She said confidently, prompting the worker to continue with whatever they were planning on doing to Peter’s arm.

“I don’t wanna harm anyone but if you inject me with whatever that purple shit is I just might-don’t!” Peter barked warningly, jerking away from the worker again. The other scientist was surveying Peter’s body and scribbling notes on their findings.

“The three point five inch laceration spanning over the frontal and ethmoid bones has already begun to close, suturing itself just as Dr. Banner’s ledgers said, Ma’am.” The voice squeaked as the masked human scribbled furiously on their clipboard.

“Remarkable isn’t it?” From the dark corner of the room Peter could hear heels clipping across the floor towards him and he could make out a silhouette of a tall woman start to peek into view. His vision was still somewhat fuzzy but he could smell the woman’s perfume from where he way laying.

The other worker was still coming towards him with a syringe aiming for his IV line and for a third time he yanked his arm out of their reach as best as he could given the restraints. The woman had been right when she said his motor function was impaired, he felt strangely light and heavy at the same time, as though his bones were hollow. He had little control over the direction he moved in but he was still able to move his body from one side of the bed to the other.

“Stop! I mean it!” Of course his pleas fell on deaf ears as the worker still continued to grab at his arm. The woman came further into his line of sight and he could see that she had blonde hair and a pinched face but that was all he was able to make out before he felt a needle poke into his arm. “Ow- fuck! Get off of me you son of a-“

He flailed his arm and to his surprise he felt his fist connect with the workers face, feeling as the bone underneath the man’s nose crunched sickeningly with a loud crack and the man flew backwards into the monitors behind him. He’d managed to snap the restraints off of his arm with little effort and he didn’t waste time in ripping the other arm free. He swung his leg round to kick
the other worker, who also stumbled back into the various technological devices, and he rolled off of the bed onto the hard white floor. It was at that point he realised the needle the man had been injecting him with was still lodged in his arm, though fortunately he had prevented him pressing the plunger. He ripped the needle out of him and sent it hurtling across the room before realising that it may come in handy later. Whatever the substance was he was sure that Bruce would appreciate a sample, should he make it that far and get out of this god forsaken facility. He dived across the room to pick it up, as he did so he heard the blonde woman speak calmly again, this time into a sleek looking black radio.

“Subject eight has managed to escape his bonds once again, please ensure that he is unable to leave the building.” She sounded sickeningly sweet as she finished the request with a smirk. “Thank you.”

The seamless walls opened up to reveal the hidden doors that were scattered around the room, and the space filled with men in similar clothing to the scientists, only much more weaponised. White leather and metal panelling decorated their uniforms as well as sleek shielded helmets that were reminiscent of motorcycle garb. Had Peter not been scared out of his mind he would have commented on how their clothing resembled that of both Storm Trooper and Death Star Gunners—but alas, there was no time for him to marvel at their great costume design. He dodged out of the way as three of the brutes lunged at him. He managed to hold his own against at least fifteen of the soldiers, knocking out half of them before his adrenaline began to weign and the effects of the drugs in his system took hold once again. The altercation flew by for him as he managed to fight his way out of the room and towards a large pair of doors at the far end of the hallway he fell out into. He managed to make it within three feet of them before he was finally halted.

His reflexes were still stunted as a result of being unconscious for an unknown period of time, and a few mistimed punches had him slammed hard onto the concrete and he felt his ribs snap. A hot blinding pain ran through his left side, making his lungs retract suddenly and harshly, knocking the wind out of him as the searing heat spread. He didn’t have time to react though, he was already being pulled up by another two men, forced back onto his feet and dragged down a grey windowless corridor; they kept his arms pinned behind his back and one of the men forced his head down so he couldn’t see where he was going. The dizzying nausea that came with the breaking of his chest wall had him fighting to stay conscious once again as he was suddenly thrown into another room. This room was much larger, though equally blinding white. Peter didn’t allow himself a moment’s respite despite the fierce pain exploding in his chest from his fractured bones. He forced himself to stand up again, only allowing a few wracked coughs before he wiped the blood away from his mouth and readied himself for the next wave of enemies to come pouring out, but they didn’t. The doors didn’t open again, it wasn’t until he heard a cough come from behind him that he turned around to look at the rest of the room.

A circular panel-like table lined the end of the room furthest from him, the tops of which were blocked with what Peter assumed to be bulletproof glass, from tabletop to ceiling. Twelve cookie cutter people with zero distinguishable features between them, all sat around the table, dressed in suits or equally official looking clothing. The only one that stood out was the blonde woman from the corner of the medical room. She was tall, scarily thin, with a pinched face and an unnervingly wide smile. Her lips were painted a bright red and her hair was pulled tight in a bun away from her face, only adding to the skin stretched over a skull look.

“What the- is this real?” Peter laughed shakily, causing the blonde woman to raise an eyebrow.

“I didn’t expect you to find this situation amusing Mr. Parker, though I must say you are just full of surprises today.”
“Really? Is this the fucking twilight zone or have y’all never seen a movie?” He wasn’t sure if it was the pain, the panic or the drugs in his system that was causing his delirium, or maybe his Dad’s smartmouth was rubbing off on him. Either way his new found confidence in the face of obvious danger was probably not a good idea, but he was too hysterical to care. He’d just been kidnapped and woken up in a strange place, with strange people who were trying to shoot him up with god knows what and now they were reenacting overdone movie tropes? “This is like every bad guys lair ever. Is this the part where you tell me your evil plan to take over the world or where I found out that that dude is my real dad?”

He snorted and pointed a shaky arm to a small balding man who sat at the far end of the conference table.

“Funny you should mention paternal figures.” The blonde woman smirked again and pressed a button on her desk. On commands one of the white walls lifted up, revealing a room separated by a similar ballistic proof glass, adjacent to the one they were in. In it was a chair with an unconscious Tony strapped to it, his face bloodied and bruised. Peter’s smile fell instantly and he ran over to the glass. The blonde woman let out a cold laugh and began speaking triumphantly. “Oh, so that got your attention. It’s not a game anymore is it, Mr. Parker?”

Peter paid no attention to her and began banging wildly on the glass in an attempt to wake his father up, but the man didn’t budge. After a few minutes Peter relented and turned back towards the desk of people. “Don’t you dare hurt him.”

“Well, that all depends. We have no use for him now so whether he lives or dies is meaningless.” She shrugged nonchalantly. “So, sit down like a good little boy and have an adult conversation with us and we’ll be more considerate when it comes to your requests, hm?”

Not much caring for her condescending tone Peter grouchilly obeyed. “How can you not have a use for Tony Stark, that man has more knowledge in his little finger than your entire facility combined, I know you’re just using me as a bargaining chip so he won’t have the Avengers tear this place to shreds.”

The woman cackled at him again. “It’s cute how you think your daddy is that important.”

“He’s not- Don’t- He’s my boss.” Peter snapped furiously. He knew better than to let the enemy get into his head and he knew that he and Tony’s relationship was best left professional when people outside the household were concerned.

“Oh, excuse me. I just didn’t realise that professional relationships included this kind of behaviour.” The woman stood and turned the the blank wall behind her, that began relaying video footage of when Tony had dropped him off at school one morning. Peter watched as he reached through the window and hugged Tony goodbye.

“See ya later, Dad!”

“Have a good day, Kiddo.” He heard his father’s voice echo around the room. There wasn’t any denying that one. Peter kept his mouth shut and his head down, stealing a glance at Tony who was still sitting unconscious in the room next to him. The man had yet to show any signs of life and the lifeless expression on the mans face made his stomach twist. This wasn’t really happening, surely. Tony wouldn’t have allowed this to happen.

“Now we have that out of the way.” The woman sighed and sat back down. “We can start discussing your contract.”
“What’re you- what contract?” Peter scowled.

“We’ve invested a lot of resources into you Peter, technology we aren’t willing to share or let go. Stark may have given you a shiny suit and let you play pretend as a little sidekick for him, but that’s not what you are. You were designed for our purposes-”

“Which are?” Peter cut her off, much to her obvious distaste. She swallowed her disgust however and resumed that sickeningly forced smirk.

“I’m not sure you’d quite understand. I know Stark has you convinced that you’re ever so intelligent, but that’s only to feed his own ego-”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it. You’re doing the whole make me feel bad about myself and make me think Tony never cared about me thing so I’ll start to believe the shit you’re trying to sell me blah, blah, blah- Lady you underestimate how bad a fifteen year olds self esteem can be. What is it? Chemical weapons? Biomechanics? Oh wait- I don’t care, because this is all bullshit anyway and you’re never gonna get me to do what you want. So go ahead, give me some spiel about whatever you’re planning, because I can guarantee you’re not going to persuade me. Tony’s not even in there is he, it’s some shitty hologram isn’t it? Isn’t it?”

The woman sat with pursed lips and allowed Peter to finish his rant. “You think you’re so smart. Arrogance will be both of your downfalls. Are you finished?”

Peter was breathing heavily, his face flushed. She hadn’t adressed his accusation about that not being the real Tony. It couldn’t be, there was no way that his Dad hadn’t prepared for the eventuality of his capture. He refused the believe that could really be him, Steve or Thor or somebody would have rescued him by now. But if that was the case Tony wouldn’t have allowed him to be left behind...but there was no way.

The woman waved her hand and the glass separating the two rooms raised up and disappeared into the ceiling. The lack of a barrier allowed Peter to see that his Dad was indeed three dimensional. He heightened senses allowed him to smell the iron rich scent of blood emanating from inside the room and hear the man’s laboured breathing. No simulation Peter had seen could’ve tricked his senses so well. “T-tony?”

“Are you going to listen to what I have to say now Peter, or am I wasting my time?” The woman’s cold voice snapped him out of his trace and brought him back into the room. He managed to rip his eyes away from Tony long enough to make eye contact with her and he nodded. “Thank you. As I was saying, it’s our company that gave you your powers. Our technology. You owe your life as it is now to us, do you understand? We can take that away.”

Peter swallowed thickly. It was taking all of his will power not to rush over to Tony’s side but he knew better than to do so. If he did they would no doubt do something far worse than knock the man unconscious. He hadn’t expected the tables to turn so rapidly, they were using Tony as the bargaining chip to get to him. Not the other way around. “Who are you? What do you want?”

“What happened to not wanting to hear our ‘bullshit’?” She smiled when Peter held his head down again rather than respond. “I won’t bore you with the strenuous details, I fear they’d be wasted on you anyway. My employer was hired by the United States government along with Dr. Banner many years ago to conduct studies regarding the effects of gamma radiation. Of course Bruce went down a different path, he was more interested in another field. But my employer continued with his own line of studies. Most of which were conducted on animals such as the one you encountered when your school toured one of our facilities. Now I know I don’t have to explain that part to you. You’re well versed in the effects that particular specimen caused, hm?”
Peter resisted the urge to spit in the woman’s direction when she flashed him another sickly, toothy grin; Only managing to refrain from doing so to avoid sealing both Tony and his own fate. Instead he nodded slowly.

“Well the results we found in you were unlike none we’d ever seen. No other” She paused for a second seemingly trying to find the right word. “Patient, managed to survive the intubation process. They would pass before our serum managed to bond with their DNA. Even when it finally did, we never expected results quite like yours. Not only did your DNA alter to allow our serum to bond it also.”

“Combined with that of the host. The spider. I know. We picked Spider-Man for a reason.” Peter hissed through gritted teeth, unable to bite his tongue any longer. The woman was feeding him information he already knew he wanted her to get to the point.

“A very apt name.” That smile again, Peter had to swallow down bile. “No one had expected any trace of the carriers DNA to be passed on. None of the trials before or after have had the same result.”

“I know. I remember. It was a fluke.” What was this woman getting at? This entire conversation was asinine, none of this was new information.

“Oh no, Peter. Not a fluke. Something in your DNA holds the key to what we’ve been trying to accomplish.”

“Please for the love of all that is holy- what is that? What’s the point of all this?” He was losing all patience at this point; if she wasn’t going to tell him what the hell was going on he was ready to fight his way out of this place with Tony on his back.

“Resistance to radiation. At least in some form. With the threat of nuclear war at a constant level in today’s climate, don’t you think that would be a useful tool? To be able to immunise people against the effects of radiation, or perhaps induce the results of it. If there’s other people with your specific genetic mutation, it may be possible to reproduce your results—”

“So you’re saying I could be used to save people from a global apocalypse should there be nuke war or to make an army of super soldiers which, in turn, could cause an equally deadly war?”

“I wouldn’t have worded it like that but essentially, yes.” The blonde cackled again, exposing the poor boy to the back of her throat as she threw her head back, turning his stomach even more.

“Well which is it? What’s the end goal here- are we trying to make more captain America’s or less Hulk’s?” Peter breathed out a humourless laugh as he tried to wrap his mind around the gravity of the situation.

“We don’t pride ourselves on ethics, are company prides itself on results, Mr. Parker. So either is preferable, so long as we’re around to reap the benefits.”

“Yeah I got that. Alright. Welp, I ain’t gonna take any part in that. Besides- shouldn’t you have enough of my DNA at this point to have found this key you’re talking about, already? What more do you need?”

The woman’s face took on a dark, twisted shape that certainly couldn’t be described as a smile nor a grimace. Whatever it was, it was much darker than Peter thought possible and he could only imagine what sick thoughts were running through her mind as she spoke. “There’s many more tests that need to be run. Many more.”
Peter swallowed and tried to keep up his calm bravado as he spoke. “S-So what was the point in all this? What’s the point in trying to get my consent? You’re just gonna do what you want to me anyway.”

The woman seemed to pause and think for a moment, clearly amused at the innocence behind his question. “We thought it would be easier if we used dear Daddy here to keep you compliant. Maybe you wouldn’t fight as much, but you’re right. It’s all fruitless. It’ll be easier without him around trying to get you back anyhow. Kill him.”

The woman waved her hand and stood up from her seat, turning away from the table. The other people seated around did the exact same motion all in synchronicity. As soon as the woman made a motion with her hand two guards came in, one grabbing Peter and the other pointing a gun point blank at Tony. There was no time for Peter to react as the latter guard pulled the trigger.

Peter pulled the man behind him over his shoulder and snapped his arm forcing him to the ground. He ran towards the one with the gun and tackled him but not before he heard the bang. The bullet had already left the chamber when Peter’s body made contact with the leather clad henchmen. He couldn’t hear anything but ringing in his own ears though he knew he was screaming. It was as though everything was moving in slow motion.

Wait.

It was.

The bullet was suspended in mid air, surrounded by a faintly glowing red mist. The smoke swirled around it for a moment before the bullet changed direction drastically, at right angle shooting the henchman who’s arm Peter had broken in the head. He barely noticed though, he was too busy repeatedly beating the man with the gun over the head with said gun screaming obscenities before he felt an hand wrap around his arm as he was about to deliver another blow.

“Kid, kid you got him! Come on Pete, stop!” It was Steve. Suddenly Peter’s rage was redirected at him. He stood up and pushed the captain away from him with enough force to actually make the super soldier almost trip.

“Where were you?!” Peter screamed, he was starting to be able to hear himself again and take in his surroundings. People were flooding into the room from all directions, some of which he now recognised to be his team members. He felt like he was going to be sick when he forced himself to look towards Tony.

He was fine. Well not fine, he still was covered in his own blood but there was a distinct lack of gaping head wound or brain matter and that was all Peter cared about. He collapsed forward, ignoring the chaos around them and started undoing Tony’s restraints. He was whispering frantic words of comfort the entire time though the man couldn’t hear him.

“You’re okay dad, I got you we’re- we’re gonna get you out, don’t worry.” He got frustrated trying to undo the leather bonds and ended up ripping them off, along with the arms of the metal chair, making Steve cringe as he watched the metal slice into the boy’s hands. Peter then lifted Tony up effortlessly and started making his way to one of the openings in the door. He didn’t notice all the fights breaking out around him. He didn’t notice Thor smashing through the glass and flying through the gap after the board members, or Clint, Bucky and the blur that was Pietro following suit. He didn’t even notice that Steve was clearing the path in front of him using his shield to part a sea of bodies in the way of their exit. His body went into complete autopilot as he ran hell for leather through the facility, carrying Tony’s deadweight in his arms like it was nothing.
At some point Steve took the lead ahead of Peter, having the zombie teenager follow him down the flight of stairs that lead to a parking garage, that was filled with S.H.I.E.L.D personnel. Several armoured cars were lined up, one of which was clearly set up to be a medi-van. A whirlpool of people surrounded the three men and were attempting to separate Tony from his adopted son, and said adopted son wasn’t taking too kindly to that idea.

“Peter you need to let them check him over-“

“If anyone touches him I will snap their fucking neck.” Peter deadpanned. He didn’t sound frantic, his voice was cold, calculated. The calm demeanour in which the boy delivered the threat was more terrifying than it would have been had he screamed it wildly, the ferocity in his voice caused everyone around him to take a step back. “Bruce. Only Bruce. No one else.”

On que the short doctor pushed his way through the crowd of agents, having heard the boy’s cries. “I’m here Pete, I’m right here. Come lay him down, there’s a good boy.”

Bruce gently lead Peter over to the van with a hand on his shoulder. “He won’t wake up, Bruce. Why-why won’t he-“

Peter’s voice started to break as the adrenaline he was running on started dumping out of his system and the panic started to set in.

“It’s alright, he’s probably just got a concussion. I’ve got him Pete, you can let go. I’ll keep him safe you did good, buddy.” It took Bruce gently pushing and Steve gently pulling Peter away to finally pry the boy off of the man enough for the doctor to check him over. By this point Peter’s resolve had all since dissipated and he fully broke down sobbing.

Steve wrapped his arms around him and help him close to his chest. “You did so good, Sport. You kept him safe, you did it. He’s okay, everything’s okay.” He held his hand up to stop the medics starting towards him, telling them that Peter needed a minute before he could handle anyone else near him.

“Where-where were you?!?” Peter tried to rip himself away from Steve to yell up at the man, but he held him firm. He knew no matter how angry the teenager was with him he needed a hug more than anything right then. “How did- how did this- they coulda..”

Peter trailed off, once again sobbing into the super soldiers chest, Steve muttering apologies and words of comfort to him the entire time. Whilst they were waiting for Tony to be cleared for travel, Steve managed to pour the hysterical boy in the back seats of one of the armoured vans, ensuring that Tony was still in his line of vision. In that van sat a very beaten up Nat.

“Oh my god- Nat! You’re alive!” Peter threw his arms around the woman who smiled in reply and reciprocated his enthusiasm.

“Just about.” She chuckled and wiped Peter’s curls out of his face. He sat back to look at her, she had a mass of bruises covering the right side of her face as well as a nasty slice in her earlobe.

“Jesus, are you okay?” Peter’s lip trembled and his eyes threatened to start crying again.

“I could say the same about you, look at your head.” She hissed sympathetically as she moved a mass of blood matted hair away from his forehead. “That’s gonna leave a cool scar.”

“They were gonna kill Tony, Nat. They were this close.” Peter’s voice broke and he started sobbing again, relaying the story to the two adults in the car, his breathing getting more and more rapid as he built himself up into a panic attack. What was more concerning to them was the raspy
rattling they could hear with each laboured breath. “P, P, hey. Breathe for me, did you get hit?”

Nat placed a hand on his side, making him draw in a sharp breath. Peter had long since forgotten his cracked ribs, the pain being pushed to the furthest recess of his mind in favour of making sure Tony was safe. He nodded and coughed wetly, making the two adults turn to each other and exchange worried glances.

“I’ll go grab a medic, shoulda had them look over him anyway-“ Steve started to hop out of the car but at that moment Bruce looked up towards the window of their vehicle, gesturing that Tony was awake. Peter didn’t even wait for Steve to exit the van, he clambered over the man’s lap and ran out before anyone had a chance to blink. “Or, you know, we could have Bruce take a look.”

Peter pushed through a group of agents and hopped over a case someone had open in favour of getting to Bruce’s van just a moment quicker. “Dad, Dad, Tony oh my god- Dad are you-“

“Woah, hey, Underwood calm down you’re gonna have a heart attack-“ Tony chuckled drowsily from his half lying position on the van floor, not getting a chance to finish his chastising before Peter tackled him with a hug. “Mind my head.”

Peter was busy muttering various apologies and confessions into Tony’s chest, along with another rendition of the events from his point of view but most of it was unintelligible. The other adults took a step back, allowing the two to share a moment in private before they had Peter looked over. Tony smiled gratefully at them and he busied himself consoling the distraught teenager. He’d been briefly informed on what Peter had to witness so he was prepared for the whirlwind of emotions he was going to be facing from the boy. He brushed a shaking hand through Peter’s hair and rubbed his back with the other, whispering to him. “I know baby, I know. I’m so sorry, I know you were scared. We’re safe now, we’re both safe, yeah? I’m right here Petey.”

It took a good fifteen minutes for Tony to calm him down enough for him to separate himself from him, allowing him to sit up fully and support them both while Bruce checked Peter over. At that point it was though all emotion had left Peter as he completely dissociated. If Tony was given the choice between Peter in that state and as hysterical as he had been not ten minutes before, he would’ve chose the former. Anything was better than Peter when he was completely switched off like that, nothing anyone did could provide any comfort, he’d just sit there expressionless. Tony was accustomed to it by that point, but it never made it any less difficult to try and emotionally support someone when they were barely responsive. He settled for holding his hand while Bruce did a quick physical exam, continuing to provide words of comfort every so often. It was heartbreaking to see his child sit there, staring off into space like that, clearly traumatised. He would’ve done anything to get some kind of reaction out of him.

“Okay, Peter, can you help me slip your shirt off of you? Is that okay?” A despondent nod was how the boy replied to the doctors question. “Okay, gently does it. Ooh, yep, broken.”

Lifting the fabric of his shirt revealed a dark purplish bruise covering the entirety of Peter’s side, spreading from just under his armpit all the way down his ribcage. Bruce pushed gently in several areas asking whether or not it hurt or if Peter could feel a change in his breathing, but the boy didn’t respond. Bruce switched to checking his breathing manually using a stethoscope. “There’s some fluid in his lungs but I’m not convinced there’s a puncture, I’ll do some scans when we get back home.”

Tony nodded understandingly and rubbed Peter’s back. He was shocked when Peter seemed to come back to himself for a moment. “Are we going home now?”

“Not just yet buddy, we have to give a report first, then we can-“
“I wanna go home. Can’t I just write a report?” All the adults smiled at him sympathetically.

“No, no. It’s not that kind of report, you have to give a statement to one of our higher ups.” Tony said sadly. He wanted to get his son home as soon as possible too, back to where he felt safe and secure. But he knew it was a necessary evil, one he couldn’t shield Peter from, not after a major incident like that. “It won’t take long, I promise. As soon as you’re done we can go home and-”

“Wait, what? You mean you can’t come in with me?” Peter turned and met Tony’s eyes for the first time since he’d snapped out of his dissociative spell. His big brown eyes taking on a watery fearful expression that made Tony want to scoop him into a hug and protect him from everything bad in the world.

“No, honey. I’m sorry I can’t, we each have to give them individually to avoid us getting our stories muddled-”

“Like cross contamination, I remember when we did the reliability of eyewitness testimony in Psych: suggestibility, misattribution and false memories and all that.” Peter said quietly, the light leaving his eyes again. Tony was used to Peter using his academic knowledge to cope with emotional situations as a way to rationalise them, if that was what was helping Peter come to terms with their current situation who was he to stop him?

“Exactly. They’ll take our statements individually then corroborate our stories themselves, it saves time and it’s more reliable. I’ll be right outside the entire time-”

“Uh uh, you gotta rest.” Peter shook his head seriously, once again switching back to his emotional state. Trust Peter to let himself open up emotionally when someone else’s best interests were involved. “You’ve got a concussion you gotta-”

“We’ve got a couple hours drive yet, bubby. I can take a nap on our way there, don’t worry about me.” Tony pulled Peter into a hug again, finally feeling the boy relax against him. “You stink.”

“So do you.” Peter giggled quietly, the sound of his laughter making Tony’s chest tighten a little. It was a relief to hear.

Whilst they were situating themselves in the back of the van, the rest of the Avengers had filled in and out of the building, checking in evidence and logging casualties as well as reporting who had evaded capture. Peter forced himself not to listen to the various conversations going on around him, in favour of listening to the gentle whir of Tony’s arc reactor. They waited around for another hour or so before the driver of their vehicle informed them of their departure back to main base.

“You buckled in?” Tony spoke into Peter’s hair, feeling the boy nod. He kissed the top of his head gently and let his cheek rest against it. “You must be exhausted, I know I am.”

“Take a nap Dad, I’ll be okay, really.” Peter looked up at him reassuringly. Tony would have argued but he was struggling to keep his eyes open, the concussion having knocked all of his energy out of him, literally and figuratively. With Steve, Bruce and Nat sharing their shuttle, he felt comfortable letting himself rest.

“Don’t you hesitate to wake me up if you need anything, understood?” Another small nod. “Good boy.”

Their drive was uneventful, allowing everyone in the car some respite time alone with their thoughts about the dreadful day they’d had. Peter took the time to go over everything he’d seen and heard, desperately trying to remember all the details so he could give as accurate a report as possible. The adults in the car were sure to check in with him often to make sure he was alright,
which he assured them every time he was even though internally he felt like screaming. He couldn’t understand how things had gone so wrong, so quickly. He itched to ask them, especially Steve given he was the one meat to be securing the information on him, but he knew better than to start a confrontation. That and the fact he knew he probably wouldn’t get the answers he wanted to if any at all, they all had to give unbiased reports they couldn’t share their experiences with each other. He was too emotionally exhausted to be angry with anyone anyway, he was sure wherever the mission went wrong it was no one’s fault. He just wanted to get home and go to sleep. Scratch that, take a hot shower, eat something dripping with grease that had zero nutritional value and enough calories to kill a small cow, then go to sleep.

When they were around ten minutes away from their destination Peter shook Tony awake gently, giving the man some time to wake up before he had to relay the days events.

“Ugh, this is gonna be fun.” Tony grumbled as he stretched. “Can’t wait for that look of disapproval ol’ Patchy is gonna give me.”

The others chuckled at the pseudonym but it left Peter confused. That was until he saw a tall, dark figure poke his head out of a room at the end of the hallway they were all currently sitting in. A tall, dark figure with an eyepatch.

“Hey, Fury.” Steve smiled as he stood and waltzed confidently past the man into his office.

“Captain.” The man nodded courteously to the rest of the group, pausing when his eyes fell on Peter. He wasn’t quite sure if the man was just blinking but the teen was sure the man intended to wink at him. Tony clapped a hand on his shoulder and gave him a look that told him the man definitely intended it to be a wink.

The rest of the group chatted casually amongst themselves whilst Steve was having his turn reporting to Fury. Peter had never felt more out of his place in his life. They were situated in what looked to be a normal working environment, all of them dressed in either their supersuits, normal but bloodied everyday clothing or in his case a hospital gown (complete with the paper underwear). People busied themselves around them, filing paperwork and fetching coffee, Nat even having to move Steve’s shield for one lady to use the photocopier.

After around half an hour Steve came out, beckoning for Nat to go in after him. When she did he allowed himself to divulge some of his own story to the rest of the group, though nothing that would conflict with their own stories. The man explained how he and Bucky were captured as planned and he was in the process of getting information out of people when he got the notification that Nat, Tony and Peter had been attacked, just like they had accounted for. Wait a second—accounted for?

“Well yes Peter, of course we were all prepared for that happening. We were never going to put you in any real danger—” Steve tried to explain when Peter had interrupted him at that part of the story.

“Well it sure as hell felt like it! You’re telling me it was part of the plan for me to get captured and drugged and—”

“No! No! No it wasn’t Peter not at all but of course we had measures in place in case that did happe—” Tony started, sensing how things were falling into place in the boys head and they were the furthest thing from the truth.
“So why didn’t you tell me there was a chance that the safe house wasn’t safe at all? I could’ve prepared, I could’ve-”

“We thought it would be best if you didn’t know so there was no way you’d-”

“Fuck it up.” Peter deadpanned, looking at the other men’s faces as if daring them to argue with the accuracy of his statement. All the days stresses starting to rise up in his chest again, preparing him for a good argument to ensue, especially at the way Steve’s eyes blazed at his choice of language.

“Hey-” Steve started to reprimand him.

“No no I get it, I just fuck things up because I’m so unpredictable and unorganised and can’t take direction. Maybe if someone had told me something rather than leaving me in the dark the entire time- about literally everything I wouldn’t have thought Tony was going to DIE! Well I’m sorry! I’m so sorry I’m so difficult to manage maybe you’d be better off if you let them take m-”

“No I get it. That sentence. That’s enough Peter. It wasn’t like that, we didn’t know that was going to go down like that- and we didn’t know that was their motives. I get it, you’re tired and angry, it’s been a long fucky day- but do not, yell and scream and act like a toddler, have you noticed where we are?”

Peter closed his mouth abruptly and looked around at the setting they were in, noticing the office workers who had turned to stare at him during his outburst. He felt his face flush red and he sank own in his chair a little. He had to admit he was surprised that Tony had told him off after everything they’d been through that day, but he also had to admit it was definitely warranted.

“Sorry.”

“Thank you. If I ever hear you start to say we’d be better off if we let them take you I’m gonna let Steve wash your mouth out with soap, understood?”

Peter nodded curtly. It was ungrateful of him to say such a thing after all the effort everyone had gone through to get him and Tony out of that mess. They continued to explain to him how they hadn’t ever intended for them to get ambushed, let alone at the safehouse, but they always had to have a plan should that situation arise and they were lucky that they did. It took a short while for them to get peter to understand but he eventually relented and accepted their reasonings for having not told him all the intricacies of their plans.

Bruce was next to go in and Peter started to get nervous, knowing Bruce had only a small role to play in the days events. That meant either he or Tony were going to go in next and he wasn’t sure which was worse; having to be separated from the man and face Nick Fury alone, or having to do that then come out and have Tony pulled away from him immediately. He knew he was being childish and that he should man up, he wasn’t about to cry about getting separated from his dad like a five year old on their first day of kindergarten. Except he was, and he couldn’t make his eyes stop watering. He was scared enough of the man after that day he’d embarrassed himself in that meeting and the idea of having to sit in a room with just them man after the traumatising day he had was enough to push him over the edge.

Just as he was about to enter what would be his fourth panic attack of the day he felt his dad wrap his arm around him and pull him closer into his side. “Breathe with me. In for four, hold for five, out for seven.”

Tony made a show of doing his breathing exercises with him and counting him down each time. Once his breathing evened out Tony continued. “I’ll be a door away from you, if you need me just yell. I’m not going anywhere.”
“That’s what you said last night and look what happened.” Peter voice broke.

“This isn’t the same Petey, we’re safe here I promise. Nothing bads gonna happen, you gotta trust me.”

Peter wanted to say how could he after everything that had happened but he didn’t have the heart to. He knew his dad was just trying to help, none of this had been his fault. He nodded bravely and straightened himself up, hissing slightly when his ribs protested him moving a certain way. Not five minutes later Bruce reemerged and Nick was calling Tony forward. His dad stood and stole one last glance back at him. “You gonna be alright, Underoos?”

Peter nodded bravely and made a ‘go’ hand gesture to usher his Dad out of the room. Nick gave him that ‘wink’ face again before he closed the door behind them both.

Tony was in the room for the longest out of all of them and the wait was agonising. By this point everyone was exhausted, Nat even falling asleep against Bruce for a short while. Steve tried to help pass the time for Peter by advising him on what to expect in the interview but he only succeeding in making the anxious boy more nervous. It was over an hour before Tony reappeared, looking visibly more relaxed than when he went in. He strode over to Peter and tapped him on the shoulder.

“Your turn bubby.” He smiled. “Don’t be nervous, okay? Just tell the truth and everything will be fine.”

Once again Peter nodded bravely and stood up, shaking slightly. He walked slowly down the short corridor to where the tall man was holding the door open for him. He took one last deep breath (and stole one more glance as his Dad who gave him a thumbs up) before stepping inside. The office was nice, tidy with stacks of paper piled neatly on the large wooden desk at one end of the room. Large open windows looked out at the city skyline and Peter found that he could see the one place he longed to be from their floor: Stark Tower.

“Mr. Parker. A pleasure to meet you again, please take a seat.” Fury smiled at him, addressing Peter in a friendly tone that he had certainly not been expecting and gesturing the white couch in front of the desk. Peter sat down as he was told as the man sat in the seat opposite him. Not that he ever had been, but Peter felt as though he’d been sent to the principal’s office for doing something wrong and he felt his palms getting sweaty.

“Before we begin, do you need anything? Water, a sandwich, bathroom break, no?” The man waited for a response to each question, Peter shaking his head to each one (blushing brightly at the last option), before continuing. “Okay. I know this is your first time reporting a series of events and after the day you’ve had I know your head must be swimming. So we’ll start at the beginning, okay?”

Peter nodded again. He was still shell shocked at the scary, usually sarcastic man’s kind and friendly demeanor; though considering the change he’d seen in Tony through the course of him knowing him he ought not to have been shocked by people’s multifaceted personalities.

“So, what happened that day at school?”

Peter started relaying the story in as much detail that he could muster, everything from what he ate and drank to what time they stopped at gas stations. He tried to avoid telling the man the personal details about their specific detours, but Nick was persistent with his questioning. It was apparent how uncomfortable he was explaining the issues he’d been experiencing with his bladder, especially considering the history of the first time they met. Peter really didn’t want the
man to think he made a habit of peeing himself (though in all honesty Peter, you kinda do). Just as he was starting to develop a block in his speech from the embarrassment he felt something brush against his leg, making him jump.

He looked down and saw a ball of white and orange fluff with large green eyes looking up at him. “Oh, hello dere.”

The ball of fluff in question then took it upon himself to jump onto Peter’s lap and nudge him hands, begging for attention, making the teen giggle.

“Goosey! Sorry about that, he’s not usually so friendly. In fact he hates people.” Nick frowned and gave the cat a disapproving look to which the cat paid no mind, if anything Goose deliberately begged for more fuss using his headbutts.

“It’s okay, I feel honoured.” Peter grinned and fully gave in the the cats demands, relaxing visibly as he did so. He found it much easier to explain the more embarrassing details when the friendly cat took it upon himself to act as a temporary emotional support animal.

When Peter was getting to the more detailed part about the time he spent in the facility he noticed the man start taking notes on exactly what he was saying. He explained everything he’d seen and heard, making sure the relay the dialogue between the woman, the workers and him to the T.

“You’ve got a remarkable memory.” The man commented looking up rom his notes to stare at Peter for a moment as though he was considering all of the missions that he could possibly put that skill to good use on.

“Uh, thanks?” Peter said awkwardly.

The man in front of him cleared his throats before waving his hand flippantly and returning his gaze to his nots. “Anyway, continue.”

“Well, the dude was trying to inject me with this.” Peter withdrew the syringe he’d grabbed out of his pocket to show Fury, the purple liquid still inside the chamber. The man’s jaw visibly dropped. “Was I not meant to show you this-”

“No no, I’m glad you did. It’s a good thing you didn’t check it in as evidence-”

“Oh crap was I meant to…” Peter stared down at the contraband in his hand in horror.

“Don’t worry about it, I won’t tell if you don’t. Be sure to give that straight to Bruce and don’t let another soul see it, do you understand?” Peter nodded but looked visibly uncomfortable at the request, not wanting to get into trouble for doing something wrong and not understanding the nature of the what the man was asking him. “Look, if you book this in, it’ll take months to process. Even when it does there’s no guarantee that we’ll ever see it again, it’d probably be destroyed. If Bruce can get anything useful from this stuff, anything that could help us in our investigation, he deserves the chance don’t you agree?”

Peter nodded slowly. He was still weary of Fury, not knowing the man well enough to make a discernible judge of his character, but he trusted Bruce with his life.

“Good, now slip that back into your pocket. Tell Bruce that should he get caught with it, he found a way to extract it out of your system whilst he was examining you, got it?”

“Okay, but Sir, I still don’t really understand what this stuff is?”
“Neither do I, son. That’s the point.”

Peter continued the story, explaining how he managed to evade the guards for a time, but was eventually thrown into the room full of people with no faces. When it came time to tell Nick about the surveillance footage used against him he hesitated once again.

“What was the footage of, Peter?”

“M-me and Tony…”

Nick waited but Peter didn’t continue. “What were you doing?”

“He was dropping me off at school…”

“And?”

“Well I...I uh- I..”

Fury was already well aware of the relationship between the two, Tony having told him the night they were abducted by the MV, when Tony told him about the number of subjects Peter had remembered. The man also went into detail during his own interview, Nick was using the question to judge the measure of the boys character, to see whether he’d be forthright with him or if he was the type to withhold information. Should it be the latter he’d question Peters ability to progress within a company where loyalty and honesty was such highly valued.

“It had a recording of me calling Tony, Dad, Sir…”

Nick was sure not to show any expression on his face, continuing as though the boy had told him the sky was blue or that he was wearing an eye-patch. “What was your response to her showing you that?”

Peter was surprised but greatly relieved that the man showed no reaction in his admission, but he prayed that he hadn’t just ruined everything for himself and Tony with that one little word. He started petting Goose more rapidly, showing his increase in stress and the cat was quick to nudge him back from the edge of a panic attack.

The rest of the interview went smoothly and after an hour and a half Peter was finally allowed to leave the man’s office, and return to the comforting arms of his father. He was a little sad to be leaving the cat behind though, who mewed sadly as soon as he placed it on the floor. Maybe he’d have to beg his Dad for a pet whilst they were both still emotionally vulnerable.

“Ah Goose, don’t be like that, you’ll see him again. Have a safe journey home, Mr. Parker. And remember, keep that little secret between you, Bruce, your Dad and I, you hear?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Good.” With that Peter walked away, automatically ducking under his Dad’s arm who was stood there waiting for him. Tony looked back at Nick and the two exchanged a knowing glance before he lead his son back out of the building and back home.

Once the boy had left, Nick filled out his report, making sure to leave Peter’s admission out of it, just as he and Tony had discussed. He knew he could lose his job for withholding information, but he also knew should his superiors find out the depth of Peter and Tony’s relationship, it would risk them being separated to avoid “a conflict of interest”. Besides, he kind of liked seeing that side of his longtime friend. Iron-Dad had quite the ring to it.
Night Terrors

Chapter Summary

After a few super serious chapters I had to make the ending of this one a lil goofy I'm sorry XD

“Master Tony.” A deep but soft voice resounded late one Thursday night, waking the middle aged genius up with a start.

“Yes, Jar, what’s up?” Tony inhaled sharply through his nose as he propped himself up on one elbow to look at his alarm clock. Three forty-seven am.

“Master Peter is requesting your presence once again.”

Tony sighed softly. “Send him in, please.”

“I have as per your previous request, sir.”

Tony frowned slightly and rolled over. Sure enough Peter was standing there, red faced but expressionless. “Hey, bubs. Nightmare again?”

Peter nodded sullenly.

“Wanna try and sleep here or are we up for the night?” Peter shuffled uncomfortably looking towards the floor, silently giving the man his answer. Tony stretched and sat up fully, readying himself to get up. “Alright, let’s go.”

Tony lead the unresponsive boy back up to the living room, sat him down on the couch and made his way over to the TV. “Which episode were we on?”

“Attack of the Clones.” Peter mumbled quietly around the thumb he was gnawing on, staring straight through the man.

Tony put the disc in and slid onto the couch beside the boy pulling him close for a hug. Peter didn’t object to the physical contact but he didn’t reciprocate it either, though Tony had grown accustomed to that when the boy was in this state, so he didn’t take the rejection personally. Once the movie started playing he felt Peter relax against him, his tense muscles starting to unwind and he allowed himself to cuddle closer to the man.

“Warming up a little, bud?” Tony asked gently, rubbing his hand up and down Peter’s arm. ‘Warming up’ was code for whether or not Peter was coming out of his numb phase after disassociating from the nightmare. Tony was more than used to the process Peter went through after an episode, from either a nightmare, overstimulation or just a general panic attack. As much as he hated it he knew there wasn’t much he could do other than wait for Peter’s emotions to return enough for him to be of any comfort. He felt the boy nod his head, which was a good sign.

Over the past few months since their run in with the MV corporation this had become a near nightly routine; it was either nights staying up on the couch watching movies until the boy fell asleep or Peter would (on occasion when he’d let himself) crawl into bed beside Tony. It didn’t
happen every night, but as time went on it was happening more often than not. Either way Peter was always gone by the time Tony woke up, which would lead onto a morning of sideways glances and avoiding eye contact between the pair.

Peter had bounced back at first, remarkably quickly in fact, immediately settling back into their usual routine. He’d been more than happy to return to school that following Monday, despite Tony wanting him to take a week off regarding his broken ribs, head injury and bladder infection but the boy had insisted; convincing his Dad that normality was what would aid his recovery the best and it had seemed to do the job. He even went out that first weekend with his friends and everything seemed normal, he was back to his usual bubbly, goofy self. It wasn’t until a couple weeks after they returned home when the severity of the events hit him and he started having nightmares about what would have happened had Wanda not stopped the bullet when she did. After each nightmare Peter would either wake up screaming or completely numb, both of which were equally emotionally taxing.

It had started off slowly at first. He noticed Peter was tired a lot of the time and was becoming more withdrawn from their usual activities, electing to spend more time in his room than anywhere else. He also lost interest in his schoolwork, often asking to stay home which wasn’t like him at all. Tony even received a call from Ned’s mom, saying Peter hadn’t been replying to his friends texts for days. After a couple weeks of his odd behaviour Peter stopped talking to anyone at all, only answering direct questions with one word answers or nods. Anytime anyone tried to broach the subject with him he immediately shut the conversation down or became hostile. Despite the fact he wanted to be alone he also seemed to want to be around Tony all of the time, which the man had expected given the trauma they’d experienced. But Peter wasn’t just being clingy, it was as though he was angry with Tony and don’t want to be around him, but he needed to be, which was obviously more frustrating for him. The teenager was struggling to accept the comfort that he so desperately craved; he didn’t feel as though he deserved it and he’d admitted that anytime Tony managed to get some conversation out of him. It was exhausting for both parties- Tony trying to convince the boy that he was allowed to need some recovery time after such an event and Peter fighting against it, claiming to not need it.

Tony has tried to not let himself worry too much as Peter was still doing well at school (despite his lack of enthusiasm) and he was still attending regular appointments with his psychiatrist, he knew if he was patient and allowed Peter to work through things in his own time that everything would be okay. It was still painful for him to watch the boys condition go downhill so rapidly, but he’d been advised by his therapist and the boys Aunt to take a step back and allow him to have his own space, something he’d made the mistake of not doing in the past. So he listened, but it was hard. It was also hard to try and convince the other adults he cohabited with to do the same, especially Thor and Steve who just couldn’t seem to grasp the concept, causing many arguments when they thought the teen was out of earshot. He just hadn’t accounted for the fact that the boy couldn’t battle his demons whilst he was asleep. The first time he’d been aware that Peter was having nocturnal issues (other than the fact the boy was constantly exhausted) was when JARVIS had alerted him that Peter was out of his room at gone midnight. When he pulled up surveillance footage it was obvious why Peter was up and where he was going to he made the point to meet him after he’d visited the laundry room. To his surprise the teen hadn’t been embarrassed about his accident, in fact he didn’t seem phased by Tony’s presence at all. Peter had been in a completely dissociative state to the point that Tony had to manually lead the boy back to his room. Of course, it had worried him. But he figured it had been an isolated incident, maybe even sleep walking, since Peter didn’t show signs of recollecting the incident the following day (whereas usually he would have avoided the man all together out of shame). It wasn’t until about a week later that he realised it wasn’t a one time thing.

Only this time it was much worse. JARVIS didn’t even get a chance to warn Tony before Clint
came barrelling into his private bathroom whilst he was taking a shower.

“Tony! Tony you gotta come quick-“

“Fuck me Barton what are you-“

“It’s the kid- he’s having a nightmare or something, I can’t get into his room JARVIS said he-“ the
man didn’t get to finish what he was saying because Tony was already dressed and out of the
room.

Sure enough Peter was screaming the place down from the other side of his locked bedroom door
where Steve was spamming the panel with every access code he could think of.

“The door won’t open JARVIS doesn’t count this as an emergency- fix your stupid computer
Stark-” Steve barked furiously as soon as Tony came into view. Hearing Peter’s cries had set off
the soldier’s fight or flight instincts and obviously fight was winning out.

“Get out of the way Steve, for Christ sakes.” Tony said calmly and with one touch of the screen
the door slid open, revealing a mass of limbs flailing wildly, tangled in sheets in the middle of
Peter’s bed. “Go. I’ve got him, he’s not gonna want a parade of people fucking watching him.”

The others listened, though they were clearly not happy about it, Steve lingering in the hallway for
a few minutes before Clint returned to drag him away. Tony made his way over to Peter though he
wasn’t exactly sure about the best course of action; he didn’t want to go all in grabbing at him in
case he frightened him more or ended up hurting him, but the boy was definitely going to end up
hurting himself if he let him throw himself around like that for much longer. He didn’t have time to
come up with a battle plan because Peter was dangerously close to smacking his head on the wall.

“Peter, P, hey, hey- Bubby wake up. It’s me Pete, wake up it’s alright-“ He was cut off by a fist
smacking him in the nose and he had to bite back the urge to curse. He hissed in pain but pushed
forward, climbing in the bed behind Peter and wrapping his arms around him, hugging him tight
enough that the boy couldn’t flail his arms around and punch either of them again. “Enough,
enough you’re okay. No more fighting baby you’re safe, you ain’t gotta right anymore.”

“They killed him, they fucking killed him-it’s your fault!” Peter wailed bitterly, still struggling to
get out of Tony’s grasp in the midst of his night terror. The sight alone was breaking the man’s
heart. He started rocking gently and brushing the boy’s hair away from his forehead, like he was
used to doing after a panic attack, desperately trying to coax the boy awake as gently as he could.

“Come on, Pete. Come back to me, I’m right here. No ones dying, everything’s okay. Can you
open your eyes for me? Hm? Come on, Petey.” Eventually Peter stilled and his eyes snapped open.
“There you are. You alright?”

Peter swallowed thickly, it dawned on him where he was and what had happened. He tried to pull
himself away from Tony but the man wouldn’t let him out of the hug. “I’m sorry.”

“What are you sorry for? You didn’t do anything wrong.” Tony continued to rock him though he
could feel the boy trying to pull away from him, stiffening up. He slowly relaxed his arms, giving
Peter the freedom to move away and turn to face him.

“Was I yelling?” Peters voice was cold and calm, showing his Dad that he was switching off again.

“Just a little, you only woke up half the street.” He joked but Peter’s expression didn’t change.
“Clint and Steve heard you, that’s all.”
“Great. Just great.” Peter nodded. He sounded both disappointed and frustrated but Tony wasn’t sure if that was aimed at himself or the other adults. “I told JARVIS not to let anyone in.”

“So you told him that, huh? I thought it was strange that I had to override the lock. It’s meant to allow access during an emergency—“

“Does this look like an emergency to you?! I’m fine.” Peter snapped his eyes finally showing a flash of emotion, albeit not the emotion Tony had been expecting.

“Oh yeah, just fine. Screaming at the top of your lungs and breaking my nose seems just fine to me.” Tony huffed out a sarcastic laugh, making Peter turn his head away and stare angrily at the floor. The man softened his tone. “Peter, what was the dream about—“

“You know what it was about and if I wanted to talk to you about it I would—now get out of my room.” The teenager snapped again, shutting down any room for conversation on the topic.

“Uh uh, I’m not playing this game with you again. You don’t wanna talk about it, that’s fine but don’t start pushing me away Pete, please. Not after everything.” Instead of snapping back at him like he wanted to, he thought he’d take on a different approach. If he played into Peter’s empathic side he was much more likely to knock down the boy’s defenses. He knew that he was just trying to protect himself and avoid facing the problem, so for once he wasn’t going to try and force it out of him. “We don’t have to talk about it. I won’t make you.”

“Yes you will.” Peter sniffed and his eyes fell to the floor. Clearly he hadn’t expected his father to take the emotional approach either and it had caught him off guard; expecting an argument and for the subject to be dropped.

“I won’t P, you’ll talk when you’re ready. I don’t expect you to talk to me either, you can confide in your therapist—”

“I have been. It’s not helping.” Peter curled in on himself at that last admission. “I’ve been talking and talking, but it doesn’t make it go away. I’ve been talking to the therapist, I tried to talk to Ned but he didn’t get it- I’ve even been writing it all down but nothings working, Dad. I don’t mean to keep pushing you away but everytime I look at you I keep seeing it…the gun and you…”

Tony sat silently on the edge of the boys bed, rubbing his back as he spoke. This was the most they had spoken in weeks since Peter had started isolating himself, so there was no way he was going to cut the boy off in the middle of his monologue. He waited for Peter to trail off naturally before prompting the boy to continue.

“It’s okay Pete, you can keep going.”

“I’m- I’m just. Tired. So tired. Even when I’m sleeping my mind won’t rest and it’s exhausting. I just want the thoughts to go away.” Tears started to run freely down his face and he put his head in his hands. “I know I’ve been a dick, but I’m trying.”

Once he’d started pouring his heart out there was no stopping him, all of his anxieties and stress coming out of his mouth all at once. He explained from point of view, nothing bad had really occurred, so there was no need for him to obsess over something that didn’t even happen. Tony didn’t die and everything had gone back to normal, so what was the issue? Everyone was treading of eggshells around him and it was driving him crazy, crazier than the nightmares. It was as though everyone thought he was even more fragile than before, as though they were expecting him to break down. He was adamant that he was going to prove them wrong, despite the stupid obsessive and paranoid thoughts he was getting. Thoughts that would creep in everytime Tony was out of his
line of sight and there was the possibility of everything getting ripped away from him again. Thoughts about the split second that could have made his entire life change yet again…

He had to find a way to make the thoughts go away. He was being ridiculous. Yes, he knew it was a normal response to a traumatic event, survivors guilt and all that, but knowing all that didn’t make him anymore understanding when it came to himself. The fact that he was able to understand why he was feeling this way, from an objective and logical standpoint, but still being unable to do anything about it was driving him insane.

“I know- I know it’s normal and everything, and that it’s the idea of what could have happened and the fact that it could happen again eatin’ at me. But I know that, so why can’t I just stop thinking about it? I can’t spend the rest of my life worrying constantly that you’re gonna die on me-”

“Pete, this is what I meant about the recovery period. This feeling is going to pass.” Tony had heard enough and at that point Peter was only talking himself in circles and working himself up more. Frankly hearing how Peter’s mind had been consuming him was making the man feel sick, he hadn’t realised the extent of it and he was internally berating himself for having not stepped in sooner. “I understand how you’re feeling, whether it’s normal or not doesn’t mean anything- everyone copes with things differently and at their own pace, you know that. Just cause it’s normal doesn’t make it any easier.”

Peter nodded and wiped at his face furiously. He felt better that the man was being direct with him, as opposed to how everyone had been treating him for the past few weeks; like a broken child. Even if that was how he felt.

“Fuck, I mean, I’ve been wanting to lock myself in my room and drink myself to death. Seeing how bad you’ve been and knowing I can’t help is killing me- and I’m not saying that to make you feel guilty, please don’t take it that way, I just don’t want you to think that you’re the only one who’s been effected. You’re not weak or stupid for feeling like this Pete, we’ve all been struggling after what happened. Steve’s been throwing himself into his work because he blames himself for everything- I found the poor fucker passed out at his desk last night because he hadn’t slept for two days.” Tony took a moment to calm himself down before continuing, remembering who he was talking to. He didn’t want Peter to try and take on everyone else’s issues as well as his own, knowing what the boy was like. “I probably shouldn’t have said that-”

“No, I get it. It does make me feel better knowing I’m not the only one.” Peter tried to console the man.

“You’re doing it again, stop tryna make me feel better it’s my turn to do that for you.” They both chuckled. “But you’re not. It’s not trivial, just cause I didn’t die doesn’t mean we don’t have a right to be upset. So cut that shit out of your head right now.”

He bumped Peter with his shoulder making the boy laugh again. “I’m trying.”

“I know you are. You don’t have to try and do it all alone though, P. I did that for years and look where it got me- friendless with an alcohol addiction.”

“Wow Dad, pep talk of the year goes to-”

“You know what I’m trying to say, smartass.” Tony rolled his eyes. “The dreams will go away, so will the thoughts. It’s gonna take some time, but it’ll take longer if you keep fighting it.”

Peter nodded slowly. “The thought thing, yeah I get that, I’m working on ‘em. But how am I meant to deal with the dreams, Dad? They’re so...so graphic.”
“I don’t know, bubs. What’s your first reaction when you wake up? What do you wanna do?”

“Go and find you…” Peter mumbled embarrassedly.

“Then why don’t you?”

“Because I’m fifteen not five. I’m not gonna go and wake my dad up cause I had a bad dream.” Peter laughed harshly, with a mocking bite to his tone.

“Don’t be like that. Wanna know something?”

“What? You gonna make up a story to make me feel better?” Peter laughed again.

“No I’m gonna tell you a real story to make you feel better. Do you know how old I was when my parents died?”

“Twenty one?”

“Yep. I made the mistake of hacking the police’s databases and looking at the crime scene photos. I couldn’t sleep for weeks after, but of course I wouldn’t talk to anyone about it. Jarvis was long gone by then so, I had no one to wake up and sit with me.”

“So, what did you do?” Peter asked, wondering where the man was going with his story.

“Nothing. I still have them.”

“Oh.” Peter frowned. He’d expected a much happier resolution. “That’s sad.”

“Very sad. That’s why I want you to work through this now. So you wanna come and wake me up? You come and wake me. Even if you just wanna come into my room and make sure I’m still breathing, you can do that. The code for my room is zero eight one zero, JARVIS is set to let you-“

“Hey, wait a second- that’s August tenth, that’s my birthday!”

“Is it? What a coincidence.” Tony shrugged nonchalantly, not letting on that it was deliberate.

“Oh my god you’re such a softie-“

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

After that incident, Peter reluctantly took Tony’s advice and started coming to him after each and every nightmare. As much as he hated to admit it, it helped a lot. He found that he was actually able to go back to sleep most nights, though he was always sure to return to his own room by a usual time so no one else would catch on to their new routine. He couldn’t help but he embarrassed each morning after he’d disrupted the man’s sleep (especially the nights where the dreams had been accompanied by wet sheets), so he’d do his best to avoid him, inadvertently alerting the other members of their household to the shift in dynamic. He had no doubt that Tony had confided in them about their new sleeping arrangements, if nothing but to explain the spike in his caffeine consumption and the darkened bags under his eyes. Peter felt so guilty about causing the man’s sleep deprivation but Tony had been counteracting that by joining Peter for his afternoon naps, albeit in different rooms.

A couple months passed and slowly but surely Peter’s nightmares started to become less frequent after the spike they had after the month anniversary of their abduction. Once Tony had helped him get over that proverbial hump he managed to wean himself off of going to the wake the man up
every night. He still made sure to go into his room, just to make sure he was still there, a few times a night but it got to the point where Peter was only having severe nightmares that he couldn’t self soothe, once or twice a week; which was much more manageable for both men. The ability to get a decent night’s rest did wonders for Peter’s general attitude too and he found himself feeling much more like his normal self. He was able to reconnect with his other housemates, though they were still definitely wary of upsetting him.

They’d all noticed the change in him though, especially Tony who was so relieved to have his little lab buddy back. As soon as Peter mentioned an idea he’d been working on to do with the fabric of his suit he had Tony had him back down in his workshop with him quicker than the boy could say suit upgrade. He’d had so many ideas he’d pushed back whilst Peter was feeling down, sure he could’ve easily worked them out himself but he didn’t want to. He wanted to share the fun with his son and the room felt empty without him tinkering away in the corner.

Things were starting to look up finally, in every area other than school. Peter was still anxious about being away from his Dad for extended periods of time, but he didn’t dare have the man take him to or from school anymore, given the context of the footage that had been used against him. It was also where he felt the least safe. He found it ironic how he had felt suffocated being trapped inside the tower before and now he didn’t want to leave it even for a moment. He didn’t just worry about his own safety, he had been worried about that of his friends. If the MV corp were able to find out his identity and the identity of those closest to him, who’s to say no one else had? How did he know that he wasn’t putting his friends in danger every moment he spent with them? It wasn’t worth the risk. Of course, when he had tried to push them away from him for that very reason, he was met with mixed reactions.

“Dude, you’re so stupid.” Ned had laughed when Peter finally confided in him after a confrontation over three missed facetimes the night before. He smacked his longtime friend on the back. “You ain’t gettin’ rid of me that easy Spider-Man.”

“Keep your voice down.” Peter hissed at him and slammed his locker, turning away to storm down the hallway. But Ned didn’t miss a beat, following right behind him.

“It’s my decision, Pete. I made it the second I found out about all that-”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about Ned, so just stop.” Peter turned around and barked at him, causing several people in the hallway to stop their own conversations to look at him. He sighed frustratedly, great more attention he didn’t want. “Leave me alone.”

Again Ned remained unphased. He skipped happily alongside his furious friend. “You can’t micromanage everything bro. That’s part of your problem-”

“My problem is having a best friend that doesn’t know what’s good for him. Have you even considered it’s not just your life I’m putting in danger? Think about your mom, your dad, your brothers and sisters-”

“My siblings suck ass so the bad guys can have em-”

“Ned! I’m not joking! None of this is funny- This is what I mean, it’s all one big game to you-”

“Okay, okay I get it bad timing.” Ned held his hands up. “But I’m serious when I say I’m not worried. If your Dad says he’s gonna keep us protected I believe him-”

“Then you’re an idiot. He almost got himself killed because of me, he’d clearly not as smart as you think he is so just-” Peter was cut off by his face getting squished against his friends chest as Ned
pulled him into a bear hug that left him dangling two inches off of the ground. “Ned. Put me down.”

“Nope.” He popped the p, still smiling. “I’m not putting you down until you agree to be my best friend again.”

“I hate you.”

“Aw, I love you too P!” Ned tightened his grip.

“People are staring! Put me down!” Peter hissed, trying to wiggle out of his friends grip but the gentle giant help him firm.

“What was that Pete? You’re finished goin’ through your emo phase and you’re ready to stop being an asshole now?”

“Okay you’ve made your point- yes! Now let go!” Ned let Peter down causing the boy to stumble slightly as he brushed the newly formed wrinkles out of his clothes. “You’re insufferable.”

“And you’re an idiot if you think you’re breaking up with me-”

“Don’t say it like that, why did you have to say it like that?” Peter shook his head and stormed off towards his classroom once again.

“I’ll see you at lunch!” Ned called back cheerily, making his way to his own class.

Later that very same day Peter was tasked with facing MJ too, who he’d been avoiding with equal vigor. She and Ned were already seated at a table when he entered the lunch hall and his larger friend pulled a chair across the floor loudly, beckoning for him to join them. He made the noise deliberately to get the kids around them attention, knowing full well Peter would be too socially awkward to ignore Ned with an audience. He sighed and took the seat, not looking up at either of his friends faces.

“Uh, hi.” MJ said sarcastically, giving Peter a faux greeting in return of the one he had yet to give her.

“Hey.” Peter said quietly.

The girl sitting across from him raised her arms in the air and looked side to side dramatically, as though she’d just witnessed something mindblowing. “It speaks! Ned did you see that- it’s almost as if he recognises the presence of his two best friends! And I was starting to think that they’d given you a lobotomy up there in that creepy tower-”

“I get it, Mich.” Peter said tiredly, having expected such a response from the girl with no human emotion. “I’m sorry, alright?”

“Sorry would imply you did something accidentally, Parker.” She popped her gum and put her boots up on the seat next to her knowing how much it would irritate him. “At least Neddikins got a text here and there, I didn’t get zip for two whole weeks. Two weeks, it’s rather impressive considering we have the same homeroom, how did you manage not to look up when I threw my textbook at your head-”

“I get it! I’m sure Ned filled you in on why I’ve been distant, so I don’t need another lecture, okay?” He looked up at her face for the first time in weeks and their eyes met across the table. Fantastic, he really needed nervous butterflies in his stomach on top of everything else. “Since when did my friendship matter to you that much anyway? You remind us all the time you’re too
cool to talk to us half the time.”

Ned made a soft oo sound and MJ’s expression flickered, only for a second, showing that his words had stung. He hadn’t meant for them to come across with such bite but it seemed to do the trick. “Point taken.”

“I didn’t mean it-” He started to apologise but the girl resumed her usual demeanor instantly.

“I’m more shocked about your appearance really. We had a bet on how many eyebrow piercings you’d have, I had ten buck’s on you flat ironing your hair and dying it black-”

“Wow thanks, way to support a male friend with mental health issues. This is why there’s a stigma you know-” Peter frowned and started to rant but he was cut off when MJ leant across the table and pinched one of his cheeks, in a teasing way.

“We’re just glad to have you back, Parker.” She stood up from their table. “I’m going to the vending machine, you hobos want anything?”

Peter shook his head still shell shocked from the sudden physical contact and the sudden burning sensation that rose to his cheeks.

“Nah, I’m good.” Ned said, turning to Peter as MJ walked away, grinning at him. “Check yourself Pete, you’re going pinker than Mrs. Clarks car.”

“Shut up.” Peter snapped, but he leant on his elbow to cover his flaming face with his sleeve.

“Dude I’m glad we’re friends again cause I’ve missed Steve’s cooking.”

“Yeah, well don’t get too excited, he’s been even more of a food nazi lately. He’d stripped the house of any refined sugar.”

“Jesus you must be dying.” Ned patted his friend on the back sympathetically.

“Yeah, he read something about sugar affecting your body’s ability to produce serotonin and he took it as gospel.”

“Well duh, don’t you know old people get all of their facts from articles on facebook.” Ned snorted as he handed Peter a cosmic brownie from his own backpack.

“For real. I made a joke about candy being the only reason I hadn’t offed myself to Clint and he overheard it and went ape shit. He even found my secret stash of energy drinks, the weekends have been tough. Me and Bruce are flagging hard.”

“Just buy a bunch of stuff on your way home from school, man.” Ned chuckled at the idea of Captain America flying around the tower confiscating everyone’s candy like an overprotective mother on halloween.

“You think I ain’t tried that? He searches my backpack. I tried eating it all on the bus one day but I ended up puking- gross Ned!”

He caught Ned off guard whilst he was drinking his soda, a laugh sending the liquid all over the table as it shot out of his nose. As disgusted as Peter was he laughed along with him, it being the first time he’d really laughed in weeks. Despite his trepidation about letting his friends back into his life, he had to admit it felt good.
That night however, Peter found himself in a bit of a sticky situation, upon following some of Ned’s expert advice. Clint had heard about the issues the young teen had been having at night and by heard he quite literally meant heard. Having been the one who’d had to alert Tony when the boy had started yelling in his sleep one night, he hadn’t felt right to intervene himself even had he been able to enter the boys room, given how embarrassed he knew the boy would be later. So when he came across Peter sneaking around the lower floors one night he felt compelled to find out what the boy was doing. He saw that he had a bundle of something he was carrying, which in the middle of the night as a father he knew that wasn’t a good sign.

“What’s got you up so early, kiddo?” He called as he approached making sure not to startle him.

“Uh- uh uh I- Uhm...nothing?” And he was stuttering? That was strike two.

“What you got there?” Clint pointed to the bundle behind Peter’s back.

“Nothing.” Peter said quickly this time, taking on step back from the man.

“Pete. You can tell me, what is it?” The man said gently expecting the teenager to be embarrassed give what he thought the mass was.

“No! They’re mine!”

What? Okay so it wasn’t a wet bed situation, then what on earth was Peter doing up this time of night? “What’s yours? I’m not gonna take it, what’re you hiding?”

“No!” Peter took another step back this time looking as though he was gonna make a break for it, Clint was in too deep now to allow that to happen. He lunged forward and grabbed Peter’s arm before the kid had a chance to get away from him.

There was a scuffle that ensued that ended somehow with Clint sitting on top of the screaming boy who was curled protectively around the bundle, like a turtle trying to retract into its shell, while Clint truffles to pull back the boy’s arms.

“No!”

“Lemme see!”

“No! Someone help!”

“Don’t say that you’re gonna get me in trou- hey!”

Peter has started to crawl away, desperately clawing at the carpet beneath him. Whilst the boy’s arms were occupied the man took the opportunity to pull out the bag from underneath him.

“NO! GIVE IT BACK!” But he didn’t he held the bag over the boy’s head, which was surprisingly light. He realised it was a shipping bag of some kind. What on earth was the boy doing getting packages delivered in the middle of the night?

“Peter what on earth is this?!”

“Ugh! Fine just open it! But you can’t take em you said you wouldn’t!” The boy crossed his arms over his chest and stomped his foot in a perfect rendition of a spoilt toddler.

Clint sighed loudly and pulled open to package to reveal...what? Some kind of rainbow packing peanuts? But they were all different shapes, what the- oh! “Lucky charms?”
“Yes, lucky charms! Steve won’t lemme have em and when he does he picks all the marshmallows out so I just got a bag of marshmallow- STOP LAUGHING!”

But Clint couldn’t. He couldn’t believe the boy had gotten so violent over a bag is sugary cereal. Of all the things to buy during Steve's sugar ban, cereal was the boy's first thought? “Help- help- they’re after me lucky cha-ar-ar-ar-arms!”

Clint could barely breathe between hysterical bouts of laughter, losing all the strength he had with it, which in turn allowed Peter to snatch the five pound bag of sugar back from the man. The teenager took of running angrily down the hallway, calling back at the howling man.

“If you tell Steve you’re dead, Barton!”
Peter Parker Should NOT Be Allowed To Watch Horror Movies

Life was finally starting to return to normal. Well, as normal as it could be for a teenager who’d been adopted by a genius multi-millionaire because he’d accidentally been bitten by a radioactive spider that gave him superpowers. He was getting back into the swing of things, resuming his training and lab work alongside his school and home life. All of which was hectic, but not the kind of hectic he couldn’t handle, the kind that made him excited to get up in the morning and see what challenges the day had for him. He was still having the occasional night terror, at least once or twice a week, but his recovery time after each one was becoming shorter and shorter, often only needing a quick cuddle session with his Dad to send him back to sleep; as opposed to nightly movie marathons and a metric ton of coffee every morning. The only thing that hadn’t let up was the sugar ban, but Peter was managing to sustain his addiction (as well as Bruce’s) using his method of sneaking giant bags of sweets to snack on throughout the week, though his hiding places were getting more and more creative. Every time he found one Steve managed to sniff it out, that man was like a bloodhound for glucose.

It was early one morning when Thor found Peter dangling from the ceiling, halfway hanging out of the vent when everyone had established that the rule was getting out of control. If the teenager was willing to go to such lengths to get a sugar fix Steve was going to have to incorporate it somehow into their regular diets. Clint was upset to have lost his blackmail material though even if it meant he could start having creamer in his coffee again.

“What about fruit? It’s sweet and it’ll-“

“No.” Both Bruce and Peter said in unison, causing the other adults to snicker.

“Okay...what about honey based things? Like pancakes and honey-“ He was still trying to find away to avoid processed sugars. But the teenager had no interest in finding a natural compromise.

“Still no. But I want honey too.” Peter deadpanned. “Mrs. Buttersworth deserves her own spot in that pantry dammit! I’m sick of this sacrilege Steven!”

They eventually reached an impasse as Steve refused to allow Peter’s favourite candies due to their artificial colours and Peter threatened to show him some artificial colours (no, he’s not sure what that threat meant either) and Tony had to shut the argument down before the whole thing got bloody.

Peter was back to reeking havoc around the house, especially since Tony had a lot of work arrangements that week and Peter was given unsupervised time in the lab. He made Thor and himself small projectile weapons that they were taking turns firing down one of the long passageways which, unbeknownst to the young prodigy, had been lined with carpet that was very flammable. After that incident he was banned from the lab without Tony being there much to his and the man’s own disappointment. He’d only just gotten back in there!

“Well what am I meant to do all day now?!“

“You should’ve thought about that before you set fire to my hallway.” Tony growled. “You could’ve been hurt, I thought I could trust you but clearly not.”

“I didn’t do it on purpose! And besides- I put it out!”

“No. JARVIS put it out. You and Thor started screaming like a couple of little girls. That man’s
started more fires with lightning than I’ve had hot meals yet he still—"

“Hey I still pulled the fire extinguisher and I was gonna use it—“

“Not the point Peter. No more lab. End of discussion.” Tony stared at Peter seriously, giving the boy that look that made him want to pee his pants.

“Okay okay. No more lab.” Peter backed off. “Then what am I meant to do all day while you’re still workin’?”

Peter gave the man his signature puppy dog eyes and pout making his resolve weaken. “Why don’t you see if Steve or Nat will watch some of your old movies with you? I’ve got meetings all this afternoon but we can go down and work after.”

“Okay.” The boy said disheartenedly. He made his way back upstairs still disgruntled about his plans to work on boosting the power of his web flingers having been thwarted. It was just a little baby fire after all- if anything it was Tony’s fault for giving him cheap conductors. He found the rest of the adults sitting in the living room, all in one place for once, something that only usually happened during mealtimes or other such scheduled activities.

“Hey.” Peter greeted them as he hopped over the back of the couch to sit in his usual spot, earning him a disapproving look from Steve (having been warned not to use the furniture as ‘his personal gymnastics equipment’ on more than one occasion).

“Hi Peter.”

“Sup, squirt.”

“Good afternoon Spiderling!” Replied Bruce, Nat and Thor respectively. He only received a nod in his direction from Clint who was fiddling with some of the wires connected to the various devices plugged into the TV, cursing as he did so.

“What’re you guys up to?”

“We were planning on watching a movie but dipshit over there can’t figure out what input channel the DVD player is on.” Nat rolled her eyes at Clint who was swapping wires in and out of the boxes.

“HDMI two.” Peter said immediately. He should know he was the one who’d installed it, insisting to Tony that the ‘old fashioned’ way of watching movies made for a better experience than simply streaming them.

“See I told you!” Steve cried out.

“I just tried that!” Clint barked back.

“You guys are so old, here lemme do it.” Peter giggled getting out of his seat to help the man who looked as though he was about to throw the whole television off of the balcony- and possibly Steve along with it. “There, see. This is the DVD remote you were using the one for the speaker.”

“Ugh, why does Tony have to update this shit every other week.” Clint grumbled looking at the two very similar sleek black boxes as he returned to his own seat.

“He likes his gadgets and doodads.” Steve chuckled.
“Did you actually just say doodads?” Nat deadpanned.

“Don’t start Romanov or you’re sitting on the floor.” Steve threatened though he was still smiling.

“What were you guys planning on watching?” Peter asked, immediately becoming suspicious when the adults in the room exchanged nervous glances.

“Oh nothing, uh, did you wanna watch Star Wars or something?” Steve smiled but Peter caught the twitch in the man’s face.

“Uh uh, what were you gonna watch? You guys were planning on having a movie night without me, that’s no fair!”

“Steve it’s really not that scary.” Nat sighed giving the super soldier an exasperated look, as though she’d had this conversation with the man already.

“You know what Tony said, he’s not allowed to-“ Bruce hissed as though he was trying to whisper but he failed miserably.

“I’m right here you know.” Peter scowled at the doctor before turning his attention back to Nat.

“What is it?”

“The Grudge.”

“Oh I think I’ve heard of that. It’s that old Japanese movie right?”

“It doesn’t matter what it is we’re watching something else.” Steve said defiantly.

“Come on Steve don’t be such a whore in the mud, I’m sure Peter can handle a simple film.” Thor chimed in confidently giving the pouting teenager a wink.

“The phrase is stick in the mud, Thor and can everybody mind their language please.” Steve stressed peering around the room.

“Honestly though Steveo, it ain’t that bad. Lila watched it when she was eleven, she thought it was funny.” Clint shrugged honestly.

“Hmm, I don’t know. You know Lila’s more…” Steve trailed off trying to find the right word when all eyes fell on him.

“What is it?” Thor asked when Steve didn’t finish his train of thought.

“Well-“

“Yeah, Steve more what?” Peter frowned and crossed his arms over his chest, daring the man to say anything that would be derogatory towards him.

“Well, she’s just a tough cookie. Not to say-“

“Oh and I’m not?” Peter raised an eyebrow, looking just like Tony when he was picking holes in other people’s stories.

“Not what I meant! I’m just saying that just because Lila could handle it doesn’t necessarily mean that you’ll..enjoy the movie-“

“You’re gonna let Peter be upstaged by a prepubescent little girl, Steve? Now that’s low, not even
giving the poor boy a chance.” Nat faux pouted before she smirked, knowing that Steve was backed into a corner if he wanted to stay on the teenagers good side (as if the two weren’t rocky enough after ‘Candy Gate’). Peter stated at him also, as did the other three men in the room, waiting for him to either cave or be honest about why he didn’t want Peter to watch it. Steve looked desperately towards each one of them, silently begging for someone to be on his side.

“Don’t look at me, ain’t my decision.” Clint waved his hands in the air and walked over to the kitchen to grab some snacks, physically removing himself from the situation.

Thor of course simply smiled and said “I think we ought to give the youngling a chance to prove himself!”

Nat has made her stance clear so it was down to Bruce who looked very uncomfortable at being the stalemate.

“Well, I mean.” He sighed. “Pete, do you think Tony would let you watch this?”

“Probably yeah, if Nat and Clint say it’s not so bad, sure.” Peter lied, but somehow managed to make himself sound somewhat convincing.

“I don’t know, I don’t think he would approve of this…” Steve muttered quietly, but he could tell that he wasn’t about to win this fight. “Peter you’ve just started sleeping better-“

“Don’t bring that up.” The boy said quickly, his face turning red. It was low of Steve to use that against him, breaking the silent rule around the house that they had not to mention Peter’s nighttime issues, no matter how obvious they were. Even though he knew Steve had a point he didn’t appreciate him using it against him.

“Well if Sparky doesn’t like it we’ll just blame Thor.” Nat shrugged and gave Peter a smirk. It made the boy laugh at the nickname but it also helped to draw attention away from Steve’s inconsiderate comment that would no doubt cause another rift between the two.

“Yes, exactly!” The god said enthusiastically before it dawned on him what the assassin had said. “Wait a minute-“

“Who wants popcorn?” Clint yelled from the kitchen, cutting off the budding argument before it began.

A few moments later they were all settled down on the sofas ready for the movie to start. Peter was excited but anxious, having seized the opportunity to watch a horror movie whilst his dad wasn’t around to stop him. It was low of Steve to use that against him, breaking the silent rule around the house that they had not to mention Peter’s nighttime issues, no matter how obvious they were. Even though he knew Steve had a point he didn’t appreciate him using it against him.

“Oh how wrong he had been. The opening scene was enough to have him hiding behind one of their couch cushions. As the movie went on Peter jumped more and more at every little jump scare and noise. But the scene that got him the worst? Undoubtedly the one that happened in the bathroom. Why did it have to be a bathroom, of all places? Why?

When the dead woman’s black hair started to drift down from the ceiling Peter squeezed his eyes shut and turned his head away, catching Steve’s eye as him did so.

“You alright, Sport?” He heard the man say, and having not heard anymore noise coming from the
screen he made the mistake of thinking it was safe to open his eyes. As he did so the horrific blue skinned face of a murdered child popped up on the screen screaming, only it wasn’t screaming in a human’s voice. It sounded like that of a dying cat. Peter let out a scream of his own and covered his eyes making everyone in the room turn and look at him.

“Maybe we should turn it off—” Steve started to lean towards the remote (albeit the wrong one) and both Bruce and Clint nodded in agreement.

“No- no I’m fine- it just caught me off guard.” Peter panted. He gave Steve that pouty puppy dog look, silently begging him not to turn the movie off even though in the back of his mind Peter wanted him to desperately. He didn’t want to watch it anymore, he wished they’d turn it off and put on something more child friendly but he was in too deep now. He had to prove himself to be tougher than Clint’s little girl. She had been eleven when she watched this? And she laughed? Jesus Christ she was a tough cookie, Peter felt like a soggy broken Oreo in comparison.

They let the movie keep rolling and it only got worse from there. The special effects were good for their time and Peter had to stop himself from gagging during the scene with the girl who’s jaw had been ripped off. Throughout the rest of the film Peter curled up into a ball, pressing himself against the back of the sofa until the oversized cushion was practically swallowing him. Anything to get away from the horrors on the screen.

Finally the movie was over, after a gruelling few hours. The final scene where the grotesque woman had descended the staircase, bending and squirming unnaturally was enough to make Peter want to cry. It was so freaky to watch, it made every fibre of his being want to run away from that monstrous excuse for a human on the screen. But it wasn’t real, it wasn’t real- but it looked it. It looked very real. It looked so real that the woman and her screeching son could just crawl straight out of the screen at any moment. As soon as the credits rolled, he shut his eyes, anticipating one last jump scare that never came. He didn’t open his eyes until he felt a hand on his knee, making him jump out of his skin.

“You alright there, bud?” Bruce said gently after the boy yelped. He gave Peter a sympathetic smile, one that was intended to make him not feel bad about being so scared, but it had the opposite effect. “That was too much wasn’t it?”

“W-What? Nah, it was fine.” Peter laughed shakily. He received unconvinced looks from all the adults it the room, bar from Thor of course. Even Nat looked guilty, having had a big part in letting him watch the wretched tape.

“See?! It wasn’t so bad now was it- you really are a worrier Steve!” Thor chuckled loudly as he stood to switch the lights back on, much to Peter’s relief.

“Right.” Steve said flippantly. He didn’t take eyes off of the shaking boy sitting next to him and he yearned to make sure he was okay, but he knew better. If he drew attention to the boy’s obvious fear he’d probably react defensively and reject any comfort anyway. “It’s my turn to pick a movie now.”

“Ugh, what boring shit are you gonna come up with?” Clint rolled his eyes, trying to lighten the tense mood.

“You’ll see.” Steve moved to put something on to hopefully distract Peter from the traumatising footage he’d just witnessed. The boy barely reacted though, staying stuck to his seat, still curled up in fear. Steve picked an older movie, but not as old as everyone had feared. It was an old action movie with a basic plot and very mild violence, but was really centred about the main protagonist saving his love from a bunch of generic super villains. Usually Peter would have appreciated the
timely classic but he couldn’t focus on it. He sat still bundled up in the corner of the couch, waiting for his heartbeat to slow down. He hadn’t expected the movie to freak him out as much as it had and that in itself was very frightening to him.

The movie was about half way through when Tony finally joined them. He walked in behind the couch and patted Peter on the head as he strode past. He didn’t notice the boy flinch at the sudden contact. “Hey.”

Everyone greeted him accept Peter who just looked up at the man and patted the seat beside him. As soon as Tony sat down his son leant against him, manually lifting his arm up to drape it over himself in a hug. The man didn’t think anything of it, since Peter had come out of his self segregation phase he’d been much more physically affectionate. He figured it was the boy’s way of apologising for being a brat earlier.

“I thought you’d be itching to get back downstairs kiddo.” Tony chuckled as he started playing with Peter’s hair. The boy shrugged against him instead of giving a verbal reply. “Save lab time for tomorrow?”

Peter nodded. He didn’t want to leave the room that was currently full of people. The more people he was around the less likely the ghost of Kayako would be to come and murder him. The thought made him shiver a little and he tucked his feet up under him on the couch, off of the floor where a crawling ghost would be able to grab them.

“What were you planning for dinner?” Tony asked nonchalantly, paying no mind to the movie on the TV electing to scroll through his twitter feed instead.

Steve sighed across the room. He realised he had nothing planned which meant- “Take out it is.”

Tony smirked knowing how much it pained his friend to say those words.

They spent the rest of the evening together, which Peter would usually have been thrilled about if he wasn’t busy being petrified. He was noticeably quiet throughout the evening but everyone put it down to the boy’s respect and love for cinema as they were watching older action movies he’d no doubt not seen. Even the adult's who had witnessed the teenager screeching in horror had underestimated how badly the film had effected him. Peter was watching the clock, counting down each minute drawing closer to his bed time. He was dreading having to leave the safety of the crowded room to spend the night alone with the pictures from The Grudge still replaying in his head. He hoped that maybe his dad would’ve forgotten about his curfew as they were busy watching a fight during one of the films but he wasn’t so lucky.

“Come on Kiddo it’s almost ten, time for you to go to bed.” Tony patted Peter’s arm for the boy to sit up and let have his own arm back, but the child was reluctant to move.

“C-can’t I stay up a little longer?” He asked in a small voice, giving Tony his big doe eyes. He was gnawing nervously at his thumb in a way that made the man’s stomach twist. When he thought about it Pete had been awfully cuddly that evening, sitting close to Tony ever since he came back from his meeting, and cuddling into him as soon as he got the chance. He’d even had to force the child to get up and go to the bathroom a few times when he’d started squirming, even then Peter had seemed disgruntled to have to leave his side. The man hadn’t thought anything of it at first but now Peter was displaying obvious signs of anxiety he started to worry that maybe he’d missed something.

“Hey, honey what’s the matter? What’s got you spooked?” Tony asked gently, in a hushed voice to avoid the others listening in on their private conversation. He wrapped his arm around Peter again,
noting how young the boy looked to him all of a sudden.

Peter shrugged and continued to lean into his Dad’s side, trying to prolong the conversation as much as he could in hopes that it would earn him just a few moments longer before the man made him go to his own room. Alone.

“You worried about something?” Tony prompted, jostling the boy a bit with the question. The sudden change in Peter’s mood was even more concerning to him, though he had been rather quiet all night. Was he not feeling well? He didn’t feel warm. “Petey talk to me, what’s wrong?”

“Just don’t wanna go to sleep, yet.” The boy replied timidly, not meeting his father's eye.

“You worried about the dreams again?”

Peter nodded. That wasn’t a complete lie, he was scared about having nightmares, though not entirely his usual ones.

“Oh bubbly, it’s okay. You know you can come and get me if one happens again.” Tony breathed a sigh of relief that it was nothing too serious. Not that he was trivialising the boy’s anxieties, but nightmares was nothing new by this point and it was something Tony knew he could handle. He was relieved to know it was something he could help with. “Come on, staying awake and over thinking about them only makes it worse.”

Tony stood and brought Peter up with him, giving him no choice but to stand up and make his way to his room. He wanted to throw himself on the floor and refuse to move but he knew that was far too childish, he couldn’t do that after all the times he’d brought his age into account during arguments. He resisted the urge to have a full on meltdown but he couldn’t help but whimper when he saw his darkened room.

“Hey, hey, bubbly what’s the matter? What’s got you so scared tonight huh?” Tony heard the quiet noise that caught in the boy’s throat and he whipped around to see Peter on the verge of tears. He pulled him into yet another hug, scared himself at the sudden turn the evening was taking. It was another case of everything seeming fine and without warning Peter starting to get upset, he thought that he was getting better at recognising the signs but clearly he was mistaken.

“I-I don’t know.” Peter lied shakily.

“Just been a bad day?” Tony asked worriedly, hoping in some way it hadn’t been his failure to notice something else going on. Peter took the out once again and nodded. “Aw sweetie. Come on, let’s get you comfy, yeah? How about I stay in here until you fall asleep, would that help?”

Peter nodded again and climbed into bed, leaving space for Tony to join him. He felt guilty lying to the man especially considering how kind he was being offering to stay with his teenage son who was scared to go to sleep, but he couldn’t help himself. He needed the comfort and he was willing to use the man’s assumptions to his advantage. He snuggled close to his Dad, having no qualms about how embarrassing it was to do so, he could save his shame for another day when he wasn’t scared shitless from that stupid movie he’d convinced the other adults to let him watch.

Peter held a fistful of the man’s shirt in his hand and mumbled into his chest. “M’sorry you gotta do this-“

“Shh, shh, shh. I wouldn’t have offered if it was a problem, Underoos. Now close your eyes, I’m right here.” Tony soothed quietly, running his hand up and down the frightened boy’s back, trying to gently coax him into falling asleep. Peter tried to, he really did, but every time he closed his eyes
he thought he could hear that deep groaning creak of that dead woman’s broken voice. He had to keep opening his eyes just to check that his father’s skin hadn’t changed to that sickly pale blue or that the creepy dead boy wasn’t sitting at the foot of his bed.

Somehow, despite all of his shifting around, he’d managed to convince Tony that he’d fallen asleep after around an hour. He struggled to keep his eyes closed as well as his composure when the man gently untangle his body from his and got up from Peter’s bed. He heard the man reach to turn off his lights but for some reason, thank the gods, the man decided against it. Instead he left the room silently, leaving Peter alone.

Try as he might, Peter could not relax in his own room at all. Even with the lights on he swore he could see things moving out of the corner of his eyes. He tried distracting himself by watching YouTube videos on his phone as he usually would on nights he found himself wide awake and restless but even the constant noise was doing nothing to calm his nerves. He dreaded getting out of bed to use the bathroom, the images from the movie flashing through his mind once again; but he couldn’t put off the feeling any longer, his bladder was screaming. For a split second he considered not getting up at all and simply dealing with the mess in the morning but he fought off the ridiculous thought as quickly as it came, as tempting as it was in that moment. He was fifteen years old. He was not about to piss his bed whilst fully conscious after he was scared from a horror movie a girl, four years his junior, found laughable. He kept telling himself this but every time he put his feet down on the floor from his bed his heart pounded, imagining pale, blue tinged hands reaching out and grabbing his ankles to drag him under the bed to his death. Because of this he found himself sprinting to and from the bathroom, peeing as quickly as possible before he leapt from the doorway onto his mattress in an attempt to avoid the gap under his bed all together.

After another hour or so he heard the others making their way to their own bedrooms having retired for the night, and that was when the panic really set in for the boy. It was one thing being scared when he knew people would be awake and ready to come to him if he screamed for help, should the Japanese murder victim and her drowned half cat son appear to reap his soul; but it was another thing to have that happen when everyone else was asleep, they’d never get to him in time. That familiar sickening panicked feeling started to form in his stomach, expanding slowly stopping his lungs from filling all the way until he felt like he couldn’t breathe. He knew how stupid he was being, it wasn’t real it was just a movie, but that didn’t stop him feeling the cold icy fear running through his veins every time his curtains moved with the wind or he thought he heard footsteps outside his door. He was trying desperately to do his breathing exercises but it was near impossible when every little thing was making him jump. He considered calling Ned but he knew the boy would be fast asleep at that time of night and he’d feel guilty waking him up. He needed someone. Anyone. No. He needed his Dad.

Without a moment’s hesitation once the realisation hit him, he jumped out of bed and literally ran out of his room. The second his feet touched the floor he got the feeling that something was right behind him, chasing him, just a fingertip away from grabbing him. It was that feeling you get when you run up the stairs after turning the lights off and he hated it. He wasted no time running straight to his dad’s bedroom as fast as his legs would carry him, only stopping to spam the access panels on the doors blocking his path. Each time he had to stop to do so the panic in his chest rose again, telling him that the invisible entity was right behind him. He convinced himself of this so much that he could practically feel it’s icy cold breath on the back of his neck and he had to bite back the urge to scream. Finally his father’s room was in view and he leapt the last five steps to the man’s door, typing in the code wrong the first two times in his frantic state before the sliding doors opened with a whoosh. He practically jumped from the doorway to the empty side of the man’s bed, which was taken over in part by the sleeping figure. He dove under the covers and buried himself close to his dad, finally feelings safe once he felt the warmth coming off of him and he could breath in the familiar smell of his cologne.
“Mm, Pepper your feet are freezing, get off.” Tony grumbled and rolled away from his son, who let out a whine to let him know he wasn’t who his sleepy brain had assumed he was. “Hm? Pete, you alright?”

Peter let out another whine in response, the adrenaline in his system causing him to shake.

“Baby boy, what’s the matter? Bad dream?” Tony sat up now fully awake, JARVIS automatically brightening the lights slowly as he did so. The newly lit room allowed Tony to see Peter’s red tear streaked face. “Oh, Petey. C’merce.”

Tony rolled back closer and pulled Peter into a hug. The boy was shuddering violently, he hadn’t seen him that way in a while, not after a nightmare. His breathing was panicked too so it took him a moment to calm him down before he attempted to talk to him again. “Bubba look at me. You alright? That was a bad one huh?”

He tilted the boy’s chin up to face him and Peter nodded in response to his questions. The teen still couldn’t bring himself to admit to his Dad what really had him so petrified. Not only was he sure that Tony was going to be angry with him, he didn’t want to drop the other adults in it with him either. Tony would undoubtedly be furious if he found out that Steve had allowed his child to get as scared as that. No, he couldn’t tell him, he felt safer with his Dad there already so he could spare the man the details. If lying to the man about his PTSD symptoms meant he would still get the protection he needed he was willing to do so, especially if it would avoid further arguments down the line.

“You’re shaking like a leaf, Pete.” Tony said somewhat rhetorically, as he resumed stroking Peter’s hair and back comfortingly, the way that always made the boy feel better. He went back to their earlier routine of cuddling and words of comfort until he felt Peter’s breathing even out and the boy fell asleep. And yes he was actually asleep this time, even in his frightened state he couldn’t force himself to stay awake that long after his bedtime.

But he wasn’t asleep for long. Tony managed to fall back to sleep right after him and the man had the foresight to loosen his grip in case Peter had to get up in the night (knowing his son wouldn’t try to wake him again). They stayed close together though, but once Peter woke up that changed quickly. JARVIS has dimmed the lights again after the two fell asleep, but not completely, allowing just enough light for Peter to be able to see objects around the room, though not clearly. If anything he would’ve preferred total darkness, only being able to make out vague shapes and silhouettes was more terrifying than the total darkness.

He was busy trying to figure out if a white shirt Tony had slung over the back of a chair was a shirt or if it was in fact a headless specter, when he felt the reason he’d awoken in the first place. He had to pee. Bad.

He hissed and shoved his hands between his legs. Curse his tiny bladder, couldn’t it have waited a couple more hours until daylight at least? Obviously not as he was already having to squirm to keep it in. He looked over to the bathroom door that couldn’t be more than twenty paces from the foot of the bed. But that was a long distance when you were scared out of your wits with a full bladder. He bit his lip and wiggled again, crossing his legs this time.

His squirming made the man next to him stir, Tony making a face in his sleep at the disruption. Peter froze waiting for his Dad to open his eyes and catch him- well what was he doing? He had to pee he should just get up and go, the bathroom was right there. Tony didn’t open his eyes, he rolled over facing away from Peter, starting to snore slightly. Unfortunately for the already traumatised teenager who was sharing his bed, his snoring sounded reminiscent of the crackling groaning sound the Grudge made when she was sneaking up on her victims. Peter flinched away from him,
almost tumbling off of the bed. He was at a loss for what to do. He knew he had to just get up and
go, that he was being stupid and irrational but the fear was overwhelming him and he couldn’t
think straight. He was surprised JARVIS hadn’t chimed in but he supposed Tony had measures in
place not to wake him.

Still it would have been nice to have at least the robotic voice accompany him to the restroom and
that was not a thought he ever expected to have. Fuck, why hadn’t he thought to grab his phone
before he left his room?! Oh yeah, because he was running hell for leather away from the demon
chasing him, that was right. What he’d give to be able to text Ned right about then, or even MJ.
Okay maybe not MJ, but Auntie May maybe. God, he had to go so bad.

He couldn’t hold on much longer, his bladder was already pulsing trying to force the liquid out of
him. He had to get up or he was going to wet the bed- Tony’s bed. With the man in it and this time
there would be no way he could hide it. It wasn’t like back at the hotel his bladder was full now,
not like the tiny accidents he was having with that infection and Tony was laying too close to him;
there was zero chance he wouldn't get the man soaked too if he wet himself. Losing it there was not
an option he had to get up.

A sudden leak reinforced that for him and he made himself throw his legs over the edge of the bed.
As soon as he did so his stomach contracted forcing another leak out of him before he had time to
stop it, making him stumble to his feet and start running to the bathroom, not giving him enough
time to realise his fear about the monsters possibly lurking under the bed. He only made it a few
steps before that fear came rushing back to him though and he stopped dead in his tracks. He made
the mistake of glancing at the mirrored wardrobes that lined one side of Tony’s room and he saw
something. Someone. Standing right behind him.

Abort mission.

Peter took a standing jump from three feet away back into the bed and pulled the covers over his
head and inadvertently off of his unconscious father who was rudely awakened for the second time
that night. He curled in a ball and was instantly back to the hyperventilating mess he had been
when he’d first entered the mans room- if not even worse.

“Pete? Peter?! Hey, hey wake up.” Tony woke up groggy but it didn’t take him long to remember
that he was sharing his bed with the terrified teenager once again. He assumed wrongly that the
boy was in the midst of another nightmare. He tried to pry the sheets back but Peter held them
firm. “P, it’s just me can you- hey, come on-”

“I’m sorry I’m so sorry I didn’t mean to, M-Mr. Stark I’m so-” Now that was a term of address he
hadn’t heard for a while. It sounded so unnatural now, having only heard the boy call him Dad or
at the very least Tony for ages. What on earth was the boy dreaming about to make him revert back
to Mr. Stark?

“Bub, what’re you talking about you didn’t do anything. It was a nightmare-”

“I-I’ll clean it- I’m so sorry I just- I couldn’t-” Clean what- oh. That’s why Tony’s left knee felt
wet. Well, fuck.

He was leaning in a puddle of the distraught teenagers urine, it wasn’t exactly a wake up call he
was expecting though he was surprised this particular issue hadn’t arisen before then. Peter had had
more than a few accidents to the man’s knowledge, he even openly admitted to them a few times
but the pair had never encountered an accident in such close proximity as this. Come on Tony you
should have prepared for this.
“Aw, shit. No no, Peter baby it’s okay! I’m not mad I promise- You’re okay you can come out- JAR can we have some fucking lights on please?!” Tony lost his patience amidst the panic of not being able to see what was going on and the fact that Peter sounded like he was about to make himself sick. The harshness in his tone only succeeded in making the boy pull away from him more.

“Certainly, Sir.” The monotone AI said as the lights slowly faded back to their full brightness, allowing Tony to see the dark stain that span across his dove grey sheets, in the centre of the mattress. Thank god it was scotch guarded.

“Pete, c’mere it’s okay I promise.” Tony made sure to speak especially softly as he’d seen the boy’s reaction when he snapped at his computer system. He tried once again to yank the covers off of him, successfully this time, if you would call Peter launching off of the bed in an attempt to evade capture a success. He landed on the floor next to his side of the bed with a thud, immediately curling into a ball again, sobbing even harder than before.

“Don’t let her get me! I’m sorry!” He wailed into his knees that he was currently hugging to his chest. Okay, now Tony was really confused.

“Who, Petey? What are you talking about?” He crawled over the wet patch and sat on Peter’s side of the bed, leaning over him to put his hands on his shoulders. He didn’t even react, was he having a flashback of some kind? It had been a while since that had happened but it was the only time Tony could think of that Peter had been so unresponsive. He cupped Peter’s chin in his hand and pulled his head up, forcing him to face him. “Open your eyes, can you open your eyes and look at me honey? Remember where you are. You’re at home with me bubby, it’s just me and you, you’re safe—”

Peter was staring right in Tony’s eyes through his own wet ones as he pointed across the room. “She was right there, Dad!”

“Who?” Tony was starting to take the boy’s claims seriously, he seemed so convinced. There was no way anyone could’ve gotten through his security measures- and he knew JARVIS was still operational so there was no way anyone could have gotten inside. But his son wasn’t one to make up wild stories so what was going on?

“The Grudge!” Peter sobbed and collapsed his head towards his knees again.

Ah. Now the night made sense. So, Tony was going to have to brutally murder his friends for letting his son watch a horror film without his expressed consent. Glad to have that one cleared up. In one way he was relieved- Peter wasn’t in any real danger and that helped to calm down the paternal panic, but the panic was quickly being replaced with rage. Cool it, Tony, you can focus on killing your housemates later, you’ve got to deal with a petrified Peter first.

“Oh Pete. Come here.” Tony sighed and physically picked the boy up, which his back would not thank him for later, placing him on the bed beside him. It was difficult to hug him whilst he was still protecting himself like an armoured armadillo but the man did his best.

“I’m sorry! I know I shouldn’t h-h-have watched it, b-but I didn’t think it was gonna get me so bad-” Peter sniffled into Tony’s chest.

“Shh, shh, it’s alright, you’re not in trouble. This is punishment enough don’t you think, hm? Don’t worry about that now, bubby.” Though Tony was annoyed at his son too he didn’t have the heart to express that while the boy was smearing snot on his shirt. Peter knew better, but what was the use
Tony had tried to broach the subject about the boy’s accident as gently as possible but it was no use. Peter immediately jerked away from him.

“Oh my god.” It was as though the boy was realising what he’d done for a second time.

“Pete, it’s really not a big de-”

“I pissed in your fucking bed Tony this is a big deal.” Peter’s face was drawing that blank, cold expression again and Tony could tell he was slipping into a dissociative state, his brain trying to protect himself from facing the embarrassment of the situation.

“Language. Uh uh, stay with me.” Tony moved forward to grab the boy’s arms again, hoping the physical contact could help bring him back from the edge before he switched off completely. “It’s just sheets. I told you months ago that I’m never gonna get mad about this bubbly, it’s just an accident. Nothing Dad can’t fix.”

It seemed to do the trick but Tony’s words of comfort didn’t bring out the reaction he had hoped for. Instead fresh, angry tears started filling Peter’s eyes. “Why are you being so nice to me?! I’m so stupid-”

“Peter, no-” Tony started to interject but he stopped himself. He’d learnt through experience it was better to let Peter get it all out before he started to console him. He always hated having to sit through the boy’s self-hating rants but it got them from A to B quicker if he let it run it’s course.

“I’m fifteen and I just climbed in bed with Tony fucking Stark then pissed myself cause I got scared BY A LAMPSHADE! IT WAS A LAMPSHADE DAD-”

“I see that.” Tony deadpanned as he followed the accusing finger Peter was pointing at the offending floor lighting. Despite the seriousness of the situation it was difficult to bite back the laugh that threatened to bubble out of his throat at the observation. It was indeed a very spooky lamp.

“And you’re being nice to me?! After I’ve been so pathetic- Lila watched it when she was like four years younger than me and she laughed” Ah, so Clint had been heavily involved in encouraging this? Tony made note of that. “But I can’t even sleep in my own bed and I was too scared to get up and pee like an adult and I-I...mm..”

There we go. Now that part was over Tony could focus back on picking up the pieces. “You finished? Come on, you’ll feel better once we get cleaned up, yeah?”

“Oh my god- it got on you!” Peter started wailing again. Dammit Tony could you say two words to the boy without putting your foot in your mouth?

“I’ve been covered in your blood and puke too, I’m just ticking things off of the dad list at this point.” Tony shrugged but his attempt to lighten the mood only seemed to dampen it more, if that was even possible. Way to go. “We’ll shower, get changed, strip the bed and see how we feel then. If you don’t want to go back to sleep that’s fine.”

“You shouldn’t have to be doin’ this. M’too old and I did it to myself this time. I-I can’t even blame the whole PTSD thing I was just an idiot-”
“Enough, Underoos. Come on.” Tony was too tired to listen to another monologue of self deprecation, plus he was worried about the boy’s skin sitting in wet clothes for so long. He was feeling itchy from having just one leg soiled so he could imagine how uncomfortable Peter was. He lead the boy by the shoulders to the bathroom, stepping out for the boy to get changed, not expecting Peter to have an issue with the privacy (something he’d defended vehemently in the past).

“W-wait.” Peter said in a quiet voice, blushing bright red. Tony turned in the doorway, raising an eyebrow in question. “I...I don’t wanna be alone…”

Peter was clearly ashamed of the request, but the fact that he’d asked in spite of that showed Tony that he was still really freaked out and his Dad wasn’t about to make him feel worse about admitting he needed something.

“Alright, I’ll sit just out here and I’ll leave the door open, okay?” Peter nodded shyly and Tony did as he said he would, changing his own clothes whilst the teen took a shower.

He realised he didn’t have any of Peter’s clothes in his room, and made a note to stock up on some just in case. For now he left a pair of his own pyjama pants and an old T-Shirt just inside the bathroom. “Sorry, Kiddo. I know my PJ’s are gonna drown you.”

“I don’t mind, they smell good.” Peter said innocently making Tony have to bite back an audible ‘aw’. He knew that Peter wouldn’t take kindly to any more humiliation.

They stripped back the bed together, which took longer than it should have since Peter had to stop every thirty seconds to pull his pants up, the boy hanging his head down in shame the entire time. Tony sighed knowing he should probably drop the subject, but his curiosity got the better of him. “So, were you asleep when it, you know, happened?”

Peter shook his head the blush returning to his cheeks. “N-no...I had to go really bad when I woke up but it was dark and I kept seeing things. By the time I got the courage to go it was already almost too late and then I thought I saw something and I guess I…”

Tony nodded understandingly, trying to show Peter his lack of reaction to prove that what happened wasn’t an issue and he wasn’t in trouble. “It’s okay bubs, you got yourself worked up. You can wake me up if that happens again though I won’t mind-”

“I shouldn’t need-”

“In the words of the great Judge Judy- Shoulda, woulda, coulda. Now quit it, we have important business to attend to.”

The important business consisted of the two drinking hot chocolate and snuggling on the couch watching ‘How I Met Your Mother’ reruns, talking about everything under the sun; from childhood memories to suit ideas to Tony’s own daddy issues, anything to keep Peter’s mind off of that god awful piece of media. They did talk through that part though, Tony giving the obligatory lecture albeit half heartedly, and Peter admitted to having overestimated his resistance to scary movies. They came to the agreement that he was never watching any kind of horror again and Tony was satisfied with the boy’s admission of responsibility. It wasn’t he teenager he blamed anyway, he’d warned the other adults about Peter’s wild imagination, they were all much more responsible for this mess than he was.

After a few hours of talking and being comforted by his dad about the embarrassingly unnecessary events that night, Pete found that he felt much better. He was still humiliated and scared beyond
belief but Tony had a knack for stopping Peter’s self destructive thought processes in their tracks and the man’s ever calming presence was working it’s magic once again. He eventually fell back to sleep, much less restless than he had been hours before. Tony didn’t bother moving him back to his own room, both as not to wake the child up but he also wanted to be there should be get spooked again. He himself couldn’t fall back to sleep though, which meant he was there to greet Steve when the other man woke up.

“Mornin’ Cap. Put the coffee maker on will ya, I’m kinda stuck here.” Tony nodded towards the curly haired head that was currently using his lap as a pillow.

“Hey, yeah, sure.” Steve moved to follow the man’s request, his still half asleep brain not clocking onto the scene in front of him. Seeing the two camp out in the living room wasn’t an uncommon occurrence.

“Guess what I spent my morning doing.”

“What’s that?” Steve asked over his shoulder absentmindedly as he poured the coffee.

“Cleaning up after Peter had a fit thinking he saw a Japanese ghost chasing him.” Tony said flatly, watching as the dots connected in his friend’s head about why he and Peter had elected to sleep in the living room.

“Aww, cheese and crackers. Tony I said it was a bad idea-”

“He said that he’d be okay to watch it~“

“You trusted a fifteen year old to make a decision like that for himself? You won’t even let him eat fruit roll ups but he can watch The Grudge?!” Tony hissed angrily, ‘whisper-yelling’ as not to wake up the boy sleeping on his lap.

“It’s rated fifteen Tony, and Clint told me it wasn’t so bad so I thought I should let him~“

“Exactly, YOU thought YOU should let him. I told you he’s not allowed to watch that kind of thing and this is why!”

“He’s not a little kid! If he wants~“

“You’re such a fucking hypocrite, Steve I swear to god! No he’s not a little kid but he’s my child. Not yours. I made that decision for a reason- this reason. He gets himself worked up over shit like that, May said he always has done. He got sent home from summer camp after one of the older kids told them a story about Jason Voorhees. We’ve all got things we don’t like it’s nothing to do with his age. I’m never going to watch fast and furious and you’re never gonna watch Ice Age for fuck sake this isn’t a point of treating him like a baby~“

“How did you expect me to know that?! You never told me!” Steve hissed back angrily, starting to lose his temper. He wasn’t ridiculing the child for being scared, of course he wasn’t. He felt rotten that he’d let it happen in the first place but he honestly hadn’t known Peter would be so badly affected. Tony was making it sound like he’d done it deliberately to spite him and he wasn’t that petty. He’d never use the boy for emotional warfare, Tony ought to know that.

“I shouldn’t have to tell you. I told you not to let him watch scary movies. I told Nat. I’m pretty sure I even told Bruce and I know Clint has common sense. But because I didn’t give you a good enough reason you decided I wasn’t worth listening to right? Because the great Steve Rodger’s decided that he should be allowed, to my rules as his dad go out the fucking window~“

“Tony stop it you’re making way to big a deal out it this it wasn’t a calculated attack against you alright.” Steve sighed and turned back towards the counter. He didn’t have to listen to the man’s rants. Especially given that Tony admitted he wasn’t completely at fault. He was also in slight shock at Tony so openly admitting to being the boy’s father, a step he hadn’t taken yet.

“I’m making a big deal.” Oh boy, here we go. Tony laughed coldly. “I’m making a big deal? JARVIS pull up the surveillance footage from corridor A-four last night from three seventeen onwards.”

“Tony no, I don’t wanna see that Peter wouldn’t like~“

“Don’t you dare start acting like you give a shit about his mental welfare now, Rodgers. I’m not gonna show you the worst part anyway.” Tony cut him off his eyes blazing.

As soon as he’d given the command the AI turned on the TV screen, showing clear footage of Peter running out of his room as fast as he could, looking back like something was chasing him and cowering in each door way as he typed in access codes. Though the camera was at an awkward angle, the fear on Peter’s face was still evident and Steve felt stabs of guilt in his chest. He truly hadn’t realised how scared Peter had been, he seemed fine after they switched the film off.
“Oh god.” He shook his head sadly. “Tony I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have let him convince me.”

“No. You shouldn’t have. And you shouldn’t be apologising to me either, save it for the kid. I’m not gonna let this one go, you understand? I’m not trusting you with my boy anymore. Any of you.” Tony looked away from him and focused on the television screen, flipping it over to a normal channel, effectively ending the conversation but Steve wasn’t about to let another civil war break out amongst the household.

“Tony please don’t be like that. It was an honest mistake, you know we’d never mean to hurt Peter in anyway.”

“Well you did. So that’s that. It’s gonna go back to him sticking with me all the time since I’m the only one who seems to know what’s good for him.” Tony didn’t know why but he felt tear pricking in his eyes. Was he really that angry? Even he’d underestimated how much the betrayal had gotten to him. It was just a movie after all but it signified something much bigger. He realised he hated relinquishing any control he had when it came to Peter’s care and that incident just reinforced that for him. He knew he couldn’t go back to his overprotective ways, not unless he wanted to push Peter away again, but he could at least stop the other adults doing things worth his son without him being there.

Steve wanted to protest further, but he knew Tony well enough by then to not push him when he was in that mood. The man had made his mind up and nothing he could say in that moment would change that, he was far too stubborn. If he made Tony think he was in control and let him have his little tantrum for a while the knew that the genius would eventually come to his senses and change his behaviour accordingly. It wasn’t like he’d ever apologise to Steve. He’d rarely say sorry to anyone other than Peter, but definitely not Steve. No he would just be extra nice to him all of a sudden in ways of an apology. He also didn’t blame the man for being so angry, he understood why having seen Peter's poor little frightened face. That and the way Tony had referred to him as his boy and his child really warmed the super soldiers heart. Steve decided to back off and play the waiting game, though he knew some of his teammates wouldn’t take the threats quite as well.

He had been right. As the others filed into the room gradually Tony gave each of them a similar speech, though the only one who seemed to take the man seriously was Bruce, who was nothing but apologetic. Clint remained rather impartial, he apologised for the effects the movie had had but he didn’t take any responsibility for the boy watching it. His response was to shrug and say, “He’s fifteen. The box says fifteen, it was his choice. Now we know for next time not to let him.”

Nat reacted with the same level of sarcastic anger when Tony tried to blame her. After all he’d told her directly that night at the motel room so she was far more guilty than the others in his eyes. In turn she accused the man of babying his son, deliberately making Peter dependent on him to feed his own ego.

“You’re not the boss of everyone, Stark, you can’t impose your will on us. Peter’s not one of your little toys- god knows you were never taught to share you spoiled little brat.”

Had Peter not still been asleep a physical fight may have ensued after she made that comment and Bruce had the good mind to lead her out of the room before Tony threw something at her head or they both said something they’d live to regret. Thor’s reaction...was very Thor like.

“I’m very sorry Anthony I didn’t realise the boy has sensitive to such things- he was very enthusiastic about watching it. I forget that human children are much more delicate than Asgardians-“

“Does everything have to be a showboating opportunity for you? We get it Thor, you’re a god, not everything has to be about that for Christ sakes!”
“That’s not what I meant!” In the heat of the moment Thor lost control over the volume of his voice and ended up waking the sleeping boy in question who sat up with a groan, almost smacking his head into Tony’s. He was pouting angrily, clearly upset about having been disturbed.

“Hey grumps ya alright?” Tony patted Peter’s back as he situated himself into a sitting position beside him on the couch.

“Mm, no woke me up.” Came the sleepy reply as the boy slumped against his father rubbing his eyes.

“I know he’s mean ain’t he? Come here.” Tony wrapped an arm around him in a hug. Okay maybe he did baby him a little bit but how could he not when he was so cute? Besides Peter acted like such an adult all the time he needed a bit of coddling now and then, he deserved it. And Tony couldn’t lie even to himself that he enjoyed the cuddling just as much as Peter did, though nobody needed to know that.

Thor’s voice softened considerably too, the sight of the sleepy boy making him revert to his big brother days as Peter so often made him do. “I’m sorry, little one.”

“S’okay.” The boy reassured him. After a moment of snuggling Peter groaned again and squirmed a little to prove his point. “Gotta go.”

“Go on. Get dressed so we can get some breakfast in you, we’ve got stuff to do today.” Tony gently pushed the boy off of the couch, having to manually pull his pants up to avoid Peter exposing himself. Clearly the boy didn’t remember who’s pants he was wearing, making Tony chuckle. “Careful.”

Peter scowled at him for laughing and held the waistband of his pants as he shuffled to the bathroom. “What stuff?”

“I’ll tell you more in a minute, go pee.” Tony laughed again.

“I’m goin’, I’m goin’.” Peter grumbled. He elected to use the restroom adjacent to the living room as opposed to his own, avoiding being too far away from the rest of the household. He still wasn’t completely comfortable after the incident the night before- oh god. He’d peed in his dad’s bed. Jesus Christ.

The embarrassment started to kick in full force as he was reminded of the events that had unfolded. He couldn’t believe he’d gotten so worked up like that over a movie. His dad must’ve thought he was such a baby- he was such a baby. All the times he’d chastised Tony for treating him younger than his years had just been made redundant, as he’d shown in one night how immature he truly was. There was no way he was ever going to live this down, no doubt Tony had already yelled at the others for letting him watch it and they were all going to treat him like a toddler from now on too. He shuffled miserably to his room, the anxiety surrounding being alone being replaced with shame. He got changed quickly and kept his head down when he went back to join the others.

“Hey sport.” Steve greeted him warmly and came up behind where Peter had sat down, putting his hands on the boy’s shoulders. He leant down and spoke quietly to him. “You alright?”

Peter nodded glumly, his fears being realised. Obviously his dad had told everyone what happened and he wanted some kind of freak wormhole anomaly to open up and swallow him whole. No that wouldn’t work, Tony would probably find to bring him back somehow…

“Guess what I found.” Steve said, snapping Peter out of his death daydreams.
“What?” Steve replied by holding up a blue box with familiar white lettering and a picture of a frosted breakfast pastry on it. “Pop Tarts!”

Peter eagerly grabbed the box before Steve could take them away from him again and literally hugged it, making everyone laugh, other than Tony; who saw Steve’s attempt at an apology and didn’t much care of his use of sweets as a weapon during emotional warfare. It clearly worked on the teenager though, who momentarily seemed to forget his humiliation as he ripped open a packet of Blue Raspberry.

They ate as normal, everyone conversing freely other than Tony, who was still giving out sour looks like a grumpy old man on Halloween. Peter was still a bit extra quiet that morning but the rest of the room made sure to include him heavily in conversation, trying to reassure the boy that no one thought of him differently after his rough night.

“So what’s the stuff we gotta do today?” Peter asked Tony around a mouthful of pastry, which he quickly swallowed when he saw the look Steve was giving him for speaking with his mouth full. He covered his mouth and blushed. “Sorry.”

“We have to go down to Westerville for group training.” Tony said absentmindedly as he scrolled on his phone.

The group all groaned and Peter didn’t understand what he’d missed.

“Why didn’t you tell us?! When was this decided?!” Clint asked.

“Oh I’m sorry Barton, I don’t remember becoming your PA? It’s not my fault none of you checked your emails. Fury sent out an alert last night.” Tony sipped his coffee not looking up.

“For how long this time?” Steve sighed, even he didn’t look happy. That was surprising to Peter because the man was always enthusiastic when it came to them getting more training. What was so bad about this place?

“Two weeks.” Another wave of groans resounded around the room.

“Where’s Westerville?” Peter asked innocently.

“Ohio, bout nine hours away.” Tony said. “There’s a compound down there S.H.E.I.L.D use for covert testing and training exercises. Remember when we went out of town a few months back and you went and stayed with Pietro and Wanda?”

Peter nodded and smiled sweetly. “Uh huh, they’re nice.”

Tony took a moment to look up at his son proudly, he was always so polite. Always had a nice thing to say about everybody. May had raised him so well and he took that second to appreciate the opportunity he’d been given to carry that parenting on. “They are nice. Anyways, we were down there to go through some basic combat tactics and be briefed on enemies and stuff. You weren’t enlisted last time but Fury decided after everything that went down with MV corp, you were ready.”

Peter shuddered at the memory but he was excited. “That sounds cool! Why do you all look so mad about it?”

“Cause it sucks ba- I mean, it’s not fun.” Thor started to curse but Nat smacked him around the head before he could finish his obscenities.
“Why not?” Peter didn’t understand, they got to learn about what bad guys were doing and try out some new training stuff, what about that wasn’t fun?

“Because they’re boring!” Thor groaned dramatically and slammed his head down on the table. From how still he went Peter couldn’t tell if he was joking around or if the man had actually knocked himself out.

“They make us do repetitive exercises and tasks that are so mind numbingly simple that half the time we fail them because we do things the hard way just trying to spice the day up. They have us on a stricter routine and curfew than Captain Killjoy over there and we’re forced to socialise with a bunch of other agents who are so. Just ugh.” Nat explained, the first one to actually give Peter a tangible answer. “Oh and the food sucks.”

“God the food sucks.” Bruce said wide eyed and staring at the table, as though he was having some kind of flashback. He suddenly pulled his plate closer to him as if he was trying to protect it.

“I go to a public high school bad cafeteria food doesn’t scare me.” Peter chuckled, his enthusiasm undeterred. It would be fun to go on official S.H.E.L.D business and get the experience, even if those around him didn’t agree. They’d been a bunch of times that didn’t mean Peter wouldn’t be able to learn something new, besides he liked meeting new people. That and he’d be given the opportunity to show off his skills to people who would actually know he was Spider-Man, it sounded like a win-win to him. “So, when are we going?”

“We’re meant to check in by tomorrow morning, but I thought if we left ASAP it would give us time to settle in and sleep there. I don’t like driving overnight, either, not with the schedule they put us on.” Tony gazed at his watch. “It’s a pretty long drive so if we leave in say an hour? Give us time to get there before dinner?”

Tony looked around at the other adults for confirmation to which they all nodded bitterly and skunk off towards their rooms to pack. Peter on the other hand ran off willingly, seeming to have forgotten all about the demons lurking in his room from the night before in his excitement. He made sure to pack his laptop, chargers and a couple books, not wanting to get caught short like last time. He packed all his school books too, making sure to send emails to all of his teachers to send him his work in advance, which they were accustomed to doing for him by that point. Considering the amount of signed days off he had to take they’d been forced to make their lesson plans months in advance to account for Tony Stark’s ward, and some of his teachers made sure to make his life more difficult down to that fact. Considering how is stopping him from going to the bathroom or picking up on the most minute errors in his work going to make their job easier?

He put schoolwork out of his head for now as he grabbed his bags and headed down with the others for the cars. There were two waiting for them.

“Who’s going where?” Clint asked, waiting on Steve or Tony to organise them.

“Me and Underoos are going in this one. The rest of you can sort yourselves.” Tony said snarkily. He was still making it painfully obvious that he was pissed at his teammates, even if Peter now seemed to be fully recovered. He shot a wink towards the teenager though, just to reassure him that his anger was by no means directed at him and the boy gave him a confident smile in return.

It ended up being Nat driving one car, with Thor, Clint and Bruce as passengers. Then Steve riding along with Tony and Peter, much to the dark haired man’s distaste.
“There’s plenty of room for you in the other car.” Tony sneered when Steve jumped on the passenger seat.

Steve smiled unphased but Peter defended him from the backseat, not liking the unjust remark. He never liked seeing his Dad’s mean streak, though he knew full well he had a big one, he was under no illusions to that. “Tony don’t be mean.”

His dad peered in the rear view mirror to make eye contact with his pouting son. “Sorry bubby, you’re right.”

“Thank you, Peter. And apology accepted Tony.” Steve smiled triumphantly.

“I didn’t apologise to you, you think I’d call you bubby?” Tony grumbled, he hated the accusation that he would ever do such a thing, especially in the midst of a feud.

“You’ve been known to make a man blush before, I’m used to your pet names by now.”

“Shut up and out your seatbelt on.” Tony growled ignoring the slight pink tinge that came to his cheeks when he heard Peter giggling in the back of the car.

“Is that everything?” Steve said, watching the others pull out of the driveway.

Tony nodded but he turned to the back of the car and beckoned Peter to lean forward so he could whisper to him. Steve made a point of turning his head away as though he couldn’t hear, trying to avoid embarrassing the boy from what he assumed was intended to be a private conversation.

“Do you need to go to the bathroom one last time? We’re not planning on stopping for at least three hours.” Though Tony tried his best not to embarrass Peter, it was impossible given the line of questioning. A blush rose to the boy’s cheeks immediately but he nodded and Tony was glad Peter hadn’t lied to try and avoid admitting he’d forgotten to go in his excitement. “Okay, go on.”

He sighed after the boy hopped out of the car and rushed back inside the building. Peter was known for using the restroom frequently, he just hoped he’d be able to last the three hours before their scheduled stop. Had it not been for Peter’s sake, they usually wouldn’t make any stops on a journey this length, making so without bathroom breaks or food in favour of getting to their destination quicker, but Tony, nor the rest of the adults, were about to subject the boy to those conditions. However, if they had to stop as often as the boy was likely to need they wouldn’t end up getting to their destination before nightfall, which would be less than ideal. Of course he would do it without question but it would be a mild inconvenience, a mild inconvenience that he was well prepared for.

Little did Tony know Peter was also aware of this eventuality. He didn’t want to delay their journey by needing to go to the bathroom every hour, so he’d devised a plan. He deliberately didn’t drink anything after Tony had mentioned their trip, and he wasn’t going to drink anything until after they stopped for lunch. That way he would’ve hopefully made it to the halfway mark only needing one stop (preferably the one Tony had scheduled for them at the state border). He wasn’t going to completely dehydrate himself though, both because he didn’t want to give himself another UTI and he knew he wouldn’t get away with that with Steve in the car, so the little genius accounted for that too. In his backpack he stowed three identical water bottles. A full one, which he intended to sip slowly, a half empty one, that he would show to Steve should the man demand he show his progress, and an empty one for further proof that he wasn’t dehydrating himself. It was fool proof.

He made sure to pee quickly and wash his hands before running back out and hopping in the car.
“Sorry bout that!”

“No problem, bud. Ready?” Tony asked and Peter nodded hurriedly. They set off down the road and onto the highway.

Peter was full of questions about the fortnight ahead, asking about the training exercises, the people he’d encounter and the accommodation.

“You’ll be meeting a lot of people that’s for sure.” Steve smiled when Peter asked if he’d see any other superheroes he’d recognise there. It was refreshing to have someone on the team who still found things new and exciting, it definitely helped boost morale. What didn’t boost morale however was Tony insisting on giving Steve dirty looks out of the corner of his eye and sighing every time the man spoke. The blond tried not to let this get to him but after an hour or so his patience was starting to wear thin.

Peter could sense the rising tension in the front of the car so he decided to pull up a movie on his laptop and put his on his headphones in hopes to escape it. The movie was coming to the end when he started to feel his bladder stir. He looked out of the window looking for road signs to indicate how far away they were from the border. He wanted to avoid getting into a desperate situation with the other man in the car so he pulled out an earphone to ask his Dad where they were. Due to his sensitive hearing that often lead to him getting overstimulated, Tony had designed him some special noise cancelling earphones. Obviously they worked a little too well because as soon as Peter removes one from his ear he was met with yelling.

“Oh because it’s just so easy for you isn’t it Steve. It must be hard being so perfect all of the time-“

“I never said I haven’t made mistakes Tony I’m just man enough to admit to them-“

“Oh you wanna play macho man now do you G.I. Joe?!“

Peter was shocked that he hadn’t noticed all the gesticulating before, he guessed that Wreck It Ralph had just really sucked him in this time. “Uh...Tony?”

The arguing stopped abruptly, both men freezing for a second before they reset themselves, falling into a very natural relaxed position. They clearly had practise.

“Yeah, bud?” Tony called back lightly, his demeanor having shifted from night to day in a matter of seconds. He looked in the rear view mirror briefly to check over his son, making sure he wasn’t dealing with an emergency bathroom situation. To his relief Peter didn’t seem to be visibly squirming yet so that was a good sign. He didn’t want to have to deal with a desperate teenager so early on in their trip.

“How far are we from the rest stop?”

“About twenty minutes, is that alright?” Tony looked back again to meet Peter’s eyes over the rim of his sunglasses. He was silently asking if the boy could wait that long or if he needed to turn off sooner and he knew Peter’s eyes always betrayed him when he was lying.

“Yeah that’s good.” Peter nodded confidently. Tony was relieved that the boy was being honest in that statement, and returned his focus to the road.

The air of tension in the car was so thick you could’ve cut it with a knife but Tony was doing his best to ignore it for Peter’s sake. He knew Steve coming in their car was a bad idea given the mood he was in. He noted that Peter put his headphones back in but he deliberately didn’t start up arguing with the super soldier again. Now that Peter had noticed they were fighting he was bound
to be much more observant and he didn’t want to expose him to any more of that. He knew he was being petty at that point but he still couldn’t back down, a trait that had been so graciously passed down to him by his father and was so difficult to break. Steve knew this though, and his friend had always been patient with him. That didn’t stop him from being angry but at least he didn’t have to worry about seriously damaging their relationship anymore, not after such a long time. It was nice for Tony to have an emotional punching bag for release very now and then, Steve had openly offered himself up as that many times. What else were friends for? Well, in this case emotionally scarring your children with inappropriate movies apparently. Ah yes, he remembered now, that was why he was angry in the first place.

They drove the remaining twenty minutes to their designated stop, Peter becoming progressively more wiggly the entire time. Once Tony pulled up he was surprised to be met by the car which contained their other team members. All three men hopped out of the car and walked over to the other one, which had the remaining members standing around it, one of which looked particularly furious.

“Tony. You’re taking him. I can’t- I won’t have him in the car with me for the rest of the journey.” Nat was standing against the vehicle with her arms folded across her chest, looking ready to kill someone. It didn’t take two seconds for the trio to realise who they were talking about.

“Natasha I said I was sorry-“ Thor started. He was shuffling uncomfortably where he stood behind the other side of the car.

“Save it!” Nat barked, not looking back in Thor’s direction.

Tony sighed and continued to get the full story of what had happened. Thor was notoriously bad for staying occupied during long periods of time in confined spaces, he’d always caused problems during road trips due to his boredom. That’s why the man had been happy when Thor has elected to go in the other car, he was in no mood to deal with that today. Whilst he was listening to the angry redhead and blond in front of him he’d neglected to notice a shuffling child behind him.

“Uh..T-Tony? Can I go now?” Peter said in a small voice trying but failing to stand still.

“Huh? Oh, Pete! Yeah, go ahead sorry bud.” Tony hadn’t realised that Peter had been waiting for permission to leave his side, though he’d instructed him to do so whenever they were in public. “Cap can you-“

“I got him.” Steve followed behind the boy who had already made a beeline for the restroom. They’d discussed previously, given the kidnapping incident, that no team member should be left alone, especially when they were travelling in a group. They were more likely to be targeted when they were all in one place as it would give enemies a bigger opportunity to capture them all at once, even if they were a harder force to fight as a unit. That and Peter was a little unpredictable at times, constantly finding himself in trouble.

Peter quickly relieved himself and walked back with Steve back to the car, trying to ignore the blush that had risen to his cheeks. He always felt weird needing a chaperone to take care of such things, though Steve made an extra effort not to be invasive it was still embarrassing. Had he not been so desperate by that point, Peter would have probably struggled to go knowing someone was waiting on him. By the time he came back, Nat’s car had already left without a particular tall blonde man. He looked into their car to see Tony with his head on the steering wheel, looking as though he was praying (or begging) to a higher power, to escape the burly man who was now occupying the back of the car. Thor noticed Peter through the window and grinned, waving wildly. Peter grinned in return and jumped in the back beside him.
“Hello again, young one!” Thor greeted him warmly, ignoring Tony who was gently bouncing his head off of the steering wheel repeatedly, muttering something about becoming a soccer mom. Steve also seemed irritated but Peter didn’t mind the company. He helped to entertain Thor by sharing his laptop with him and showing him the wonders of Star Wars.

“Hey look, it’s Fury!” Thor pointed excitedly to the screen.

“That’s Mace Windu.” Peter laughed, not seeing any resemblance, not catching the worried looks Tony was trying to give him in the rearview mirror.

It was when Thor started freaking out that Padme looked exactly like some lady Peter had never heard of and Tony told Peter to turn it off before the man combusted. Instead they elected to spend their time taking turns playing music.

“Just remember there will be no singing in my car, understood?” Tony warned seriously, looking pointedly at Steve in particular. Luckily for him though most of the songs Peter chose the man didn’t know, though Tony almost ended up breaking his own rule when Judas Priest started playing over the speakers. “Low blow, Parker. Low blow.”

They ended up stopping for lunch at around one, which was lucky as that was all Peter’s bladder could handle. He hopped out of the car and ran straight through the fast food restaurant before any employees had a chance to stop him this time. Tony had received a text from Bruce saying that the other group had decided to go through the drive through to avoid Nat assaulting Thor and save time. He wasn't surprised as the only reason they had scheduled stops was for Peter's potty breaks after all. He would have suggested the same thing once he’d returned from the restroom, but Tony had been warned by May not to let Peter eat in a moving vehicle unless he was prepared to have his car cleaned so the others sat inside to eat; the three older men having to adorn slight disguises in order to dine in peace, Steve of whom's included a fake moustache that Peter found highly hysterical. Thor and Tony’s were slightly more subtle, Thor tucking his long hair into a beanie along with a pair of sunglasses and Tony a brimmed hat. Peter struggled to contain his laughter when he saw three sitting in a booth when he exited the bathroom.

“All you need is a newspaper to hide behind and y’all are set.” He cackled at Tony’s disgruntled expression.

“Sit down, shut up and eat your happy meal.” He scowled beneath his glasses but Peter continued to giggle. They made light conversation as they ate until Thor started asking some more personal questions, inadvertently putting his foot in it once again.

“So you weren’t a fan of the movie last night, young one?” The conversation quickly died down as the other men gave Thor looks that said ‘stop talking’ but of course he didn’t read them.

Peter blushed bright red before giving Tony a filthy look. “You told them?”

Tony sighed and ran his hand over his face, he should’ve been prepared for this situation. No one could keep their mouth shut for long around that house. “Pete don’t start I just told them you got a little freaked out-”

“It was more than a little by the looks of those videos-”

“Thor, shut up!” Tony kicked the man in the shin under the table making the blond frown. He hadn’t intended the comment meanly he was just trying to make conversation, why were mortals so sensitive? How was he supposed to know that that piece of information had been intended to stay private?
“You SHOWED them?!” Peter raised his voice. He couldn’t believe the man would betray him like that. Had he shown them everything? Including when he...when he and Tony had to clean up the bed.

“Nice one Thor.” For the first time that day Steve seemed to be on Tony’s side.

“What? What did I do?” Thor was genuinely confused. “It’s nothing to be ashamed of little one, everyone’s afraid of something-”

“Yeah, well not everyone has to run and jump in bed with their boss when they’re a frickin’ teenager do they?” Peter snapped snarkily and sank down in his chair, folding his arms over his chest. He looked away from the table to stare dispondantly out of the window. His life was ruined. He’d never be taken seriously by the team again, not that he ever was in the first place.

“Hey, don’t be like that.” Tony said quietly. Hearing Peter call refer to him as his boss had stung more than he cared to admit, though he knew that he wasn’t going to refer to him as Dad in front of Thor openly yet. Still he couldn’t help but feel a stab in his chest. “I didn’t show them that part-”

“Cause that makes it better? Are you that oblivious to other people’s emotions Tony?” Peter didn’t look at him as he spoke, his accent starting to peak through as his anger rose. “Just leave it, ‘aight? I know everyone thinks I’m a pathetic kid anyways why not show ‘em?!”

“Peter no.” Steve said sadly, sharing a worried glance with Tony. He too was used to Peter going off on himself whenever something like that happened. “We don’t think that-”

Thor also tried to reassure Peter. “We certainly do not Spiderling, I can assure you. Tony here was only highlighting our wrongdoings in regards to your parenting-”

“Save it guys, m’not mad at you anyways.” Peter shrugged flippantly.

They finished their meal in an awkward silence and got up to leave. Peter walked in the opposite direction causing Tony to ask where he was going.

“To the bathroom, is that alright with you? Or would you rather film it and post it on twitter?!” He snapped, before he quite realised the implications of what he just said. And how loud he had said it because several of the other McDonald’s patrons turned to look at the man he was accusing of taking lewd videos of him. Did Peter not realise how bad it looked for a middle aged man in a hat and glasses following a teenage boy to the bathroom looked on it's own? Add that comment and you might as well call the FBI right there.

“Okay for one, ew. Let’s think about things before we say them-”

“Yeah, that came out a little wrong.” Peter shrugged, laughing nervously backing down from being angry for a second in embarrassment.

“And two, can you give me a second to explain why I did what I did?”

“Nope.” Peter turned and walked to the bathroom, with Tony following close behind him (but not too closely given the suspicious looks he was now getting thanks to Peter's thoughtless screaming). “Are you actually following me into the bathroom-”

“Can you stop saying creepy shit?!” Tony said firmly. “And last I checked this was a public bathroom and I’m well within my rights to use the facilities.”

“Fine, but no talking to me while we’re peeing.” Peter huffed and slammed the stall door shut.
“I said cut it with the creepy shit, Pete!”

“AND I SAID NO TALKING!”

After they’d both relieved themselves and washed their hands, Peter strode ahead of Tony back towards the car, trying to avoid having a deep conversation with the man. He was in no mood for it, he just wanted to go back to the car and introduce Thor to another one of his favourite movies, maybe he’d show him V for Vendetta to see if the man would freak out again-

His thoughts were interrupted when he felt hands on his shoulders, almost making him grab his Dad’s wrist to break his arm. “Are you dumb? I almost took you out, why would you sneak up on a trained assassin?!”

“Trained assassin?” Tony smirked which only made Peter more furious. “Alright, big shot cool it. I’m not gonna chase you-”

“Then don’t just leave me alone-” Peter turned to walk away again but Tony held him by the arm.

“Quit acting like a bratty teen for five minutes and listen to me. You’re perpetuating the stereotype right now and I don’t much care for it. I’m your father, show me some respect.” Tony lowered his voice in a way that made Peter shiver a little. It was the voice he used when he was chastising a work college or he was giving out an order, it demanded authority. It also jarred Peter into listening to him as Tony very rarely used that voice on him. “You gonna listen to me now?”

Peter nodded but crossed his arms and looked at the ground. He hated how Tony had the ability to make him feel like a small child at times, especially when he felt totally justified for his anger.

“Thank you.” Tony said, his voice softening. “I’m sorry I showed them the surveillance footage. I know it was a shitty thing to do, but I didn’t do it to embarass you. I did it to prove a point, a point I’d already made about you not watching stuff like that-”

“But why were you proving that to them? I’m the one who chose to watch it you can’t punish them for something I did.”

“You’re wrong, I can. You took an opportunity to break the rules, and as far as I’m concerned you learned your damn lesson. Like I said last night I think scaring yourself shitless was enough of a punishment.” Peter blushed again, reliving the recent memory. “They went behind my back and let you do it. Yes, it was your choice, but they were the adults in the situation. Adults who should’ve known better. So, I was showing them the consequences.”

“It’s not they’re fault I’m such a baby..” Peter muttered miserably.

“Uh uh, don’t start that up again.” Tony lifted Peter’s chin with his hand, forcing him to make eye contact with him. “We talked about this. I told you what Howdy Doody does to me, I didn’t share that embarrassing story for you to keep on beating yourself up anyway.”

That got the boy to chuckle, remembering the story his father had told him the night before to try and make him feel better. It had, though Peter had been sworn to secrecy and was threatened with mild violence if he ever repeated the tale to anyone.

“See? That’s not the issue here Pete, nobody thinks any less of you, I can promise that. They only felt guilty for letting it happen, as they should.”

“But I was the one who-”

“I’m not gonna spend all day talking round in circles with you, P.” Tony sighed in frustration and
pinched the bridge of his nose. “Okay, put it this way. If I told Steve that you were allergic to peanuts, but you were being a brat and throwing a tantrum over a reese’s cup and he let you have it, who would be in the wrong?”

Peter opened his mouth to give the obvious answer but Tony cut him off before he could, sensing the boy was going to give the wrong one in his opinion.

“That’s right, Steve. Because he was the adult and you were the child. Kids do dumb, detrimental shit sometimes, that’s just what they do. You’re programmed for it, testing boundaries and what not, it’s how your brains develop. That’s why we have adults to make decisions for you or society would fall apart after ninety percent of it’s population killed itself by doing said dumb shit. Teenagers, such as yourself, are especially prone to this because risk taking is a habit that develops in adolescence to prepare you for adulthood. Finding out the do’s and don’ts of the world is part of that but we’re here to impart our wisdom upon you, and stop you from finding things out the hard way. You could argue Darwinism is an appropriate factor to take into account but I digress-”

“Tony.”

“It’s our job to take care of you because you’re brains too underdeveloped to understand the implication of your own choices yet. That’s not a fault in your character so don’t take it personally, it’s a transitional phase we all go through-”

“Tony.”

“Why not cut out the middleman of you getting yourself hurt or upset for no reason, when we could prevent that from happening in the first place-”

“Dad! I get it, you can stop talking now.” Peter was done with the basic human developmental psychology lecture, he’d already taken that class three years ago. “They shoulda stopped me, but they didn’t. None of us realised how bad the idea was until after, it was a mistake.”

“I agree. But you got to see the repercussions of that mistake, now you know not to make it again. They didn’t-”

“I see your point but could you not have just told them about it instead of showing them the tapes-”

“They didn’t listen to me the first time when I warned them not to let you watch it. How was I meant to know they weren’t going to ignore what I had to say again?”

Peter sighed. He wasn’t going to win this one so it was best if he just backed down. He’d have to live with the fact the rest of the team had seen him in such a state but he supposed that was part of the repercussions Tony was talking about. “How much did they see?”

“Just you running through the hallways.”

“Not when I..” He trailed off.

“Not when you peed in my bed, no.”

Peter blushed brightly again. “Ugh! You didn’t have to say it out loud!”

“You’re right but it’s kinda funny-”

“It is not!”
“A lamp-”

“I swear to Jesus Christ I will-”

“Okay, okay I’m sorry, bubbly. But trust me in a few years time you’ll be laughing with me about this.” Tony wrapped his arm around the scowling teenager and started steering him back to the car. He couldn’t resist teasing the boy. “Be one of those stories to tell at parties-”

“Oh my god if you dare! This is why you’re not doing a speech at my wedding!”

“Thinking of marriage already are we? Who you getting married to, hm? MJ?” Tony drew out the girls initials as Peter stopped in his tracks and turned to him furiously.

“You- you stupid- mm- Shut up!” Peter stuttered flusteredly. Smooth Pete, now he knows for sure he got to you and he’s going to use it every time he wants to get a rise.

“Nice comeback, kiddo.” Tony faux congratulated him patronisingly. He ceased his teasing after this last comment though. Afterall, he was trying to win the boy back in his favour. “I’m sorry for upsetting you Underoos.”

As much as Peter wanted to, he couldn’t stay mad at his Dad. Not after a heartfelt apology, which he knew did not come easy to the man. He knew Toy had reacted out of anger and he was only trying to protect and defend him, even if he had gone about it in a weird way. Peter was forgiving of the fact that Tony didn't have much experience in the parenting department, or “Fine. You are forgiven. But only if-”

“For the love of god Peter, no for the last time you are not getting a cat. Besides Goose isn’t even-” Tony cut himself off, making Peter give him a quizzical look.

“Isn’t what?” He tilted his head slightly in curiosity, looking Tony up and down skeptically.

“Hypoallergenic. Clint is allergic, it wouldn’t be suitable.” Nice save, Stark.

“The what about a Sphynx? They don’t have any fur and I’ve already got a name picked out! Yoda!”

“The answer is no.” Tony shook his head, trying to be serious but the boys endless enthusiasm for animals was so endearing he found himself smiling despite himself. It was hard enough to say no to him even when he wasn’t begging this ferociously. Well it was the boys birthday coming up soon...but that was a decision to be made at another time. He chuckled as he climbed back into the driver's seat.

“What about a hamster?!“ Peter bargained, also returning to his assigned seat.

“Peter Benjamin Parker, you will not be bringing any tiny mammals into my home-”

“SO THAT MEANS I CAN HAVE AN AXOLOTL!”

“NO!”
They drove for another four hours, having to make one unscheduled stop for Peter (which Tony passed off as needing to get gas) and they were nearing their destination. The ride went pretty smoothly other that Tony pulling to the side of the road and demanded Thor get out of the car since the man refused to stop kicking his seat.

“I’m not doing it deliberately Stark, these small human cars aren’t designed to hold someone my size!”

“Steve is the same height as you and he has no problem, you’re just being a baby! I know you have plenty of legroom!” Tony yelled.

“Well if Steve’s so good at being confined then maybe he and I should switch places!” Thor bellowed.

“Yeah, maybe you should!” Tony agreed but still in an equally angry tone. “Steve get in the back.”

“But I called shotgun…” Steve said in a small voice pouting slightly.

Tony stopped to slowly turn and look at him, his face expressionless. “Seriously?”

Steve shrugged then crossed his arms over his chest, showing that he wasn’t budging. Just as the other two men opened their mouths to roar at one another Peter chimed in.

“I’ll swap seats with Thor, Steve is schootched a little further forward anyways, there’s more legroom on my side.” He offered helpfully in a desperate attempt to avoid any more arguments for the short time in the car they had left. He was already undoing his seatbelt to hop out of the car.

“Thank you, P. That’s a good idea.” Tony sighed. It had taken a teenager to find a solution to the argument that didn’t involve Thor being ejected from the car forcefully, something that had happened of several other occasions. After that little incident though, the rest of the drive was quiet. It wasn’t until they were coming to the last leg of their journey when they encountered a problem. Well, Peter encountered a problem.

His bathroom break plan had worked up until that point, but he had made the mistake of drinking too much from his designated water bottle, underestimating how quick his metabolic rate really was. He’d already made Tony stop not a little while before he started to feel an urge again, there was no way he’d bring up needing a stop. Not when they were so close to their destination, no way. He could hold it.

And he did, but it wasn’t long before he was becoming visibly uncomfortable. He was constantly checking his phone for the time, it was almost seven and Tony had said they’d get there before
then. Though he supposed the impromptu stops had added unexpected time most of which were his own fault.

He tried to tough it out at first, but after around ten minutes his bladder was becoming insistent, constantly bringing Peter back to awareness about the building pressure in his tummy. He didn’t want to sound like a whiny kid again but he had to know how long he was going to be waiting, not knowing was killing him. How was he to know if he could hold it if he didn’t even know how close they were to the compound?

“D-Tony?” He barely caught himself. Shit, Parker you can’t go slipping up like that, not when you’re about to go around strangers for two weeks.

“Yeah?” Tony was instantly alert at the boy’s near blunder. Peter was always careful about letting the D-word slip around their team members, that combined with the nervousness he heard in his voice made his fatherly instincts kick in. Something was wrong.

“What are we almost there?” Peter asked as casually as he could, avoiding making eye contact with the other people in the car.

“Not far. Bout another twenty miles or so.” Tony eyed him suspiciously in the rear view mirror but Peter did his best to ignore him. He couldn’t drive and he didn’t know how fast they were going, he had no idea how long that was in minutes. “Are you alright?”

“Yeah.” Peter didn’t offer any more explanation, knowing it would only lead to more questions being asked should he come up with a bad excuse. He knew lying wasn’t his strong suit.

Tony decided to drop the subject but he kept a close eye on Peter whenever he got a chance to look up from the road. He looked a bit paler than usual and Tony started to wonder if Peter’s occasional car sickness was beginning to rear its head. He knew it was a rare occurrence but maybe they’d pushed their luck driving for so long. They were almost there though, hopefully his son would be able to hold out that long.

Not five minutes later and Peter’s unnatural movements were becoming apparent to everyone in the car, even Thor who wasn’t the best at spotting odd body language. The boy kept shifting in his seat as though he couldn’t find a comfortable position and was pulling his seatbelt away from his stomach.

“Are you quite well, Peter?” Thor furrowed his brows, using the boy’s actual name for once marking his concern.

“Uhm..Yeah.” Peter said quietly blushing as he realised he hadn’t been quite as subtle in his movements as he once thought.

“You look uncomfortable, child.” Thor said softly causing Steve to turn around and look at him. He did indeed look very uncomfortable and nervous? The look on Peter’s face was reminiscent of the time he started throwing up blood in the kitchen and the memory made Steve’s stomach twist. He really wasn’t emotionally prepared to see that again.

“Are you gonna be sick?” Steve asked.

“Uh uh, it’s not that.” Peter he was quick to settle Steve’s nerves about that seeing the soldiers wide eyed look but blushed when he felt all eyes on him. As embarrassing as it was to admit he really wanted to avoid having an accident in the car, at the very least without warning. “I just need to use the restroom.”
Steve looked back sympathetically at the boy who was now squirming in his seat, having been surprised by his sudden admission. Peter looked to be shocked by his words too, never being so bold to admit he had to go to anyone but Tony. Steve knew how it felt to be stuck in a situation like that, as well as how embarrassing it was so he tried his best to avoid making it worse by drawing too much attention to what he said. He made sure to keep his tone light and casual. “Don’t worry Pete, not long now.”

“We’re almost there bubs, there’s nowhere for me to turn off before then.” Tony said gently, growing concerned. If Peter had to go badly enough for him to openly admit it in front of the other two men in the car he must be worried about his ability to wait until they got to the compound. Now he was nervous that Peter was going to end up getting another bladder infection from waiting too long, after the day in the car and the incident last night his bladder must be tired of the abuse. “You only went an hour ago, you feeling alright?”

Peter blushed at the question, not liking the implied question his dad was asking with an audience in the car. He answered quickly feeling flustered. “I don’t know why I gotta go so bad I haven’t even drank anything today-“

“What do you mean you haven’t drank anything?” Steve’s tone changed, suddenly very serious and concerned.

“Uh-uh I don’t mean nothing at all! You saw me drink at breakfast and lunch and- and look!” Yes, Peter, you had prepared for this! If only you held up the right water bottle from your backpack the first time, instead of showing the full one first- Ah fuck! He got it right the second time though, holding up the half empty one as ‘proof’. “See?!”

“I haven’t seen you drink anything.” Steve said suspiciously, obviously not having been convinced by Peter’s poorly executed charade.

“Neither have I, you ought to young one. Maybe you would have got in this predicament earlier and Tony could have stopped the car.” Thor chimed in unhelpfully on Peter’s part.

“Shut up Thor.” He growled as he rocked in his seat, clenching his thighs together. His tone and the way he snapped at the man made Tony offer him a very disapproving look that made him duck his shoulders shyly. He hated his Dad’s looks even more than when he raised his voice. “Sorry, but can we please stop talking about my water consumption? It’s really not helping.”

“There, there, little one. You know you can always use the empty bottle you have there should you be left with no other-“

“Shut up, Thor.” Tony said in much the same tone as his son just had. He knew from experience that Peter would not take kindly to that suggestion and he didn’t want to stress him out any more. “Just ten minutes bud, fifteen with us getting through security. You can make it.”

“Okay…” Peter wasn’t so sure, with the rate his bladder was filling he didn’t know if he would be able to wait that long.

“Just think about dry things-“

“Thor don’t start filling his head with images you know where they’ll end up-” Steve started.

“Can we stop talking about this now?!” Peter snapped, the embarrassment that came along with the entirety of his current predicament becoming too much to bare. He was content to pretend the situation wasn’t happening, that it was just him and his Dad in the car, at least for just long enough for him to get to the bathroom and survive the agonising humiliation. But that was very difficult to
accomplish when a certain two blond men kept making remarks.

Tony managed to shrink theirs road time by stretching the speed limit just a little. For once Steve didn’t chastise him for it, since the road was clear and he wanted to avoid having a sopping wet teenager on their hands. They managed to make a ten minute journey in just under seven, which didn’t seem like much, though every minute was precious when you were dealing with one of Peter’s bladder crises and Tony knew that better than anyone. In the back of the car Peter was still attempting to stifle his squirms to avoid letting on how desperate he truly was but it was futile. It was either wiggle around embarrassingly or water his dad’s upholstery; the latter being far more mortifying he decided his best best was to allow himself to be a little more animated than usual.

Tony breathes a sigh of relief when the building they were headed to came into view. Peter didn’t look to worse for wear, yes he looked desperate but at least now Tony didn’t have to worry about him having an accident. He pulled up to the security booth and started giving over information to the attendant (who immediately started fumbling over what he was doing when he realised that it was Tony freaking Stark). Steve took the opportunity to check on the fidgeting teen.

“How you holdin’ up, sport?”

“Uh...not too good.” Peter muttered honestly, as humiliating as it was it was hard to lie when he could barely sit still. He wished the guy who was meant to be letting them through security would quit being star struck over his dad, could he not tell this was an emergency?

Luckily Tony could and he managed to move the conversation along enough for the young worker to finally let them through the barriers and into the compound. It looked like an average military base from the outside, with a large parking garage to one side next to the row of grey and green buildings. “Pete you can hop out and run inside that building there, the one with the blue door.”

“Uh- n-no it’s okay I’ll wait with you guys.” Peter shook his head. The idea both made him anxious and embarrassed that Tony was implying he couldn’t wait long enough for them to park the car. Which he couldn’t, but that wasn’t the point. He wanted to retain some semblance of dignity.

“Parker, I said no peeing in my car. Get out. We’ll meet you in there.” Tony shook his head laughing at the boy’s stubbornness. He was clearly minutes away from peeing his pants but he was still refusing to admit just how badly he needed to go. There was no way Peter could wait through getting the car processed as well as the walk back to the building. Teenagers had such sensitive sensibilities at times, he wasn’t sure he’d ever understand it.

Peter huffed and gave his Dad a filthy look, but he didn’t wait to be told twice. He was out of the car before Tony pulled it to a complete stop.

“Do you want me to hop out with him?” Steve said gesturing to the dot in the horizon that was Peter, who was already running full pelt towards the blue doored building.

“Nah, I don’t think you’d catch up with him at this point anyways.” Tony chuckled. He wasn’t worried about the boy’s welfare as he was in a more than safe place and he feared if Peter slowed down to wait for Steve he may not make it to the bathroom in time.

Peter wasted no time running into the building, where he immediately entered a lobby type area, with a smiling blonde lady with a kind face sitting behind a desk. It was then he realised he wasn’t exactly sure what he was meant to say. The lady could see his internal conflict and broke the conversation for him. “Hi there. Can I help you?”
“Uh- hi yeah, uh, is there a bathroom I can use, Ma’am?” He stuttered, trying his best to stand still but ultimately failing.

The lady smiled a little more softly, catching on immediately to Peter’s situation. “Not here in the lobby honey, but there’s some just past the barriers. Have you got any identification with you?”

“Uh no.” He hadn’t thought about that, he’d assumed there would at least be a restroom he could use in the waiting area. The idea hadn’t even passed through his head that they would need to see who he was before they let him use the bathroom, though it made obvious sense. They couldn’t let just anyone walk in there under the guise of having to pee but he really did.

“I’m sorry sweetie, I can’t let you through without your ID papers. Who are you here with?” She was trying her best to help him but there wasn’t much she could do. The lady said looking over him sympathetically, he seemed in a bad way.

“T-the Avengers.” He stuttered again, having to cross his legs when a particularly bad wave hit. He hoped the title of his company would sway the woman in letting him go through without any form of ID though he doubted it.

“What’s your name, honey?” She could tell the situation was urgent and the boy in front of her looked so young, maybe he was part of an entourage and she could find a way to let him in off the record. Technically she shouldn’t be bending the rules to accommodate his situation but she couldn’t help it, her heart went out to the young man. She typed furiously at the keyboard in front of her, ready to type in the relevant information.

“I uh- uhm-“ He felt so stupid, why hadn’t Tony told him what to say? Was he meant to use his superhero alias or his actual name?

The kind lady could see his confusion. “Your legal name, honey.”

“P-Peter Parker.” He bent forward as his bladder gave a particularly hard contraction. It couldn’t understand why he had stopped moving and why it wasn’t allowed to empty yet. He felt himself threatening to leak and he had to move around to avoid that from happening. He tried his best to only squirm while the lady at the desk was looking at the screen in front of her but it was near impossible for him to stay still at this point. ‘Please let my name be on there, please. I can’t wait much longer.’

“Aha, Yes here you are!” The lady said happily before her face fell. “Shoot, sweetie I’m sorry you don’t have clearance yet. I can’t let you through, you have to have someone come and identify you because this is the first time you’ve been enlisted, I’m so sorry.”

The woman looked genuinely upset, she didn’t know what she could do for the young man who was so desperately trying to contain himself in front of her. Still despite what she had told him he remained so polite.

“I-It’s okay, Ma’am it’s n-not your fault. I don’t wanna get you in t-t-trouble.” The boy bent over double and put a hand on his lower stomach, making her worried that he was about to lose it then and there.

“Oh goodness, come sit down would that help? Whoever you’re with knows where you are right? They’ll be coming to meet you soon?” He nodded to each of her questions, not being able to make himself speak without whining. “That’s good at least, then I’ll be able to let you back there.”

She didn’t know what she could do to help, if she could have let him through the barricade illegally
she would have but without Peter’s identification she had no access code to put into the computer. She’d considered using someone else’s but that would flag up immediately as soon as said person try to enter the building themselves; had that person in question already been inside the building however there would immediate backlash for everyone involved. She lead Peter over to a chair at the other end of the room, leaving her desk unoccupied- that alone she could have been fired for. She didn’t have any way to open the door, even though she desperately wanted to. Once she got closer she realised the man didn’t just look young, he was young. Like, a child young. He was at least a head shorter than her. Surely he wasn’t a minor. “Honey, how old are you?”

“F-Fifteen ma’am.” Why was she asking him personal questions? Was he allowed to tell her that? Was she just trying to keep him distracted? He didn’t care at that point he could barely hear anything over the sound of his bladder screaming for release.

“Good grief, and Stark sent you over here alone?” There was a bite to her voice that Peter couldn’t quite understand. It was as though the thought personally offended her. Why did she assume he was with Tony anyway? He had just said the Avengers. Though Tony was kinda the main boss but it was weird how her tone changed upon hearing that information.

Just as he was about to question the lady in return he saw said billionaire pop into view through one of the windows, accompanied by Thor. He stood up quickly and rushed out of the door, grabbing his crotch as soon as his back was turned to the nice lady. He was too desperate to worry about what Thor would think, at this point he doubted the man would judge him anyway. As soon as he was in front of them the two men ceased their own conversations and looked equally concerned.

“Well if he thinks he’s so much better at parking we’ll let him do i- Pete? Why haven’t you-” Tony started but Peter cut him off. He didn’t have time to have a full conversation dammit he was about to pee his pants.

“Mm-the doors locked and there’s no bathroom by the front desk- the lady can’t lemme in without a code or ID or something so can you please just- mm, come on!” He rushed out all in one breath bobbing up and down, hands still buried between his legs.

Tony wasted no more time he gently moved past Peter and ran up to the front desk himself saving time waiting on Peter to keep pace with him. This left Thor tasked with trying to lead him back inside without the boy either tripping himself the way his legs were twisted together.

“Come, young one, it’s alright. Your father will have this sorted, don’t worry.” Thor soothed. Even in the heat of the moment Peter caught on to the term of address Thor had used and dear god, if he had picked up on their dynamic they had no chance of keeping it a secret. He didn’t have the energy to care, he was too focused on keeping his rebelling bladder in check, a fight that he was gradually losing. He could feel that the crotch of his jeans were wet but he could bring himself to check how visible the stain was.

Thor half carried him the rest of the way inside where he could hear Tony screaming at the poor woman behind the desk. He had both hands on the desk, one of which was clutching a stack of papers in its fist and he was looming over the woman, who seemed entirely unimpressed.

“You couldn’t have just opened the fucking door?! Like I would let you get fired for helping him-”

“It’s not up to you whether I keep my job or not anymore you made sure of that.” She hissed at him obviously trying to get him to lower his voice.

“Oh so that’s what this is about?! You wouldn’t let him go to the bathroom because you’re still pissed at me?!”
“Of course not!” She raised her voice for the first time and her blue eyes blazed in anger at the accusation, in a way that made Tony take a step back momentarily. “How dare you suggest such a thing, I didn’t even know who he was. Not everything is about you Tony I thought you would have figured that out by now. I can’t believe you brought a child into this. When you said about the kid I didn’t think you meant an actual kid. I never thought even you be so-”

But she cut herself off with a sigh, only managing to make Tony even more angry. “So what?! Go ahead tell me!”

“It’s not worth it. I’m not going to spend my time arguing with you sir, not in front of a little boy. Especially not when you seem to care so much about him.” She lowered her voice again and spoke calmly, sarcastic undertones towards the latter part of her statement. She stood up so that their faces were almost touching, her expression just as determined as his. “I’ve wasted too much of my time trying to get you to be a decent person.”

“Open the goddamn door.” He said through gritted teeth keeping his eyes locked on hers, but the lady didn’t back down.

She just silently tapped a code through, opening the clear barricades to the hallway behind her desk. She looked away from Tony who was still leaning over her, showing no indication that she found him threatening in anyway and made eye contact with Peter; who was being held upright by Thor in the doorway obviously dangerously close to wetting himself. She smiled again and spoke to him softly. “I’m so sorry sweetie, I hope you make it on time.”

“Thank you Madam.” Thor answered for him and started making his way down the hall, still coralling the desperate teen.

“Second door on the left guys!” She called after them, but she was already out of view.

Peter could distantly hear Tony start shouting again but it was hard to hear over the blood rushing through his ears. He could barely walk, he no doubt would have collapsed if Thor wasn’t dragging him. As much as he was clenching his muscles he could still feel urine coming out of him slowly, more coming out with each step. He felt like just giving up, there was no way he was going to make it to the bathroom dry at this point, but fortunately for him Thor didn’t have the same outlook.

“Almost there youngling.” He sounded a lot calmer than Peter felt. Suddenly the man stopped and pulled Peter to one side and moved his hands down towards his waist. Before he had a chance to question what the man was doing, Thor had already undone his belt and was pushing him through a door into the bathroom.

Thor had hoped he hadn’t overstepped any boundaries by doing that for the boy but his brotherly instincts had kicked in before he had a chance to second guess himself. In the urgency of the situation he hadn’t stopped to think how that may have been deemed inappropriate and he hoped that he hadn’t made Peter uncomfortable.

Luckily for him Peter felt the complete opposite. He was grateful Thor had taken those few precious seconds to do a task for him that undoubtedly would have taken him too long to do in his desperate state without completely wetting himself. He dashed over to the toilet and pulled his underwear down immediately, not noticing that he had neglected to shut the door. Fortunately Thor had the foresight to rectify that for him before he did notice, to save him some humiliation.

The blond waited patiently outside the door and was there to greet a still seething Tony who came barreling down the hall a few minutes later,
“God that woman, she’s lucky she doesn’t work for me anymore I swear to god-” He was muttering angrily to himself but upon seeing Thor he stopped. His anger turned back into concern knowing how upset Peter was going to be about the whole display. “Did he..?”

“Mostly, I think. But you may need to grab him some more clothing, my friends.” Thor smiled sadly. Peter had yet to reemerge even though he had heard the toilet flush minutes ago, it didn’t take a genius to figure out what was happening.

Tony sighed and shook his head, preparing himself to deal with a distraught teenager for the second time in twenty four hours. “Thanks, Thor. Can you wait here while I-”

“No problem.” Thor waved his hand and leant against the wall. As soon as Tony returned with the clothing in hand Thor took the opportunity to go and find Steve and the others, to give the pair some privacy.

Once the man had walked away Tony knocked on the door. “Underoos.”

“Yeah?” Came a quiet, tearful voice from the otherside of the door.

“Open up.”

Peter opened the door just enough for Tony to hand him the garments. He let out a sheepish thank you before shutting the door again.

“It’s alright bubs.” Tony sighed gently. It had been a long day this was really not the ideal way to finish it off, he just hoped Peter would bounce back as usual when he got to take a look around. He didn’t want to ruin his experience so early on, not after he had been so pumped about getting to join them. Peter finally came out of the bathroom and it was clear he had been crying, but he’d dried off his face and looked as though he was making an effort to keep his composure. Tony, not wanting to dwell on the subject and risk upsetting him again decided to move on. “We missed dinner, but Clint found a vending machine. You hungry?”

Peter shook his head and sniffed. He didn’t seem interested in conversation just yet, lest his voice betray him.

“Okay, let’s just go and get unpacked yeah? Then I can show you around a little if you want.” Tony placed a comforting hand on Peter’s shoulder and started to lead him down the complex passages and hallways, which lead to their assigned chambers.

Their room was fairly small with two sets of bunk beds lining it’s two outermost walls. There was a dresser on either side of each bunk, with a small desk area tucked away in one corner, a sink in the other. Tony was getting slightly worried about Peter’s lack of reaction or conversation but he hoped it was just the usual after effects from his partial accident. However that was not the case, Peter was upset about something else, which he soon found out.

“Why wasn’t I on the stupid system already? Why didn’t you tell me?” Peter turned to him, sniffling wetly, though his eyes were dry now at least. He looked more angry than upset.

Tony sighed. He should have known Peter was going to say something like that. It always seemed easier for the teen to blame him for everything. “I didn’t know they wouldn’t let you through, I didn’t know she couldn’t have just- ugh. She knows I could’ve overridden the codes when I got there she should have just used mine-”

“It’s not her fault she was trying to help me!” Peter snapped. He didn’t understand how his dad could be so rude to someone who was just trying to do their job and it irked him to no end. “You
Tony paused for a second and it was clear to Peter he was trying to find the right words to sugar coat whatever he was about to say. He considered lying, telling the boy that it happened to everyone the first time they entered a new area but he was bound to get caught out sooner or later; whether that be from another member of the team telling Peter otherwise when they boy asked them the same question to see if they’d corroborate his story, or when they would undoubtedly visit another base and Peter wouldn’t be subjected to the same process. It would be better to tell the truth. Not easier but better. “You are a part of the team. You’re an avenger just not a full S.H.I.E.L.D agent yet-“

“That doesn’t make any sense.” He made it clear that he wasn’t in any mood for Tony’s bullshit.

“It does make sense.” Of course the teen wouldn’t be able to understand all of the intricacies of the working world yet, it was pretty complicated what Tony had had to go through just to get Peter to live with them in the first place. He’d never felt the need to explain it to him either, especially given how Peter was reacting to the information.

“No it doesn’t. How could I go on official missions and go out on call and patrol if I’m not an agent? Surely that wouldn’t be allowed, I wouldn’t be allowed to know secret information. I know Spider-Man is still meant to be a secret from the general public, or at least they don’t know I’m an Avenger I get all that, but I didn’t realise I was a dirty little secret to the people I’m meant to be working for-“

“It’s not like that.” ‘Really kid? If only you saw the stack of paperwork that had to be completed every time you put on your damn suit.’ Tony pinched the bridge of his nose, trying to calm the anger that had started to rise. He really didn’t want to snap at him, but the sass was really starting to work on his last nerve. He didn’t understand how the child could be so indignant about something he knew literally nothing about; he was taking one snippet of information and acting like he knew everything about how their agency worked, and as though Tony was doing something to slight him when in fact it was the opposite. “You’re listed as a general field agent, almost like the FBI, you’re only one step down from being an official part of S.H.I.E.L.D, okay? No you shouldn’t technically know certain things, but I went around things a certain way so we could train you up at home instead of having to get shipped off to a dump like this. You were technically in pre-training during those missions, it took a lot of loopholes for us to let you do that. Now Fury and I decided you should be fully enlisted so we don’t have to jump through hoops everytime we go on official business-”

“Oh so you lied to me. Again.” He quipped coldly, the usual lilt to his voice flattening. Why hadn’t he just told him that in the first place?

Tony shook his head. Peter really had a knack for taking things the wrong way, despite what he said to try and explain things. Was that a teenage thing or a special skill his son had developed due to his tumultuous childhood? Either way it was infuriating, it was like he was just trying to find things to argue about. Is this how Steve felt when Tony was in one of his moods? After the foolishness at the front desk and having to deal with Thor in the car all day he was not in the mood to be having this conversation. Not when his son was being so stubborn. “No I didn’t. Why are you acting like this? I was trying-“

“To protect me. Yeah I know. That’s all you ever try and do but you always find a way to mess it up, huh?” Peter scowled and threw his bag then himself onto the top bunk on his side of the room.
He was used to the spiel Tony was about to give about now, it didn’t excuse the man constantly lying to him about stuff. Not after everything, he didn’t deserve to be treated like a little kid then expected to react like an adult, how was that in any way fair?

Okay. That was uncalled for. After everything Tony was trying to do for him having Peter say he only ever messed things up was deeply hurtful. Did he not understand what a pain in the ass getting enlisted as an official agent was? S.H.I.E.L.D was one of the most top secret areas of the government, did he not understand the levels of security, backgrounds checks and rigorous tests, interviews and training people had to go through just to get their application looked at? Obviously not, he didn’t seem to appreciate all the opportunities he’d been given, he was mad all because he hadn’t been allowed through one door? Maybe Tony ought to show him what he was missing out on. Maybe he ought to show him being a hero isn’t all that easy. “You don’t want my help now? Is that it? Fine. Go to your room.”

Peter huffed a laugh, not taking Tony seriously in the slightest. “I’m in my room-“

“No you’re not smartass, you’re meant to be in the rookie barracks, sharing a bunk bed in a room full of twenty or so other men who are way older than you and have a lot more experience. Probably a bunch of ex-marines or other people with powers like you. They have a great row of communal showers and toilet stalls without doors if you wanna go check ’em out? But you knew that didn’t you? I forgot you already know how everything works, since you can’t seem to make sense of what I have to say right? I had you put in with me so you wouldn’t have to be kept separate from us all day and night. But since you don’t feel like appreciating all that why don’t we take a walk down there right now, huh?” He watched Peter’s face fall at that and it filled him with a smug satisfaction that he would come to regret later. “Oh got nothing to say now?”

Peter paused for a moment, carefully thinking about what he was going to say next. It wasn’t his fault he didn’t know anything, how was he supposed to when Tony never talked to him? “How was I supposed to know that?”

Tony didn’t feel like he should have to explain every decision he made to Peter before he made it. He was the adult and he was the child. He should be able to follow some simple instructions without kicking up a fuss. “Well you seem to know everything, I forgot all teenagers have infinite knowledge. Would you rather I hadn’t pulled some strings? Cause I can have you sent back where you’re meant to be staying and I’ll see you in two weeks.”

The conversation was going downhill very quickly and he didn’t much like where it was heading. He was the one who was upset after not being allowed to go to the bathroom he didn’t expect for the conversation to turn back on him. He hadn’t meant to piss his Dad off that much, he wasn’t sure if Tony’s threat was serious or not. Either way it wasn’t right for him to threaten him with something like that. He hated when he backed him up into a corner like that, using power moves against him. In Peter’s eyes it just proved that his Dad was in the wrong; it meant Tony couldn’t win the argument with his words so he had to bully him into submission, something he’d seen the man do several times and he wasn’t a fan. “You know you’re not being fair.”

Tony laughed coldly. “Life ain’t fair, that’s why I do my best to make it fair better when I can, but if you don’t appreciate it and you’d rather do things the hard way, go right ahead kiddo. Be my guest.”

“You just think I can’t- forget it.”

“No come on, you wanna be a big shot. What were you gonna say?”

“It’s not worth it.”
“Well I just said it is. And what I say goes. Now, what were you about to say?”

As much as he was trying to resist snapping back, he couldn’t help it. Tony was trying to push him into saying something back so he could feed into his own anger and he hated it. He hated when his Dad goaded him, he just sounded like all of the bullies at school. He couldn’t stand it. “I just- you don’t think I can do it. You think I’d come crying to you just because I had to share a room with some other people, I’m not that pathetic-”

Tony growled in frustration. Why did Peter always have to bring it back to that? How many times did he have to tell him that wasn’t the case? It wasn’t fair, he always found a way to twist his words or his actions to suit his own self hating narrative and it was exhausting. He was too tired to entertain it, too exhausted to spend the time consoling him when it never seemed to sink in anyway. “Don’t start that shit I never said-”

“I’m not that codependent! I’m almost an adult, Tony, I don’t need you around me all the time to just function-”

“Oh yeah? You don’t need me around?”

“You weren’t saying that last night, when you quite literally came crying to me, were you?” The man froze at his own words as did Peter. The teenager tensed for a moment before he sighed and looked away. Fuck he hadn’t meant to say that.

He didn’t get the instant reaction he was expecting. Instead Peter let out a quiet, breathy laugh and looked away from him.

“Wow, really? Okay.” Peter deadpanned.

No this wasn’t fair he hadn’t meant to say that, he could still take it back. Fuck why did he let himself get so over emotional in a conversation with a teenager. He wasn’t Steve he shouldn’t feel the need to one up his own son. “Pete I didn’t mean-“

“Nah, it’s cool I get it. Let’s just stop fighting now I won’t question your decisions anymore.” Peter said dejectedly as he hopped down from his bunk.

Tony was infuriated by Peter’s sudden apathy towards the conversation. He’d been happy to wind Tony up like that he deserved a chance to apologise. “The conversations over when I say it’s over. I shouldn’t have brought that up.”

“But you did. And I’m not interested in having a ‘conversation’ with someone who’s gonna throw things back in my face like that. You’re just- you’re so nasty sometimes.” Peter just shook his head, speaking very quietly. His tone had changed from one of indignance to a flat, neutral tone. He sounded like an exhausted parent who had spent hours telling their child not to do something and they did it anyways. He sounded how Tony felt and honestly, the man would have preferred for Peter to shout and scream at him. At least that way he had something to bounce off of not the emotional brick wall that had just formed before his very eyes.

Peter started moving towards the door and Tony was too gobsmacked at the sudden turn in the conversation for that to register at first. “Where are you going-“

“I’m gonna go hang out with Nat and Bruce for a while, I saw their room was just down the hall. You should take the time to cool off a little.”
Peter walked out of their shared room shaking his head disapprovingly. The boy had managed to make Tony feel as though he was the teenager and Peter was the parent, leaving him in his room as ways of punishment. He did not like that feeling, it was one he hadn’t experienced in over twenty years. The shock from Peter’s sudden maturity actually made him sit back and reevaluate his actions that had lead up to that point. Had his son reacted in anger at him, like he had expected, it probably would have ended with one of them storming off or crying or both; which he was glad to have avoided but he was meant to be the adult in the situation it should have been his actions that helped to avoid an argument not fuel it.

But why was so hard to everyone to understand? He had a reason for everything he did. All he was trying to do was take care of Peter the best way he knew how, there was never any malice. He always weighed his options before making a decision on the boy’s behalf, he knew full well what he was doing, how dare anyone else think they have a say? Or even an opinion? He didn’t have to justify his actions to anyone. Though as that thought crossed his mind he knew he was being unfair and if anyone should have a say it should definitely be the boy himself. He knew he was in the wrong about everything, he just hated to have to admit that. To himself or anybody, especially when it had to do with his parenting.

Every time something like that cropped up he felt like his father, in fact the way he had brought up a vulnerable moment like that and used it against his son to win a stupid argument? That was a total Howard Stark move. Christ, he had enough of his own issues dealing with ‘weakness’ from that kind of behaviour he wasn’t about to pass that onto his son. If he had just taken a second to word it differently or think about what he was saying to the already fragile teenager- he’d basically outright called him pathetic, which he’d been spending months, well over a year now, trying to convince Peter otherwise. For a man who prided himself on his reputation of having no heart he really had a way of getting over emotional.

He decided ultimately that Peter was right, he should take a minute to himself to calm down. He didn’t blame his son for wanting to get out of that volatile situation either, he was just glad he had a safe place to go. He knew his friends would make sure he was alright, his friends he had spent the last twenty four hours hating because of a stupid mistake...okay, let’s focus on one thing at a time, Tony. The team is used to your outbursts, Peter isn’t. Nor does he deserve to be.

After an hour or so of wallowing and mulling over the right things to say, Tony made his way down to where the rest of the team were located. They’d all hauled themselves up in Bruce’s room and they were playing cards. Clint had spent the time to teach Peter how to play rummy which was fun at first, until the kid started to beat him. The fact that they had been placing bets using candy was a high stakes reward for both Peter and Bruce and the pair were currently wiping the floor with everyone, planning to split their profits equally. Tony stood in the doorway for a few minutes just surveying his weird little miss matched family. Dysfunctional as it may be at times it was his and it was heartwarming to see them all getting along, albeit without him there, which was probably a good thing at that time. It was incredibly humbling and thought provoking and-bleugh emotions. No more, please.

Just as he was shaking off all his paternal pride Peter made eye contact with him, and much to his surprise gave him a small smile and a wave. This caused the others in the room to turn around and look at him, other than Clint who was taking the opportunity to try and get a peak at Peter’s cards. He sat back huffily though as Peter moved his hand deliberately as the man leaned over, not looking in his direction.

“Nice try, Clint.” He giggled, still looking over at his Dad, waiting for a command.

“Can we talk?”
“Sure.” Peter shrugged his shoulders, keeping his tone incredibly light much to Tony’s dismay. He had fully prepared himself to beg for a grumpy Peter’s forgiveness, but he ought to have known never to expect anything. His son was always full of surprises. Peter stood and followed him into the hallway where Tony immediately started to talk at him again.

“Peter I’m-“

Peter held a finger up to stop him. Usually Tony would have taken great offence to this but given the circumstances he gave the boy that one. “Uh uh. My turn first.”

“Okay, you’re right. Go ahead.” He took a step back and nodded for Peter to start talking. The boy did, he kept his tone equally light throughout which only added to Tony feeling like a naughty schoolboy being chastised.

“You hurts my feelings dad. I know you were lashing out because you were frustrated, I get that. But you’re old enough to know better. You should be leading by example when it comes to thinking before you say things.” Peter paused for a moment when Tony looked as though he was going to interject, but he gave him a look that told the man otherwise. He’d agreed to let Peter talk, so he ought to do it. Besides he was in no place to be defending his actions, he was there to apologise after all and he certainly didn’t disagree with anything Peter had just said; it was just relax for him to apologise at that point.

“I know you’re sorry and you didn’t mean for it to come out like that, I’m not upset anymore I promise. And I do understand why you do the things you do, even when they come out the wrong way. You’re not used to the whole dad thing, you’re gonna make mistakes and you and I both know you don’t have a very good base to go off of. I appreciate everything you do for me and I know everything you do is only because you care. Even if I don’t like it sometimes, you do it because you believe it’s the best thing to do and you’re trying to protect me. So, I don’t wanna have to have this conversation again cause honestly it’s kinda boring. You’re forgiven, I still love you, you’re still a great Dad even if you make mistakes. Which you do. A lot. Just, talk to me next time okay? Tell me the truth, we both promised to talk to each other about things remember? It’s not fair for you to make all the decisions on your own, for me or you.”

Towards the end Peter droned his voice dramatically to illustrate his point. “Wow. You kinda ruined my speech I had ready there, kiddo.”

“I know I’ve heard it a bunch of times, I’m just paraphrasing at this point.” Peter shrugged. He was so calm the entire time and Tony was glad. He had been so scared that he’d really damaged the boy’s self esteem, what little he had, with that comment. So being met with a calm, rational thinking teenager was what he had least been expecting. He really had talent the wind out of his sails with his whole spiel though.

“I am sorry, P.”

“I know. I forgive you. Just please don’t be so mean to me next time. I don’ like it.” Peter let himself show some emotion for the first time since his he’d walked out of their room. He looked so sad and the way he said it made Tony’s heart break with guilt. He hadn’t meant to let his mean streak get the better of him.

“I know, I’m so sorry bubb. I shouldn’t have let myself get so upset and I shouldn’t have taken it out on you. Thank you for being so mature.”

To that Peter’s usual smile resumes and he took to opportunity to make fun of his Dad a little as revenge. As much as Tony had upset him, he knew that Tony was going to beat himself up
emotionally more than Peter ever could, so he wasn’t going to prolong the man’s agony. Besides, he made a much better point when he conducted himself in the way he just had; making Tony feel ashamed of himself whilst upholding the moral high ground by not reacting. “Well one of us had to be huh? Thought it was better if I just walked away and let you have your little tantrum in peace.”

“Alright I get it.”

“But for real you say I act like a bratty teenager-“

“Peter.” Tony said warningly letting the boy know not to push his luck with his Dad’s already short temper.

“Okay, okay. But seriously, can we not argue anymore? At least not til we get home cause it’s been a long day.” Peter yawned to prove his point.

“It has been a long day.”

“Did you apologise to that nice blonde lady?” Peter suddenly remembered the altercation at the front desk and how rude his father had been to the woman who had been trying help him. He turned and frowned at the man.

“Uh. I will, Pete.” Tony shrugged awkwardly and Peter had never seen the man look so- shy?

“Seriously you were so mean to her, she was just tryna help me-”

“I know, I know, I will I promise. I owe her an apology for a lot of things.” Tony muttered not looking Peter in the eye. A sudden realisation hit him. The familiarity between them, the way they were going back and forth and what they were saying...

“Wait a second...was that Pepper?!“ Tony’s eyes went wide and he stared at his son causing Peter to giggle involuntarily.

“Where did you hear that name?” Tony sounded dead serious but it was hard to take him that way when he had a distinct red glow on his cheeks.

“Oh my god- are you blushing? I never thought I’d see the day-“

“Peter.” Tony growled. It was clear he had no patience to be teased about that particular lady. “Where did you hear that name?”

“You said it in your sleep last night, when I jumped in with you. When you said my feet were cold, you called me Pepper.” Peter tried to keep a straight face as he saw the mortification set into Tony’s it was near impossible.

“You don’t repeat that name to another living soul do you understand?” The man said flatly and continued walking ahead of him, not glancing back.

“So it is her! What is she your girlfriend or somethi-“

“One more word and you’re grounded as soon as we get home.” Tony said finally.

Peter’s mouth gaped like a fish as he fought the urge to say anything else, but he held his hands up to show Tony he forfeited. He waited for his Dad to say something first, not sure if the threat including talking about other things.

“Just say it.” Tony sighed and rolled his eyes at him.
“Can I go finish my game now? I don’t trust Clint not to try and cheat again, he’s mad I got his ho-ho’s-”

“Come on.” Tony smiled and shook his head.

Peter grinned and turned back down the hallway announcing his arrival back in the room with a “What’s up losers!”

“No one likes a show off Kid, you were just on a lucky streak. Quit while you’re ahead.” Clint grumbled behind his cards.

“That sounds like something a sore loser could say Mr. Barton.” Peter giggled annoyingly, relishing in the reaction he got out of the man.

“We were going easy on you.”

“Suuuure you were.”

“I leave my kid alone with you for an hour and you guys already have him gambling? Tsk tsk.” Tony laughed at Steve’s horrified expression.

“I didn’t think you of all people would object to such a hobby, Tony.” Bruce chuckled as he clutched his small pile of various sweet goods close to him, looking ready to bite anyone who dared to touch his loot.

“On the contrary, I wanted to give him his first Casino experience on his eighteenth birthday.”

“Uhh, no thanks I’ll stick to candy bets thank you very much.” Peter laughed nervously. He could only imagine his aunt’s reaction if she heard Tony had taken Peter on such an excursion.

“Underground gambling more your style there, Pete? Looks like we got a little lawbreaker on our hands.” Nat smirked.

“Hey, uh uh don’t do that. Not going there.” Peter shook his head but he was still laughing.

“You’d rather gamble illegally than go to a licensed, refutable establishment? That sounds pretty deviant to me, son.” Tony joined in.

“Shuddup, I’m a sweet innocent baby boy and you all know it.” He smiled sweetly to illustrate his point. “Y’all are the heathens who are corrupting me. I’m a minor I relinquish all responsibility.”

“So, I’ll take your stash since you’re not gonna play anymore-” Steve reached his hand over to take Peter’s candy.

“Oh hell no, you best believe I’m taking you suckers for all you’ve got.” Peter cackled, slapping Steve’s hand back. “Hands off me treasure.”

They continued playing for a couple more hours, Peter being true to his word wiped the floor with the rest of the group. He couldn’t resist sharing some of his earnings with his candy-less victims though, he wasn’t a monster. It got to be eleven o’clock when Tony finally decided it was time they all retire to their own rooms, ready for the busy day they had to face tomorrow. Satisfied with having won Peter didn’t argue as he was pretty exhausted from the emotionally taxing day. He was just glad he and his Dad had made up before they had to retire to their room as despite himself, as the sky darkened outside he felt a familiar dread from the night before. Since it was past curfew all the lights in the hallways had been turned off and he would’ve been completely lost, not to mention
terrified, if his Dad hadn’t been there. He managed to ignore the pale, black haired figures and shadows he saw in his periphery thanks to the man’s comforting presence, but he couldn’t ignore the shame that came along with it. Especially after the speech he’d given to his Dad about not needing to share a room with him.

Tony made sure to point out the closest bathroom before they retired to their room, both of them visiting it before heading back. After they had unpacked and changed for bed he also made the boy lead him to the restroom and back to their room unaided so that he was sure that Peter knew where he was going.

Peter elected to sleep on the top bunk of his set of bunk beds for some odd reason. Peter often liked to sleep up high, constantly making web hammocks in his room since he figured out how that day they spent at the safehouse. Tony knew better than to question his sons weird habits anymore, he was too tired anyway. He was ready to sleep like the dead for five hours before he had to get up and-

“Psst.”

Ugh. Just pretend you didn’t hear him Tony. Pretend you’re already asleep. But what if he needs something?

“Pssst, Dad are you awake?”

Tony sighed and rolled back over. “I am now. What is it Pete?”

“What’s gonna happen tomorrow?”

Tony sighed again. It wasn’t like he had already had this conversation eight times today with the boy already. But the way Peter asked was so innocent he didn’t have the heart to say that. “Well, we’ll get up at five thirty because they do count at six and it’s nicer not getting woken up be a soldier sticking a flashlight in your face. Breakfast is at six fifteen on the dot and anyone who’s late will be reprimanded-”

“Like with Steve?”

Tony chuckled a bit at that. “A little worse than Steve, bubs. But you won’t be late so don’t worry about that. After breakfast you’ll be called to go to your training area-”

“But I won’t be with you guys right?” Peter recalled from their earlier conversations.

“Right. I’m not sure exactly where you’ll be headed, but you’ll most likely be attending an initial induction meeting first. They’ll go over all the basic stuff about the importance of secrecy, data protection blahblahblah. Then you’ll go on to do some kind of drill exercises, but I should get to see you at around ten o’clock. That’s when we’re scheduled a break and I put a request in for you to be allowed access to our break area.”

“If I’m not put in with the new recruits then where else could they put me?”

“I don’t know, probably with a group of trainees or something.” Tony sighed. Couldn’t they talk about this in the morning? He’d already told Peter he didn’t know.

“Oh right yeah, I just wanna be prepared for anything. Sorry, I’ll let you sleep now.” Peter picked up on how exasperated his father was becoming and he didn’t feel like getting yelled at again that day.
“Goodnight, bubby.” Tony smiled fondly and turned back over.

“Nunight, Dad.” Peter lay down himself. He still had a thousand questions burning in his mind and his stomach was filled with a mixture of excited and nervous energy. But he knew better than to continue pestering Tony. All of his questions would get answered tomorrow and maybe he could find out from a neutral third party a little more about his standing within the agency because lord knows he wasn’t about to get a straight answer from his dad. With his mind racing it took awhile for him to fall asleep, he spent a couple hours tossing and turning. But finally he drifted into an uneasy sleep, dreaming about all the possibilities the next day could hold.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone has a particular marvel character they'd like to see Peter interact with, please let me know. Now would be the perfect time for me to incorporate them into the story :)

First Day

Chapter Summary

Thank you for all of your character suggestions! I'm going to try and find a way to make them all fit in (even if it kills me, dammit)!

Obviously I didn't cram them all into one chapter cause that woulda just came across all messy and lazy like- but don't worry I'm definitely going to be incorporating more heroes in the chapters to come!

Not much happens time wise in this chapter but I wanted to get something up for y'all today and it kinda sets the foundations for what I'm tryna achieve for this part of the storyline- I hope you like it! <3

Peter woke up before their alarm was set, by his body's natural alarm clock. He was confused as to where he was for a second, but the prompting from his bladder caused him to remember pretty quickly. Once he had used the facilities he was already too awake to go back to sleep, especially once he remembered all the excitement and anxiety he had in store for that day. He decided to get dressed and ready a little early so he would some time to calm his nerves before he had to meet any new people. He took a little extra time in the shower, letting himself relax under the warm water. By the time he strolled back to his and Tony’s room it was coming time for the man to be getting up himself. And he was right his Dad was up, albeit a little confused.

“Pete, c’mon you gotta get up.” Tony yawned his eyes half lidded, washing his face in the sink. “I’m tired too bud, but we can’t be late-”

Peter was standing in the doorway tilting his head. “Dad, I’ve been up for ages who are you-”

“Jesus christ!” Tony jumped slightly and put a hand over his arc reactor. “Peter, fuck, you scared the shit outta me.”

Peter was genuinely confused. Had the man not noticed he wasn’t in the room with him? It was then he looked over to his bed. In his haste to get to the bathroom he had thrown back the covers over the three pillows he had accumulated in his nest (two of which were stolen from the unoccupied bunks, had he been able to pry Tony’s out from under his head without waking the man up he would have) inadvertently creating a human shaped form under the blankets. He bust out laughing much to his father’s distaste.

“That’s not funny Peter. You can’t go around doing that to someone with a heart condition. You wanna start a prank war with me?”

“No, no! It was an accident I swear!” Peter said quickly his smile dropping. He had been told tales of the great prank war that occurred a couple years ago, Thor had even shown him the scar.

“Oh yeah, sure. Hey Pete, what’s that?” Tony changed his expression convincingly and pointed over Peter’s shoulder causing him to turn around.

“What’s wha- AH!” Tony took the opportunity and lunges at Peter tickling his sides mercilessly.
He hadn't thought the boy would be naive enough to fall for that. “N-No! Sthap- stop! D-aha ha had!”

“I know you’ve just been to the bathroom so I can do this all day.” Tony grinned evilly, crouching down to continue his torture when Peter’s knees have way from laughter. He rolled into his side like a character from a dramatic Shakespearean death scene, losing all of his strength during his giggling.

“Wh-who who a-ar- AH!” Peter had intended to say ‘who are you Steve?’ given that Tony had just used the man’s signature catchphrase unintentionally, but he wasn’t given the opportunity between gasping for air.

“Why are you doing an owl impression Pete?” Tony spoke as if they were having a completely normal conversation and Peter had started just booting out of nowhere. “Be quiet kid you’re gonna wake the neighbours.”

“I-I-I’m gonna pe-he-he- Stop!” Tony didn’t take the threat seriously until Peter stopped trying to fight him off and started grabbing his crotch instead.

He relented and stood back up, still believing it to be a scare tactic to make him back off. “Oh come on, that’s so not fair.”

He was cut off by Peter running out of the room still holding himself. He returned after a few minutes his face still impossibly red.

“That was so not funny!” He huffed grumpily. “I said no prank war!”

“There is absolutely no way you actually used the bathroom.” Tony chuckled flippantly.

“Oh yeah?” Peter scowled and abruptly pulled down his pants enough to show the man his underwear.

“Boy what are you doing- oh.” There was indeed a decent sized wet patch and Tony felt a stab of guilt. That was until he started laughing. “How is that even possible?”

“Shut up! It’s involuntary alright?!” Peter huffed and stormed over to his dresser to fish out a new pair of boxers.

Tony knew he ought not to tease his son but he was still tired, which caused him to be a bit giggly that morning and he couldn't help himself. “No but that’s like, physically impossible. How did you manage to do that? Is that pee or some kind of spider venom-“

“Stop talking or I’m throwing these ones at your face.” Peter deadpanned holding his wet underwear menacingly. “It’s like a fear reaction I don’t know..”

“Awe did I scare you my little bubba?” Tony mock cooed at him and walked over to pretend pinch his cheeks. Peter slapped his hands away and stomped his foot.

“God you are so annoying! What is with you this morning? Go get some damn coffee or something.” He scoffed and turned away from his Dad to get changed.

Tony turned to do the same, throwing his head back to groan dramatically. “Ugh don’t remind me. I’m not gonna get a decent cup of coffee for two weeks.”

“Woah, wait do you hear that?”
Tony sighed knowing full well what was coming. “Don’t say it.”

“It’s the world’s tiniest violin.” Peter proceeded to make tiny whining sound effects until he felt something hit him in the back of his head. It didn’t hurt but it was startling. He looked behind him to see a pair of discarded socks rolled up into a ball. “Oh gross! That’s disgusting Tony!”

“You just threatened to throw your pissy draws at me, don’t wanna hear it.” Tony cackled.

Not long after the two finished getting dressed (or redressed in Peter’s case) a soldier dressed in typical camo gear came round with a clicker, counting to make sure everyone was in their rooms. Peter had been in the middle of making sure his bed was made to an appropriate military standard and jumped a foot in the air when he heard someone come in behind him. Luckily his brain worked ever so slightly quicker than his reflexes that morning or the poor worker would’ve got a fistful or webbing thrown into his face. After they had been cleared to leave their bunk room from count Tony lead Peter by the shoulders in the opposite direction than they had been going previously since he had zero idea how to get to the mess hall himself.

Just as the were at the top of a corridor, opposite a set of doors labelled cafeteria, Tony stopped walking and turned Peter to face him. “The canteen is communal and everyone eats at the same time, so there’s gonna be a lot of people okay? It’s gonna be pretty loud.”

Peter managed to keep the grimace from his face and nodded. His Dad knew about how sensitive his hearing was and how common it was for him to get over stimulated from too much sound. Peter often counteracted this using specially designed earbuds when he was in crowded public spaces, like in the halls at school, but he hadn’t thought to bring them. Tony had said they weren’t allowed any specialist pieces of equipment that weren’t essential to survival (such as Tony’s heart), as not to impede or advance their performance.

“I know bud.” Tony rubbed his arm comfortingly. He could tell that Peter was putting on a brave face but was nervous as well. “Just stick close to me.”

As soon as they opened the door it hit Peter the magnitude of the place. The room was filled with what must’ve been six hundred or so people, sat along the massive metal benches lining each side of the room or standing in line at the various windows that were dealing out trays. He was immediately bombarded with sounds that made him want to cover his ears. Sounds of metal scraping, of conversation and worst of all chewing. Gross. It made him wonder what kind of material the doors were made of to be able to block out the sound so much, as he could barely hear whispers before they hinges opened.

It wasn’t until Tony nudged him that he realised he hadn’t moved and he was standing in the way of a pair of giant men who made Thor look like a cabbage patch doll. “Oh s-Sorry!”

“No problem.” Came one gruff voice.

“Cute kid, Stark. He yours?” The other man teased, grinning slyly.

“Good morning Marvin, Ace.” Tony nodded to each man respectively and rolled his eyes. “Come on, P.”

He steered Peter through a sea of people getting stopped a couple more times. He tried to stay calm but it was difficult when he was being pushed through a crowd without knowing where he was going. He much rather would have trailed behind Tony but he supposed the man didn’t trust him not to wander off and talk to people. Which was tempting as he saw several people he recognised.
“Hey is that-“

“Keep it movin’ Spidey. We can have a meet and greet later.”

He didn’t argue. He knew Tony was right, they had two weeks for him to go around pestering people. He was just happy to see familiar faces in the ocean of strangers. Finally he saw some very familiar faces, one of which was bellowing across the hall, causing a lot of other missionaries to turn and stare.

“TONY! SPIDERLING! OVER HERE!”

“Yes, Thank you Thor we see you.” Tony shook his head, clearly embarrassed by the sudden attention. Peter on the other hand was relieved, though he did blush a bit at the nickname. He didn’t want anyone else to start calling him that or god forbid think that was his actual alias.

Tony steered Peter through the last leg of the crowd and told him to sit down at the table whilst he went and grabbed their trays. Peter went to object, assuming that Tony wouldn’t be allowed to take two in such a strict military environment but he bit his tongue. Who was he kidding, his Dad was Tony Stark. No one was going to say no to him. Besides, he didn’t want to leave the safety of his seat and be swallowed by the mass of other agents.

“Morning Pete.” Steve smiled, though the man looked exhausted. Peter had never seen him look so tired.

“Hi, are you okay?”

Steve laughed softly. “Yeah, just a rough night. Has anyone told you where you’ve been allocated yet?”

He noted how Steve had changed the subject quickly but decided not to press the man on the issue, assuming he was keeping something private for a reason. “Uh uh not yet. I haven’t really seen anyone official other than the head counting dude.”

“Yeah, the first morning is pretty unorganised. They have to allow time for everyone to get here first.”

Peter nodded understandingly. He’d heard at least a dozen different languages being spoken that morning alone, which was amazing. He hadn’t realised that S.H.I.E.L.D was such a diverse corporation. Of course he knew they had agents all over the world but he had thought it was predominantly an American based operation, but he was clearly naive to assume such a thing. He was pretty sure half of the native tongues he was hearing weren’t even human. Cool.

They all made general conversation, answering Peter’s excited/nervous chatter. Tony eventually made his way back to the table with two mini boxes of cereal and cartons of milk, looking disgusted.

“Have you seen the shit water they’re trying to pass off as coffee?” He grumbled as he slammed the trays down. “Here kid.”

“Thanks!” Peter happily ripped open the packages, being starving given that he had missed dinner the night before.

“Well maybe this is a good time to curb your caffeine addiction.” Bruce chided over the table, earning himself a death glare from Tony.
“I’ll stop drinking coffee when you stop putting yourself at risk for type two diabetes, Doctor.” He growled.

“Take it easy.” Steve chuckled. That was when Tony noticed how disheveled the blond looked.

“Jesus Rogers, you look like shit. Bucky having a rough time sleeping again?”

Steve’s expression hardened and he looked between Tony and Peter for a minute. “Can we not in front of Peter please?”

Tony blinked for a second before catching on to Steve words, seeming to have forgotten Peter’s presence. For once he actually held his hands up in apology. “My bad.”

“I ain’t eavesdropping on other people’s business.” Peter out his hands over his ears to prove his point. Though he was intrigued by the things implied during that short interaction Peter respected Steve’s right to a little privacy, something that was already in short supply in their household. He made a show of changing the subject. “So Clint, you’re looking extra grumpy this morning-“

They made conversation freely again, Tony being sure not to accidentally bring up private matters again. It wasn’t long before Peter started to grow quiet, the anxiety starting to take over the excitement running through him. It was Nat who caught on to this first and she got up from the other side of the table and gestured for Thor to scootch up the bench.

“Getting nervous, Spider-Guy?” She spoke quietly to avoid Tony jumping in and going all over the top protective Dad on him. She smirked her usual sarcastic smile but her voice was a lot softer than usual, letting Peter know that she wasn’t teasing him.

“A little.” He chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly.

“You’re gonna do fine. You’ll pass all the tests, you’re more than physically capable. So long as you keep your head down and don’t stray from orders you’ll be absolutely fine.” She patted his back and gave him a genuine smile, which was certainly a rarity. “The questions they ask are easy, just don’t over think them. You’re more than qualified for this, you have nothing to worry about.”

Peter nodded, finding that her words actually did bring him some comfort. It meant more coming from someone who so rarely engaged in emotional conversations. Since the time they spent together before Peter and Tony were abducted, moments like that were becoming more and more frequent and Peter likes seeing that side of the usually stoic woman. He managed to smile back at her. “Thanks Nat.”

“Don’t mention it, squirt.” And of course she had to ruin the moment by messing his hair up as she stood to take her original seat.

“Hey!” He had spent time slicking his curls down dammit!

Not long after Nat gave him a pep talk, the room that had been full of roaring conversation died down to near silence. Everyone turned to face the far end of the room, Peter following suit, to look at the group of official looking missionaries that had filed in and lined up. As opposed to the other officers he’d seen walking around, these men and women were wearing a sleek, navy uniform that looked similar to the suits Tony often had his team wear to rain when he was working on repairs or upgrades for them.

“New recruits listen up!” One of the men stepped forward and barked, his voice echoing around the room. “You will now be sorted into groups do testing and processing. If you have already been processed and accepted you will be placed into another group, but if not you need to have your
personal statements, identification and other credentials on hand."

At this point in the speech Peter turned to look at Tony, silently asking him if he had forgotten to bring something important but his Dad put him at ease, shaking his head slightly.

“For those of you who are already agents or have been here before, you should understand how the following process will go. When I call your name please go towards your allocated officer. Avery, Aaron, group c."

The man continued to list names in alphabetical order and it seemed to Peter as though he was just calling out the newcomers. This made him nervous as he realised his time with his family was running out. Even though Tony had prepared him for this since they’d got there it was still a momentary panic to have the clock ticking against him, he hadn’t realised how immediately he was going to have to be whisked away. What made it worse was most of the other new people had congregated together, likely due to having bunked together, and were sitting at the tables nearest the door. Peter was sitting all the way at the other end of the room meaning he was going to have to walk the entire length of the dining hall. In front of all those people. He suddenly felt like his breakfast was going to make a reappearance when he felt Tony’s hand on his shoulder.

“You’ll be fine Underoos. Remember I’ll see you during break.”

He looked up to his dad and gave him a brave smile even though he felt like crying. Deep breaths. Oh god they were getting to the P names that would mean he’s-

“Parker, Peter, group G. Partridge, Alan.” The officer moved on immediately of course but Peter didn’t move for a second. It wasn’t until Tony squeezed his shoulder and he realised that he had to stand up before it started to look weird.

“See you later, guys.” He whispered as he turned away, all of them whispering encouraging words in response. His legs felt like jelly as he strode towards the soldier holding up the laminated sign for his group. It felt like all eyes were on him, and some of them were, mostly because they were shocked to see a new recruit sitting at the Avengers table more than anything else. He swallowed the bile that rose in his throat and kept his eyes dead ahead. He joined the back of his line, where about thirty other people were already queued. He dared to glance back at his table everyone was giving him thumbs up in approval. At once point Thor looked as though he was about to shout something out across the room but Bruce and Clint pulled him back down, Steve covered his mouth and Nat looked as though she was whispering threats to him. At least that made him chuckle.

It was hard to see across the room but Tony was mouthing something to him. He shrugged to show the man he couldn’t decipher his facial movements and his Dad held up his wrist pointing at his watch. What about the time? It was six forty five what was so important?

He shrugged again and Tony rolled his eyes, preparing to mouth whatever he was trying to say more dramatically but unfortunately, Thor decided he’d help the pair out.

“HE’S SAYING TEN O’CLOCK MY YOUNG FRIEND!”

“Thor shut up!” Nat hissed as did the rest of the adults lining the table, who were all giving the confused god murderous looks. Well if they weren’t before, everyone was certainly looking at Peter now.

He didn’t dare to reply verbally he just gave his Dad a nod to show he understood and turned away before Thor had the mind to say anything else. He could feel eyes boring into his back and it made...
his skin crawl thinking about all the pairs of eyes on him, waiting for him to do something. Or to mess something up. No pressure. He tried to shake off the feeling as best he could but it was difficult when he could hear mumbling and whispers asking what that kids name was again and was he really sitting by the avengers? Surely not.

He could feel his ears getting hot as the blush on his cheeks spread. Keep your head down Pete, just like Nat said. He took a deep breath and straightened his shoulders, trying to portray the air of confidence he wished he had. He’d been this anxious before, he kept telling himself that.

‘Remember the day you started the Stark internship? That was way worse than this, you’ve got this. I’ve got this. Like Dad says keep breathing this feeling will pass, it won’t be as bad as I think it is.’

He kept this little mantra going as the last of the list of newbies was called and they were being marched out of the room. Well, not literally marched because Peter didn’t know how to, not properly. He made sure not to steal another glance back at his table, both to not waiver his newfound bravery and to help convince the people on it that it was genuine.

“Is this what it feels like on your kids first day of school?” Tony turned to Clint after he watched Peter walk away, right up until he disappeared out of view.

“Yup.”

Peter followed the line of people, not being able to see where he was going. It was pretty disorientating between all the noise of people’s boots hitting the hard floor and the twist and turns of the corridors that he had no chance of maneuvering around himself. He ended up bumping into the guy in front of him, who gave him several dirty looks for doing so; It wasn’t his fault, he couldn’t see far enough ahead of him to anticipate the corners they were about to take. They were eventually were lead to a large bunkroom, much like the ones Tony had described during his threats the night before. The main guard who had been holding the sign took to the open space squared off by the beds in centre of the room Next to him were stacks of bluish-grey clothing folded neatly and separated by size.

“Line up.” The man spoke quietly but firmly and everyone immediately did so, except for one guy who for some reason had been forced out of the line and no one would make a space for him to slot in.

“Oh come on- ugh. Seriously? Just lemme scootch right on in and- hey!” Every time he tried he was shoved back and it was clear he was becoming understandably frustrated.

“We got a problem here, Lang?” The main guard said gruffly.

“No. Well yeah I just-”

“Psst.” Peter hissed and stepped aside to make room for him, waving his hand quickly. He’d never been a fan of organised bullying, he wasn’t about to let this guy get in trouble for something he couldn’t help. By the looks of things even the organising officer had it out for him. The man’s eyes lit up when he saw what Peter had done and he rushed forward to join the line before the men either side of him had a chance to close the gap.

“Thanks.” He whispered to him hurriedly and flashed Peter a smile.

Everyone else in the room sighed, tutted or groaned once the man he only knew as Lang joined the line. For a second Peter was worried he had made a mistake, he didn’t want to make enemies so
early on. But the man hadn’t been doing anything wrong from what he’d seen so he brushed that feeling off as quick as it came. He shrugged and smiled in return before turning his attention back to the man in the centre of the room.

“This will be your uniform for the duration of your stay with us here at the sunshine camp for wayward girls.” The man held one of the folded garments in the air as he strolled slowly around the room, looking each soldier up and down. Peter resisted the urge to laugh at the scene. It was such a stereotypical rookie intimidation thing had he not known better he would have thought it was satirical. It was difficult not to laugh when he had images of the various ‘let me see your war face’ memes running through his head. It didn’t make it any easier when the man stood in front of him, eyeing him up and down. He couldn’t help it, he had a nasty habit of laughing at inappropriate times, anyone who knew him could attest to that.

Despite the filthy looks the officer was now sending his way he continued with his speech.

“The colour of your uniform is your key. It works as a form of identification. It lets us know who you are, where you’re meant to be and where you are not.” His dark piercing eyes laid upon Peter with that last word. “Your suits are grey. Grey means you’re in G group and grey means you’re now answering under me. Everything you do from now on is a reflection of me and I won’t have my soldiers ruining my spotless reputation, is that understood?”

The group chorused, including Peter even if he was just a beat behind. “Yes sir.”

“Good. I understand most of you come from a disciplined military background-” Again the man’s eyes fell on Peter but also the man beside him, with a look of disgust on his face. “-and have worked very hard to be here today. To have this opportunity. So, I don’t expect mistakes. Mistakes mean you don’t really want to be here, that you don’t have the drive needed to excel in this kind of environment, that you’re weak. And none of those apply to you, do they men?”

“No sir.” Again Peter had to bite back the urge to make a remark considering at least half of the troops lined up were women. He wasn’t sure where all of the sass was coming from but he had a sneaking suspicion he was spending too much time around his quick witted father. He was going to have to tone down the sarcasm if he was going to survive the next two weeks.

The man, who’s name Peter still didn’t know, then went around the room asking peoples sizes and handing out the appropriate uniforms. Peter wasn’t exactly sure what his measurements anymore and that’s what the man seemed to be asking for, which made him start to panic. People were also changing right where they stood like it was no big deal, did he really have to strip in front of a bunch of strangers? Given his age he was sure that there were laws in place preventing that.

‘Well, suck it up buttercup.’ A voice in his head sounded. ‘It’s no different to getting changed in the boys locker room at school-’

Another voice chimed in. ‘Yes it is there are girls in here. And I hate gym at school too.’

‘Touché.’

As Peter was having his internal debate the officer had made his way around the room and was standing in front of him.

“Size?”

“Uh- I don’t, I’m not really sur-”
The man sighed and cut him off. “So Stark’s golden boy doesn’t even dress himself?”

There were chuckles around the room. Ah. Great.

Peter felt his face going beet red for the second time that morning and he clamped his mouth shut, both because he didn’t know what to say and he didn’t trust himself not to throw up as his anxiety kicked in. How was he meant to respond to something like that? It was clear the man already had a distaste for him, he wasn’t going to win whatever he said. Keep your head down and you’ll be fine.

He looked down towards the floor and the chuckles died down. It seemed even the officer didn’t have the heart to continue to ridicule him. He sighed again, but softly this time. “Johnson, grab me a small uniform please.”

A small? Come on, he was at least a medium! Though looking around the room everyone around him was considerably bigger than him, all of them being at least half a foot taller than him, including the women. Going by their standard Peter was certainly a small. Well, that was a confidence boost for sure.

Once his uniform was handed to him he made quick work of getting changed, both because he didn’t want to cause a fuss and have attention drawn to him again and the fact the almost everyone else was already done. Luckily he had plenty of practise changing quickly, thanks to his small bladder and his vigilante days in the alley after school. To his dismay it was still a little loose whereas everyone else’s seemed to be form fitting. Maybe he was going to have to start listening to Steve about finishing his meals. He puffed his chest up a little, as though that made him look any bigger and awaited further instruction.

“As you know, you’ve all been stripped of your technological devices. This is to ensure none of you rely purely on your tech to survive and preform. Tech should only be used as an additional asset for any S.H.I.E.L.D agent, an accessory not a necessity. To ensure that we make sure to weed out the weak ones early on. I’m sure none of you will struggle with the following tasks, the tests you’ve passed previously would have made sure you were up to speed, so to speak.” Again the man’s eyes fell on Peter and ‘Lang’. Okay so this guy was in the same boat as him it seemed. It wasn’t his fault he had skipped the usual route to get there, he didn’t ask to be bitten by a radioactive spider dammit. Just keep your head down- he was trying but it was hard when everyone seemed to have it out for him already because of his circumstances. It just made him more determined to prove to everyone that he was worthy of being there as they were.

“In order for us to achieve an accurate score for your results of these assessments we ask those of you with particular skills or powers not to use them. Not only could this affect those around you from achieving their personal best it would also make your own scores invalid as your superpowers wouldn’t allow us to get a clear picture of your physical abilities. That means no portals, manipulation of elements, mind control, projectiles of any kind, etcetera- understood?”

“Yes, sir.”

The group was then lead out of the room and back through a barrage of hallways. Just trying to figure out the floorplan of this place was enough to make Peter dizzy, though he supposed that had been a deliberate design feature. It would help confuse enemies as well as keep people like him dependant on their leader, in turn leading to less people exploring. They were taken to an outside area, complete with a large obstacle course as to be expected.

“You will be completing the course as a unit first. All of you at once. Those of you who finish last will be made to perform the task again until your time improves. Then you will complete the task again as an individual. If you do not beat your own record time you will have to redo the task until
you do. Is that clear?” Everyone sounded off. “Take your positions at the starting line.”

Peter was just happy to be outside, the cool early morning air leaving him feeling instantly charged. And honestly? The course didn’t look half bad. In fact it looked quite fun. It was a typical military set up, with tyres and rope swings and walls to scale; along with other various structures to climb over, under or through. He could do all of those things easily he didn’t need his webs. This was going to be a piece of cake.

“On the count of three. One. Two. Three.” And they were off. Much to Peter’s surprise he seemed to be ahead of everyone else, only seeing a few people in his periphery. He took the tyre run with ease, leaping backward and forwards fluidly. The ropes, if anything, gave him the unfair advantage the nameless officer had been talking about. He propelled himself forward using only the first and last rope, skipping over a solid thirty yards as though it was nothing. If he wasn’t ahead before he definitely was after that, the only minor snag he hit was towards the end, on a frame covered in wooden spikes. Quite literally a snag, his uniform got caught on one of the pointed edges and he had to take a moment to free himself lest he end up finishing the rest of the course with no pants. While he was fiddling he saw a couple people over take him, but he paid them no mind. He wasn’t particularly competitive (other than with his dad, but Tony could’ve convinced Mother Theresa into competing in an arm wrestle) and besides he was getting marked on his performance alone, this minor hiccup would just make it easier for him to beat his time.

He ended up finishing fourth, which he was pretty proud of given the circumstances, not that they were particularly taking an interest in placing. He was just relieved not to have finished near to last. Speaking of which he noticed the man, Lang, was one of the last five people to finish. It was still impressive, the obstacles were by no means easy, Peter doubted anyone who hadn’t formally trained in the military (bar those like him who had had training elsewhere) would have struggled to complete it at all. Lang came fourth to last and was visibly upset by that fact. The group was now a mixed bag of sweaty, heavy breathing people and those who looked as though they’d just taken a gentle stroll through the countryside. Fortunately for Peter, he was one of the latter as he’d had ample time to get his breath back whilst the others finished. They however, weren’t so lucky.

“And, Polinski. Time three o eight. Walker, Lang, Reed, O’Connor and Polinski make your way back to the starting point.” The officer barked, looking disappointedly down at his watch.

Lang looked up from his bent kneed, position where he was leaning his hands against his thighs, staring wide eyed at the officer. “Wha-what? Can’t we take a minute to-”

“And now!” The ferocity in the man’s voice made Peter jump even though it wasn’t aimed at him. He felt bad as he watched the men walk back around, only to be forced into a jog after another bark from the navy clad man. They were given no respite before he demanded they go again. Peter watched, silently rooting for all of the poor people especially lang, hoping that they would beat their time so that they’d be given a break before they had to go again.

It seemed his silent prayer worked, at least to an extent. Lang was given the all clear and allowed to crawl towards the sideline for a much needed rest. Two of the other recruits weren’t so lucky. Peter watched in horror as the two raced the last leg of the course against each other, when one abruptly fell with a sickening crack resounding through the entire area. Not a few seconds later the sound was followed by an ear piercing scream that reverberated off of the concrete walls and into Peter’s sensitive ears, as the man who had fallen (he believed to be Reed) held up their leg that was very clearly broken. His foot was facing away from his body in an unnatural position and Peter had to look away before he threw up, getting that familiar watery feeling in his mouth as a warning. He didn’t see the other rookie make the mistake of turning back to tend to the shrieking man, which ultimately lead to him having to take the course a third time. This time by himself.
Their captain took this as a learning opportunity. “This test was not designed to measure your morality. I don’t care about your precious sensibilities, this task was created to measure your athletic ability, your will and your stamina. How you ever gone survive out on the battlefield if even in here you can’t remember to look out for number one? I don’t wanna see any more of this no man left behind bullshit- you getting the message over there O’Connor?”

The exhausted man managed somehow to yell back. “Sir, yes Sir!”

He didn’t respond, he just laughed cruelly. Thankfully for O’Conner the adrenaline that had fueled him once he’d seen his comrade break a limb managed to carry him over the finish line, somehow beating his first score.

“There! Now that weren’t so hard was it.” The leader laughed again and smacked the man on the back, almost knocking him over. “Two twenty six- hell you even beat Stevenson! Go grab yourself some water there, pal.”

The second smack to O’Connor’s back was enough to make him stumble over, to which he received no help or sympathy. “Whoo, careful there. You coulda broken a leg.”

Peter took it upon himself to help the man up and hand him a bottle of water, not that he received much gratitude in return. He couldn’t blame him, not after he’d just been forced to learn a hard lesson for helping others. Peter went and sat down on the grass along with a few other people, ready to watch the people with names corresponding with earlier letters in the alphabet. He was glad that they didn’t get yelled at for doing so as their captain was busy surveying the other recruits.

He was busy considering how much water he should drink to avoid dying without needing a bathroom break when he felt someone sit beside him. It was Lang. They exchanged a quick smile before Peter really took in the mans face. Peter hadn’t noticed before but the man looked strangely familiar now that he was up close; it wasn’t a familiar face, he was good with those but there was something about him. Something that he couldn’t place. The more he looked at him the worse the deja vu got, he just couldn’t put his finger on it.

“Do I-” They both started at the same time. It seemed the man had been thinking the same thing.

“Have we- have we met before?” Lang said.

“I don’t know have we?” Peter laughed. He didn’t recall ever hearing the last name Lang but the mans voice-

Once again it appeared Lang was having the exact same thought process. “Wait your voice, I knew I heard it when you were talking to Judge over there- say something else!”

“Oh hi?”

“No no, more than that, give me your name or something!”

“Oh, hi I’m Peter?”

“That’s it! Oh my god you’re that kid from Germany! The one Tony Stark brought in! Jesus I knew you were young but I didn’t think you were this young!”

Whilst the man was talking the realisation dawned on him too. He turned himself around to face Lang fully, sitting up on his knees and pointing to him. “Wait are you that tiny guy who got really big all a sudden and then-”
“Yes! Yeah- that was me! And you were the kid that Captain America dropped that tanker on!”

Peter laughed nervously at the memory, rubbing the back of his neck. Steve had apologised over a hundred times about that and he’d flown off the handle at Tony for letting him fight him (“FOURTEEN?! I COULD HAVE KILLED A BABY!”) “Hehe, yeah that was me.”

Lang finally seemed to get over his initial shock at the chance meeting and held out his hand to shake Peter’s. “Well, how are ya man?! My name’s Scott by the way, Scott Lang. God it’s nice to see a somewhat familiar face around here!”

Peter shook his hand back mirroring the man’s enthusiasm. “Tell me about it, T-Mr. Stark told me you were part of an independent company, what’re you doing here?”

“Well after the whole Germany fiasco S.H.I.E.L.D got wind of my work, obviously. The whole national TV thing didn’t help- Anyway! They said I could continue doin’ my thing so long as I went through the proper government measures and all that. To which I said, ‘no you can kiss my ass’ to which they said ‘uh, you either do it our way and enlist as a part of our agency, or that ass will be behind bars in an unmarked cell where no one would ever find you’. So yeah. Oh that and if I do think I get access to a lot of materials that were pretty darn hard to get otherwise. So, yeah, that’s it in a nutshell!” Scott shrugged still smiling happily. “So what about you kid, how’d you get wrapped up in all this?”

“Well after the whole Germany fiasco S.H.I.E.L.D got wind of my work, obviously. The whole national TV thing didn’t help- Anyway! They said I could continue doin’ my thing so long as I went through the proper government measures and all that. To which I said, ‘no you can kiss my ass’ to which they said ‘uh, you either do it our way and enlist as a part of our agency, or that ass will be behind bars in an unmarked cell where no one would ever find you’. So yeah. Oh that and if I do think I get access to a lot of materials that were pretty darn hard to get otherwise. So, yeah, that’s it in a nutshell!” Scott shrugged still smiling happily. “So what about you kid, how’d you get wrapped up in all this?”

“Uh…” Peter wasn’t really sure where to start. Bearing in mind this man was still practically a stranger and he wasn’t sure how much information he could actually divulge without getting himself or anyone else into trouble. “It’s a long story. But basically I work for Mr. Stark full time now and they decided it would be a good idea for me to enroll as a full agent since I was kinda doing it anyway just off the books, you know?”

“Makes sense.” Scott nodded. They chattered back and forth for a while, Peter asking questions on how Scott’s suit worked and Scott asking Peter what kinds of things he worked on in his own lab. Halfway through a conversation about nanotechnics Scott paused and looked at Peter thoughtfully. “Can I ask a personal question?”

“Well that depends on the question I guess.” Peter chuckled nervously. “How old are you?”

Peter paused before answering. He didn’t exactly want everyone around them to hear him admit his age for fear of being judged even more. They were already against him for having gotten to their position so easily he could only imagine the looks on their faces if they found out he had achieved their lives work in only his short years, let alone the treatment he’d most likely receive as a result. He made sure to lower his voice, crouching closer to Scott so hopefully the man would pick up on his vibes to secrecy. “Fifteen.”

“Fifteen?” Scott exclaimed before lowering his own voice at Peter’s wide eyed expression. “Fifteen? Wow.”

“Yeah I know, I get that a lot-”

“You are really smart for your age.”

That took Peter by surprise as he’d expected a spiel about how young he was to be working in the field. “Oh. Uh, thanks.”

“I’d never be able to hold a conversation like that with most grown ups let alone a fifteen year old.
Damn, you’re not much older than my daughter.” Scott sat back and stared off into the distance, still letting that information sink in. “Fifteen-”

“If I’m done interrupting your mothers meeting ladies, I believe I’ve called LANG TWICE ALREADY! ONE MORE TIME AND YOU’LL BE JOINING THE PIGS IN THE MEAT LOCKER!”

Scott and Peter both jumped and the former scrambled to his feet. “Shit, shit, shit- sorry Colonel, I’m coming!”
Don't Over Do It

Chapter Summary

Sorry for taking so long to update, this chapter has just been killing me...I don’t know what it is about it it's just taken me so long write it even though I know what I wanna say XD

Maybe it's down to the fact that my friends keep tagging me in Endgame memes and it's slowly killing my soul...anyway! I know it's probably really boring to read and I hate breaking up one day into three chapters too I know it's a lot, I just really wanna set up the kind of schedule they'll be sticking to for the next two weeks; that way I won't have to explain it all in detail down the line. Kinda get the timetable out of the way so we can get on to the fun stuff. So, I'm sorry if this ones kinda tedious to read. I know it's long and it kind of drags...The next chapters will be better I promise just please bare with me! One more hopefully shorter one to finish off the first day then we can get down to the nitty gritty I'm sorry this update is disappointing D:

(Mild Emeto warning in this chapter)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Scott was quick to complete his third rendition on the obstacle course and much to his glee he halved his original time, actually ranking within the top thirty of the group. Not that he actually received any praise whatsoever from anyone other than himself. He returned triumphantly to Peter's side, collapsing on the grass next to him.

“Not bad.” Peter chuckled and threw the exhausted man another bottle of water which he took gratefully.

“Whoo- thanks. Damn, what time is it?”

Peter glanced down at his watch, forgetting it wasn’t there. Tony had told him he wasn’t allowed to wear it, the officers enjoyed having complete control over their recruits meaning they were dependant on them for everything, even the time. That and he guessed some people would have been able to hide forbidden tech even in such a small device, hell Tony probably would have. He shrugged in response to Scott’s question but the man didn’t seem too upset by it.

“Feels like bedtime to me.” He yawned dramatically and threw his head back onto the ground and closed his eyes, still panting heavily.

Peter chuckled but he started to wonder himself. It had felt like they’d been outside for hours but realistically it couldn’t have been that long. He supposed he was just bored from the lack of mental stimulation but he wouldn’t have to worry about that for much longer.

“Nice work Packham. Parker, you’re up.” The colonel called out giving Peter that familiar sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. He wasn’t nervous about the task itself but the idea of everyone staring at him again was enough to make his stomach churn. He took a deep breath, trying to
ignore the nagging feeling in the back of his mind and stood up. He found a tactic that helped calm his stage fright.

‘Pretend you’re in the suit. They’re not looking at you as Peter, they’re looking at Spider-Man. Show them what he can do.’ The voice in his head lending the idea sounded suspiciously like Tony and the thought helped calm the butterflies in his stomach tremendously. He still didn’t like the way the officer stared at him but it was much more tolerable if he imagined his mask between them. He braced himself at the red line that indicated the start of the track, waiting to be counted down from three like he had heard the man do for each of the other recruits.

But no such countdown came. “Go!”

Luckily his body reacted immediately so that didn’t impact his time, but his mind was reeling. He hadn’t done anything wrong, the only interaction he had had with the man included him saying five stuttered words to him, there was no way he had done anything to deserve such treatment. It was like he was setting him up to fail, deliberately trying to put Peter at an unfair advantage, as if his age and size wasn’t enough. This early on in the programme no less, Peter hadn’t even been given a chance to prove himself yet what did the man want from him? It was totally unfair. His anger towards the unjust treatment fuelled him, making him take on the course faster than humanly possible. He didn’t even have to think about what he was doing, having watched so many people go before him and the muscle memory from his previous run, he could have tackled it with his eyes shut. He landed gracefully over the finish line, his breathing barely altered and he felt accomplished. He didn’t even need his time to know he had beat his record, the colonel’s sour expression told him enough. He tried to resist giving the man a smug smile but he couldn’t help himself.

“Sit down, Parker.”

“Yes, sir.” Peter said coolly and strutted back across the yard.

Despite how happy he felt he couldn’t help but notice Scott’s worried expression as he sat back down. “Tread lightly around Judge, Peter.”

“Is that his name? He never said it.” Peter shrugged off the warning, but Scott pressed on.

“His nickname. His real name is Colonel Wilson. From what I’ve heard and seen over the past few weeks you don’t wanna be on the wrong side of him—”

“Wait. Weeks?”

“Yeah. My lab got raided sometime last month and since I complied they couldn’t put me in jail so they had to keep me somewhere. They just had me wait around here until the next catchment of new recruits were scheduled to come in; which I get there’d be no point training one person but come on, I was already under house arrest it’s not my fault they didn’t consider that my ankle bracelet wouldn’t shrink with me. How is it my fault? I didn’t break the rules I bent them!” He ranted rhetorically for a second before remembering he was telling a story. “Anyways-I was in the barracks with a few other strays up until then but all the people I met were like ‘oh, I hope I’m not with Wilson, I hope I’m not with Wilson’. I didn’t get it at the time but I do now.”

Peter had seen that morning alone that the man was less than friendly, but if the man had a reputation even amounts the newbies he must’ve been worse that he’d initially realised. He figured his unfair treatment was just down to him being young and having skipped the other steps to get there but if other people were experiencing the same thing...something about it didn’t feel right.
“What kinda things have you heard..?” Peter asked apprehensively.

“Well for one thing he was demoted from Lieutenant General I think it was? Some time last year, for something he did. I don’t know what it was. But ever since then apparently he’s had a mean streak a mile wide.” Scott looked around him briefly to see if anyone was eavesdropping on their conversation. “I’ve got a hunch that it’s something to do with the people you work with.”

“Huh? Why?”

“Just the way he’s been acting with you. I thought it was just me you know? Since he was nice as pie when I first came in but as soon as he looked through my papers and saw who had me enlisted he started being a total prick- wait shit, I probably shouldn’t swear around you huh?”

“Dude I’m in highschool. And I live with Tony do you really think I don’t hear cursing on a daily basis?” Peter snorted.

Scott opened his mouth to say something but his face fell into that of confusion. “Wait. You live with them?”

“I didn’t say that.” Peter felt his face reddening. Backtrack, backtrack, backtrack-

“Yeah, but you kinda did. Just now you said ‘I live with Tony.’”

Crap so much for keeping things private. “N-not that Tony. Uh- My aunt.”

“Your aunts name is Tony.” Scott said flatly, no inflection of a question.

“Yeah? Problem?” Peter reverted back to the indignant front most teenagers give when they’ve been caught out saying something stupid or incriminating.

“With the name? No. But if you’re referring to your aunt why would you say Tony like I’m meant to know who that is?” Scott tilted his head smirking, knowing full well he had the boy backed into a corner.

“...My aunts very popular?” Smooth Parker. Real smooth. “A-anyway. Why do you think he’s got something against the Avengers?”

Scott laughed off the Tony issue, deciding to come back to that later. “Rumour is he used to be one, or at least he was gonna be. He was Steve’s right hand man for a while.”

“Weird. I’ve never heard the name before.” He’d never heard Steve talk about anyone other than Bucky, who he’d met a couple times. He supposed it wasn’t unlikely that he didn’t know everything about the man’s life, he was Tony’s apprentice after all, but Steve was one to talk about his friends pretty openly. Hell, Peter even knew the name of the man’s dentist. So it was odd to him that he’d never even heard the name, especially with how close Scott was implying the pair were.

“Oh, I guess but maybe there’s a good reason for that. Apparently he went rogue after Captain and Iron-Man’s little spat last year. He had a grudge against the winter soldier or something, I don’t know the details. But it was thanks to him that he got excommunicated, though I think Steve helped get him this gig instead of firing him completely. God knows what he would’ve done then or what S.H.I.E.L.D even do with dangerous ex heroes like that. I can’t imagine it’s very nice.”

Peter listened intently but again something didn’t add up. There was no way a bunch of random ‘strays’ as Scott had called them, would know such intimate details about something that was so
internal as Steve and Tony’s self proclaimed ‘Civil war’. He lived with the two men and he still didn’t know much about it. He could tell Scott was vaguely trying to cover up the fact that he knew more than he was letting on by skimming over some of the details.

He decided to call the man out on it, just to see his reaction. “You didn’t hear that through the grapevine did you?”

Scott blinked for a second, seemingly weighing his options about whether or not to be truthful. He ultimately decided to tell the truth, though he looked uncomfortable, he sounded off in his usual cheery tone. “No I did not. He caught me sneaking into his office and hacking his computer. I read the whole report.”

“Well, no wonder he hates you man! Keep that information to yourself- you shouldn’t have even told me you could get yourself into so much trouble.”

“I mean I already did so, you know, one more big fuck up and I’m outta here. And not in the way I want- I think that’s what he’s counting on, so. There’s that.” Scott grimaced for a second as he let the gravity of his situation settle in, but he shook it off just as quickly as it came. “Anyway! I’m pretty sure he had it out for you to cause of the whole Avenger thing. I’m pretty sure he took the rap for something to do with Germany and it looks like Steve let him.”

“Well, ain’t that just great.” Peter sighed dejectedly letting his head and shoulders fall. He put his head in his hands and stared at the floor, thinking about all the ways he could possibly get out of this situation- a situation he was in through no fault of his own. Surely someone had seen the connection between him and this vengeful officer? There was no way his placement in G group had been an utter coincidence. What is this was the man’s way of getting back at Steve?

He couldn’t put in for a transfer without giving a good reason, there was no way S.H.I.E.L.D would just let people pick and choose where they wanted to be even if they were the ward of Tony Stark. That and his Dad would have questions as to why he wanted to move groups, after one day no less. Of course if he did go ahead with asking for a transfer he’d then have to give tangible evidence of the unfair treatment too, which he didn’t have and had no way of getting; like they’d believe a teenager and Scott, who was apparently a minor criminal in at least some capacity, over an officer. Even if said officer had a tarnished reputation.

In fairness, the man hadn’t done anything that bad to him yet either, other than make him uncomfortable. Peter couldn’t justify making such a serious decision off of some bad vibes and a few mean looks. And who knows, maybe it was a good thing the man was being so harsh on him. Getting to be an agent wasn’t meant to be easy, so maybe it wasn’t a bad thing the guy was giving him a hard time. Compared to the other people there Peter had had a pretty easy time getting to where he was meant to be so perhaps the man’s misdirected anger towards him would be helpful to him in the long run, help him build some of that resilience he always insisted he had. He’d spent so much time and effort telling Tony that he wasn’t a kid and that he could handle tough situations himself, if he wanted to prove that there was no way he could just go crying to his Dad because one of the officers was being mean to him. Not if he wanted to prove to himself and everyone else that he was good enough to be a part of the team.

He also felt kind of bad if Scott’s theory about the colonel was true; he could understand the man being angry. Of course it still wasn’t fair that he was taking it out on him, but he didn’t want to be responsible for the officer getting into anymore trouble, both for his sake and everyone else’s. Who knows how the man would react when Tony would undoubtedly get him fired for being a bit harsh to his son? No, he decided, he’d tough it out. It was the first day, not even the first day- first morning. There was no way he was about to quit or be deterred by a little unfair treatment. The
man had barely done anything to him, Peter told himself that he was just being too sensitive. He’d been in high school and middle school with Flash and he hadn’t quit then, and that kind of systematic bullying had been way worse. No. He could do this.

“I’m sure it’ll be fine. Just keep your head down.” Scott soothed unknowingly reinforcing Nat’s advice from earlier. He could see Peter was still anxious given the new information so he tried to change the subject. “So, why Spider-man? I get with like the webs and stuff but what made you go with that idea instead of, I don’t know, some other bug?”

“Well, I was gonna go for Ant-Man but that was taken.”

“Ha- funny one.”

“It’s a long story.”

“Well we got time, doesn’t look like Thompson is gonna he beating his time anytime soon.” Scott gestured to the recruit who was struggling to scale one of the wooden walls.

It was the first time Peter had been asked for his superhero backstory in quite some time and though it went against his better judgement he relayed it in great detail. Though he’d only just met Scott he felt comfortable that the man wasn’t going to be using the story he told against him, even if he was a bit nervous about discussing classified information. Tony had warned him against doing so thousands of times but surely that didn’t count towards other agents right? Besides, Tony himself had trusted this guy in particular to help him out last year, when he couldn’t trust people in his own household, so he must be safe. Scott helped quell Peter’s anxieties once again by going through his own origin story which the teen had plenty of questions about. More about the science than anything, some of which Scott didn’t know the answer but Peter was fascinated nonetheless. They were discussing some of the technicalities behind Dr. Pym’s EMP communication device when Colonel Wilson cut off there conversation once again.

“Right ladies!” Ugh, Peter was getting sick of him using outdated gender stereotypes with the intent of being derogatory. Get with the times man, it’s not the nineteen sixties anymore. “Break time! Not that a lot of you have earned it. If it were up to me we’d continue through to lunch cause most of y’all ain’t even breaking a sweat. But don’t worry, I’ll get your blood pumping as soon as you get back. Line up alphabetically again and follow agent Johnson.”

The woman he pointed to was young, with shoulder length dark hair. Peter hadn’t really noticed up until the but the woman had been standing back the entire time, watching them. She looked sternly across the courtyard, eyeing up each recruit as the stood in line but her face seemed to soften as she look at Peter. He was probably just imagining things, anyone’s looks were friendly compared to the ones Wilson had been giving him.

She lead them silently through the courtyard over to a fenced in area, filled with two other groups in different coloured uniforms; red and purple. There was another typical oblong, grey concrete building spanning the length of the gated field, as well as a running track at one end.

“This is what’s known as the blue zone, during break periods and free time you’ll be allowed to enter both the building and the yard freely. For this if you who are bunking in dormitories you’ll now be sleeping in one of the rooms inside that building. You’ll be assigned beds after dinner tonight and you’ll be given time to move your things over from the barracks, don’t worry. You must not leave the blue zone or enter other areas so long as you are in uniform- which you should be in at all times. Not under any circumstances unless you have been given expressed permission and are otherwise accompanied by a guard. Is that clear?”
“Yes ma’am.” G group sounded off in unison, though Peter was much quieter than the rest. He wasn’t sure if his situation applied to those terms as Tony had told him he’d put in for him to have permission. He didn’t have any kind of proof of that on him though and once again he lacked any ID. He was frightened to ask in front of the other members of his group because he really didn’t want to give them any more reasons to dislike him. He didn’t want to be that kid who was given special privileges, especially not when how his group mates were already looking at him. But Tony had been pretty insistent that Peter meet him during break, he really didn’t want his Dad to turn up in the middle of one of their training exercises if he didn’t show up to meet him, which wasn’t unlikely. He could just imagine the looks on their faces if Tony Stark turned up to check up of his

“You’re allowed to talk to members of other groups but it is preferred if you mix among yourselves as opposed to building bonds outside the confines of this group. Remember to conduct yourselves in a professional manner at all times. Meet me back here at ten thirty please ladies and gentlemen, enjoy your break.” With that she promptly turned away from the group and exited the yard, back through the chain link fence that separates it from the main campus.

Peter felt lost for a moment and it seemed he wasn’t the only one. For a few seconds, no one in their line moved, they all just looked back and forth at each other waiting for someone to take the first step out of line. Finally someone did. A tall man with bright blue hair and a surprising amount of facial piercings (which Peter was sure had to be against the rules somewhere, how could that possibly be up to health and safety standards in that kind of environment?) stepped out shrugging his shoulders before striding across the courtyard and into the grey building. “Later bitches.”

With that the rest of the group wandered their separate ways, leaving the poor teenager stuck standing by himself against the fence, still unsure of what he should do. All he did know is he wanted to find a bathroom at some point before he went back into training. He wanted to go find Scott since that was the only person he now knew there but he didn’t want to come across like a clingy child. Maybe the man wanted a break from him after spending most of the morning with him.

“Oh my god, there you are thank god I didn’t wanna be alone!” Scott ran up beside him breathlessly laughing. He slapped Peter on the shoulder and took a second to catch his breath before he noticed the troubled look the teen had on his face. “Hey, you okay?”

“Uh huh.” Peter said quietly but it was obvious how the boy’s mood had changed in less than ten minutes.

“What’s wrong?” Scott straightened up and stood in front of Peter so he couldn’t avoid eye contact. He may not have much experience with teenagers but he had a child of his own, so his instincts were pretty sharp when it came to upset children.

“Nothing, I just. Well I was supposed to..it doesn’t matter.” Peter sighed and went to move past him, making his way towards the building but Scott stepped back in front of him.

“Woah hey, come on Spider-Man. You can tell me, what’s up? Did one of those guys say something to you?”

Peter smiled a little at that. He’d barely known the man for three hours but he was already getting defensive for him. It occurred to him that he brought out the protective side out of most people around him and he wasn’t quite sure what that said about his character. He shook his head before answering. “No it’s not that, it’s just, you know how agent Johnson said we can’t leave this area? Mr. Stark told me I had to go over and meet him, though I don’t know where he meant-“

“Oh. Well, I’m sure Tony Stark’s orders outrank that lady’s so uhh- maybe you should go and ask
one of those guys over there.” Scott pointed over towards the three armed officers who were manning the entrance to the Blue Zone. “Ask ‘em. Did he give you like a clearance code or something?”

“Uh uh, nothing.” Peter gnawed his lip nervously. He knew Scott was right and he should just go and ask but his anxiety was starting to kick in. The more time he wasted the worse it got.

“Want me to go with you?” Scott asked gently, he could see the panic rising in the teen who had been so outgoing and friendly only moments before.

“No no, it’s fine I know I’m just bein’ stupid.” Peter shook his head and forced himself to walk over to the guard. He hated the pitiful look Scott was giving him, though of course he didn’t blame the man, he just didn’t want to be treated like a little kid from by the only friend he’d made. He got enough of that from Tony and he knew it was his own fault for being so dependant on him. Peter wasn’t about to let himself start relying on other people to speak for him, he needed to prove to himself and his Dad that he could do it, and that the months of working on his social anxiety with his counsellor was actually working. He was perfectly capable of going by himself he just needed to convince the right side of his brain. He knew he was being irrational, the worst thing they could say was no.

He could feel heads turning towards him as he approached the guards by the gate, letting him no this was not something people usually did. He wasn’t sure if he was breaking any rules by doing so either but he didn’t really have a choice at that point, not if he wanted to avoid getting in trouble with Tony. He walked up to the man in uniform closest to him but to his dismay they didn’t turn in his direction. He was standing three feet away from him but the guard continued to stare straight ahead of him.

“Uh..Excuse me?”

“What do you want, kid?” The man said in a low gruff voice, still turned away from him, not even offering Peter a nod in his direction.

“Uhm,” Peter wasn’t exactly sure how to word it, even though he’d rehearsed the conversation at least twenty times in his head on the walk over. “I’m meant to go meet someone in a different area?”

“What area?” This time the soldier actually turned to look at him, with a quizzical but amused look on his face.

“I-I’m not sure.” Peter said quietly getting a sense of where their interaction was headed.

“Uh huh right.” The officer nodded patronisingly, his amusement more evident and the other guards were sneaking sideways glances at the pair. “So, who is it you’re meant to be meeting?”

Peter looked down at the ground dejectedly already knowing full well what reaction he was going to get. He sighed before mumbling. “Tony Stark.”

“What was that?” The man leant down to peer up at Peter’s face, teasingly, barely holding back a smirk.

Peter huffed again and stood up straight again, puffing his chest out a little and squaring his shoulders. He spoke more confidently this time, though it came out as more of an exasperated whine as he anticipated the rejection. “Tony Stark.”

The three men openly bust out laughing that time. “Get outta here kid. You can get his autograph
Peter promptly walked away, keeping his head held high though he could feel his face burning. Of course he wasn’t allowed to bring his phone either so he had no way of texting his dad to let him know where he was or have the man vouch for him with the guard, he knew better than to try and argue. He just silently prayed that Tony wouldn’t rip his head off, or someone else’s trying to get to him.

He saw Scott go from smiling with his thumbs up to cringing with his thumbs down before he scurried towards him. “I take it that didn’t go well?”

“They didn’t even ask for my name! Assholes- now Tony’s gonna be pissed at me.” Peter hissed angrily as he walked towards the building. He wasn’t walking away from Scott deliberately but he was storming off a little faster than the man could keep up with at a comfortable pace without jogging, which he did.

“Look, he can’t get mad at you. Just explain what happened, I’m sure he’ll understand.”

Peter let out a joyless laugh and shook his head. “My boss ain’t always the understanding type, ‘specially not when he’s mad. He’ll probably yell at me for ten minutes before I even get a word out.”

Scot frowned again and paused for a second. “Well, I’ll vouch for you.”

Peter managed a smile. “Thanks, but I wouldn’t wanna put you in the firing line when Mr. Stark goes off on one.”

Scott seemed unphased and smiled. “Eh, we’ll have to worry about that later, we’ve only got fifteen minutes left before we gotta head back.”

“Already?” Peter sighed again when he looked up at the big clog on the front wall of the building. “Jeez.”

“Yeah, so we should probably hit the bathroom before they get super busy when everyone gets the idea at the same time, then just go wait at the meet point.” Scott shrugged. Peter was glad he hadn’t been the one who had to mention using the restrooms because after his failure with the guards he wasn’t mentally prepared to speak up about that too.

Luckily it didn’t take the two long to scope out where the restrooms were, and double luckily for Peter they were near empty. He still had to wait until someone turned on a hand dryer for him to be able to actually relieve himself but that didn’t take long either, so he was able to survive the morning without another awkward incident.

They waited out the rest of their break by the meeting point as other people gradually joined them, automatically lining up in alphabetical order which in turn forced the two men apart. He saw agent Johnson peek into view from the other side of the fence, ready to come and collect them. Just as she went to the front of the queue there was an earsplitting siren that suddenly echoed across the yard to mark the end of their break. It must’ve been hitting a certain frequency or pitch that Peter’s sensitive eardrums didn’t like because the sound sent a sharp, searing pain right through his head. He couldn’t help but audibly hiss and hold a hand to his ear to check if it was bleeding, which fortunately it wasn’t. He saw a few people in line turn around to look at him, most of whom sneered.

“Oh, great cause Stark’s kid is too sheltered and spoiled to be able to handle a loud noise, how’s he...
ever gonna be a real agent?’ Was what Peter’s brain told him what they were thinking which did oodles for his already destroyed confidence at this point. Couldn’t he just shut off his thoughts for like, five minutes?

His ears were still ringing as Johnson lead them back out to the yard they’d been in before, then back inside the main building to an indoor gym type area. He was still struggling to quell his anxieties regarding Tony busting through the door at any moment, but looking around at the different instruments that were laid on the floor in front of him helped to take his mind off of it. There were various vests and protective gear in a variety of sizes and a multitude of different shields, all made of different materials. They looked similar to what S.W.A.T teams use, the kind of full body shields that people are meant to crouch behind, some were clear but others were different metals and meshes.

“Listen up.” Wilson appeared from seemingly nowhere behind the group making several people, Peter included, jump. He had a smug look on his face as he strolled past the line into the centre of the room. “This training room is where I’ll be teaching giving you your combat training. But once again I need to assess each of you to see what you’re capable of first, so I can ensure I put you in a group of peers with a similar skill set. All of these safety devices are designed to keep those of you without powers safe. They’re all resistant to fire and most types of radiation, as well as the shields being resistant to sonic waves and other types of kinetic force.”

That certainly peaked Peter’s interest. He’d love to get his hands on some of the elemental components that went into making them, he could tell even from as far away as he was that one of the shields was made out of Vibranium. He’d only seen small samples of it before but the juxtaposing matt sheen on its jet black surface was too distinct to be anything else. His nerd brain managed to push out the anxiety and he listened keenly to what Wilson was saying.

“You’ll all be performing some strength tests, as well as those of you with abilities will be asked to display what said abilities are. If your powers involve being able to control or otherwise manipulate another person we ask you so do so with a willing volunteer with expressed consent, we don’t want any lawsuits here people.”

There was some murmuring amongst the recruits, for the first time since their day had started. It appeared that some of them were nervous for their safety being in such close proximity to people displaying their superhuman abilities. Peter too thought it was a little strange that such a test would be conducted indoors as opposed to back outside where they’d been originally but he was sure there was a good reason for it.

Colonel Wilson seemed to sense the unrest in his troop and rolled his eyes. “To demonstrate that you’ll all be perfectly safe, I’ll demonstrate how good our equipment is. Agent Johnson if you could come up and assist me please.”

He beckoned the woman forward and she did so begrudgingly, giving him a sickly sweet sarcastic smile. “Maybe I don’t feel like performing on cue today, unless you’ve got peanuts.”

Wilson didn’t respond to her quip verbally, he just gave her a pointed look of frustration. He continued addressing the room whilst he walked to pick up the shield that Peter had been admiring. “Johnson here can produce waves of kinetic energy at will-”

“My mistake.”
He turned back around to face the group. “Vibration waves, at will. She’s mastered her ability to
the point that she can focus this energy into directed, controlled waves aimed at one person, a room
of people or if she really wanted to- a full scale earthquake. Since I’m only trying to demonstrate
the power of our defence equipment, I’ll be asking her to stick with some small scale attacks, if
that’s not too much to ask?”

“Not at all, you know I love hitting you Sam.” She smirked at the reaction she got out of him.

“Enough! Just get ready.” He growled through gritted teeth and positioned himself behind
the shield, crouching low to the ground. “On your countdown, Johnson.”

Agent Johnson held her hands outstretched straight in front of her, palms facing Wilson. Peter
found it comparable to Aang airbending in Avatar, she even took on a similar focused look. She
took a deep breath visibly relaxing her shoulders as she adjusted her foot posture, readying herself.

“Three. Two. One.”

After the last count Peter felt the floor beneath him rumble under his feet ever so slightly. No one
else seemed to show any reaction, so he guessed it was his heightened sensing making him extra
sensitive to Johnson’s manipulations. Just as he was realising that fact, he saw a ripple of air (or
what he assumed to be air since it was practically invisible) ripple through the space between her
and Wilson. It was so quick had he blinked he would have missed it entirely, but he noticed the
wave that came out of her hands seemed to echo in a ring pattern, that ended at her intended target-
the centre of the Colonel’s shield.

The sheer power and velocity that the wave showed by the way it tore through the air was not
reflected in the man’s reaction. The shield worked for its intended purpose by absorbing the shock
dealt to it, deflecting the energy off of it. That after shock sent a whirlwind rushing throughout the
room, visibly moving the other recruits hair and clothing, even knocking off one’s glasses. It was
powerful enough for Peter to have to take a step back in order to steady himself but Wilson barely
budged a foot backwards; he slid back on the floor but he remained in his crouched position,
slowing his skidding down with his back foot. It was evident that it was a difficult task holding the
shield firm whilst that much power was thrust into it, but the man didn’t waver and it had worked.

He stood up a moment later, rolling his shoulder a little probably to relieve the tension that had
built up in it, and straightened his clothing. He cleared his throat before he continued speaking.

“Usually I would ask Miss Johnson to do a demonstration on what her powers would have caused
without the shield, but since we’ve been put inside today and I don’t wanna fill out any paperwork
about why there’s a hole in the wall, let’s skip that for now. You get the idea.”

Everyone certainly did, though several people still looked pretty apprehensive and dishevelled. The
man who’s glasses had been ripped from his face seemed particularly shaken, even more than
before the demonstration. It occurred to Peter then that a majority of general members of the public
had never seen mutant abilities up close. In fairness he hadn’t seen many either, at least nothing
quite like that, but he found it fascinating.

“People with powers line up over here please. Those of you without, over on this side.”

The recruits separated into their respective groups and Peter looked worriedly over to Scott, who
made sure to give him a reassuring smile. Running an obstacle course in front of everyone was one
thing but being asked to show off his powers was another thing. How was he even meant to do
that? He was still working on webbing on command and how was he supposed to show everyone
he had super senses? He couldn’t there was no way he’d be able to prove that through combat
exercises, this test was stupid, he conceded before he even saw what the tests were.
“First you’re all gonna be doing a strength test, seeing how much you can deadlift, bench press or otherwise move without difficulty. Yes, you’re meant to push yourselves but I don’t wanna see anyone trying to compete with others and hurting themselves. I wanna see your personal best, is that clear?”

“Yes sir.”

Peter felt slightly more confident at least, heavy lifting he could do. At least he’d be able to prove his super strength if nothing else. Once again the tests started going in alphabetical order, after some preliminary warm ups, so Peter had a while to wait before he was expected to perform; which was both a good thing and a bad thing. It was good because it meant he had time to try and relax, but bad because he couldn’t. The longer he prolonged the inevitable the more anxious he became rather than less. The wait gave him time to build up his anxiety that was waving heaving in his stomach. The two groups (his of which was only made up of six people, which he guessed proportionally was quite a large group considering the size of his class) were performing separately at least, so only half the room would be watching him, but that did little to settle his nerves.

Each person was expected to step under a machine that had a box on top of it, that the person was expected to hold up. It was a simple design, though Peter was interested in the internal mechanics of it as the box would progressively get heavier and the person was expected to endure the weight until they couldn’t bear it anymore. Each person was made to do the test three different ways, as Wilson had already described deadlift, bench press (that involved laying down underneath the machine which Peter found mildly terrifying- he didn’t particularly want to be crushed) and then the ultimate test was seeing how much weight that the individual could simply move. Not necessarily lift entirely, but move. It was simple enough, so why was Peter freaking out so much?

Of course, the machine the superhuman group were using had been specifically altered to accommodate their strength. Part of him was actually kind of excited, Wilson was reading out the amount of weight each person was able to lift and it seemed the scale went up to at least three tons (the most one woman had been able to lift) and he had never measured how much he could lift before. He wasn’t sure if the MV had done that kind of test on him, though if they did he certainly didn’t remember it and Tony had never put him through any rigorous testing like that. Not even when he had been taking certain measurements for his suit and Tony had asked him to do some particularly odd things for that.

Wilson had called up the last member of his group other than him and Peter could feel his palms getting sweaty, but he kept repeating his tactic of pretending to be in his suit. It wasn’t as helpful as it had once been, it seemed his brain had grown a tolerance to his trickery but it worked enough for him to slow his breathing down so that those around him at least couldn’t hear how nervous he was. Man, his stage fright was killer.

Peter was counting down on his fingers the seconds on one hand. It was a nervous habit he’d developed at an early age after he’d been taught to count, it was compulsive. Whenever he was anxious he would try and count down the amount of time he had before he had to do the thing that was causing the anxiety. In his later years the habit had been replaced with constantly checking his phone or his watch for the time but not having either of those things on his person made him revert back to his old method. According to his digits each test was taking around three minutes, each person having to perform three different tasks each, making people in his group’s average time about ten minutes roughly. Unfortunately, his old method was a lot less accurate and he was called up a lot sooner than he had expected.

“Parker, you’re up.” Wilson called. Why couldn’t Johnson be manning his group? She already seemed way nicer than him. Peter strode up to the front of the room on slightly shaky legs and
readied himself for the instructions he was about to be given. “Stand there. Place your palms under there, yep just like that, good. Careful of your foot stance, push back- there we go. Ready for the weight?”

“Yes sir.”

“Alright, starting off at two hundred and fifty pounds.” Wilson turned a dial at the side of the machine and Peter heard the whirring sound, as well as the vibrations and gentle pressure that started gradually building up on his hands. The weight was nothing to him and his body language reflected that. Of course he felt the weight was there, but it was no different to him than picking up his backpack, which was odd but he assumed it was due to the way the weight shifted slowly as opposed to being dropped on him as a deadweight.

Wilson increased the weight by another two fifty. Again Peter barely reacted, the distance between his hands and his shoulders not changing at all. Another two fifty. Then another. The weight was increasing obviously but Peter felt no more strain on his muscles; it was an odd sensation. He’d never held something that gradually got heavier, he was only ever used to catching or picking up something with a predetermined weight. It occurred to him that S.H.I.E.L.D used this method as opposed to free weights, both because it was easier than having multiple different dumbbells (as well as taking up less space) but it also simultaneously tested their agents endurance.

At the two ton mark Peter was starting to experience some difficulty, though it wasn’t unbearable. He had to adjust his feet posture and crouch slightly, but the pressure was still easily maintainable. He’d kept his eyes focused on the floor the entire time, but he took the opportunity to peer around the room at the people watching him. The other recruits had a mixture of expressions, some remaining completely unphased whereas others looked impressed or concerned. Most people made an effort to act like they weren’t watching him, which he was perfectly fine with though Scott deliberately made eye contact with him across the room to give him the thumbs up.

“Three tons, you feeling the strain yet, Parker?” Wilson asked, though not as teasingly as Peter would have expected. The man sounded a lot less hostile but maybe that was down to the fact that half the room were out of earshot to hear his gentler tone.

“Not really, sir.” Peter said honestly and his voice reflected that he wasn’t struggling at all. The only minor problem he was experiencing was that his hands were starting to sweat and he felt a mild ache in his joints from standing in one position for too long. He made the rash decision to swap his legs over, making his left the weight bearing leg, and his foot nearly went out from under him when his sneaker slipped on the metal floor. Wilson moved forward, putting an arm under Peter’s, ready to pull him out of the way of the machine before the box fell on him but luckily Peter stabilised himself so that wasn’t necessary. The machine had measures in place to stop him from being crushed, of course, but he still would have sustained a nasty knock to his head if he lost his grip.

“Well, that was a dumb fucking idea.” The man said staring wide eyed at the boy, showing concern for his welfare for the first time since they’d met. After the initial shock left his face he was quick to return to his cold, steely expression but Peter had seen the crack in the man’s composure. Maybe colonel Wilson wasn’t so scary after all.

Peter chuckled nervously. “Yeah, it was.”

He was sweating and his biceps and deltoids were burning, the edge of the metal panel was digging painfully into his hands and he was sure the moisture in them wasn’t just sweat anymore. But he stayed strong and the weight was still tolerable. He was more worried about his hands
slipping or his legs going numb than his ability to continue holding the box up. When he got to four tons that was when it was becoming a challenge, he had to make a concerted effort to focus on the weight rather than the symptoms he was getting from standing so long. He finally felt his shoulders start to dip and he made a small noise as he felt Wilson up the pressure again. He hadn’t gotten used to the four thousand pounds before he was being upped to the four twenty five and his shoulders and back were really starting to protest the sudden changes. There was a deep ache building in his muscles, like they were being set on fire whilst at the same time turning to cement. It was a familiar feeling, one he was used to getting when he was pushing himself during cardio, a simple build up of lactic acid. But his inability to change position or do anything to alleviate the ache was frustrating, making the pain get more and more intense. It wasn’t excruciating, more aggravating and uncomfortable, but it was enough for Peter to have to close his eyes and hiss through his teeth. For a moment he felt like asking to stop but he pushed through the pain. He really wanted to know how much he could hold, once he’d gotten over that wave of pain it became easier again. He even found he was about to straighten his arms up, so that his elbows were above shoulder height again.

Getting over that proverbial proverbial hump have Peter a burst of energy. He wasn’t sure if it was adrenaline or self confidence at having forced himself through and out of his comfort zone, but he was ready and excited to find out just how much more his body could take. With his newfound determination at the forefront of his mind it took him a second to notice that Wilson had stopped calling out numbers and he looked up at the man questioningly. Every thirty seconds he’d increased it, Peter had been counting, now it had been thirty five.

Just as he was about to ask why he hadn’t increased the weight anymore the man spoke. “Five tons. That’s the maximum capacity of this machine, Parker.”

“Woah, really?” He was holding up five tons? He’d never have guessed he’d be able to do that—especially not with the minimal amount of effort it took. He must’ve gotten stronger since the last time he had to do any real heavy lifting, that bus would’ve only been what like, three tons max? And that was with adrenaline coursing through him. The knowledge was exciting, he couldn’t wait to tell his team.

The colonel seemed as surprised as he did. “Yeah. We may need to bring in some heavier equipment for you later down the line, but you’ll have to make do with this machine today. How hard was that for you?”

“It wasn’t that bad.” Peter shrugged breathlessly, stepping out from under the panel once he heard the clank of the safety clip slipping into place. He was more interested than ever to find out how that machine worked. That would be something for him to ask his dad later, maybe he could find a way to get their hands on one so Peter could find out how it ticked.

Wilson still seemed rather shocked about Peter’s display himself, but clearly eager to see how he would fair with the other two challenges. “You ready to do the bench press?”

Peter nodded apprehensively. Physically he was more than ready but mentally, not so much. He’d never considered himself to have claustrophobia but then again he had never considered the prospect of five tons of unknown metal falling on him. He took a deep breath and told himself he was safe, which he knew he was. He was in no danger of being squished, he could see the brackets just above the floor preventing that. With that in mind he watched as the panel lowered until there was just about gap for him to slide underneath and he promptly did so, making sure not to hesitate. He might be scared but he didn’t have to show it.

That test went much like the last though Peter found it a bit more difficult; it was probably due to
his body not having ample time to recover between sets but it was still fairly easy. The only thing that really hurt were his hands but he brushed it off in favour of completing the task quicker. Once the box was heavy enough for him to have to lower his arms though, panic set in. Having something you knew weighed that much in such a compact object that was slowly moving towards your head was more than nerve wracking and he had to focus on his breathing and shut his eyes to avoid a panic attack. Wilson seemed to think this behaviour was due to him struggling with the weight and he crouched down to talk to him quietly.

“Do I need to pull the plug, Parker?” He spoke quietly and calmly, it actually sounded as though he was showing some compassion in trying to avoid the rest of the room hearing their conversation; as though he was trying to avoid embarrassing Peter for once, which he appreciated.

“No sir.” He said shakily, though of course the colonel remained unconvinced.

“Are you sure? You ain’t got nothing to prove, don’t hurt yourself.”

“Yes, sir. I’m fine honest, it’s not the weight.”

“Then what is it?”

“Uh,” even though Wilson was being somewhat nice in that moment, Peter didn’t feel fully comfortable admitting his fear to the man. “it’s just uh, leg cramp.”

Wilson quirked an eyebrow but didn’t question him anymore, standing up straight. It was obvious he didn’t buy the lie but he’d exhausted his level of responsibility, if Peter went and got himself hurt after that it was his own fault.

Finally the test was done, and like the last one Peter managed to complete it fairly easily. He slid himself out from under the metal slab and scrambled to his feet, getting prepared for the third test.

“There’s no point you doing the deadlift, Parker, you’ve already shown you can move the maximum weight.” Wilson said flippantly, going to turn away.

“Well, yeah, but that was gradual, it wasn’t like all at once. So, surely that different right?” As soon as Wilson turned around Peter realised he’d made a mistake in speaking out of turn, the man’s previously intimidating demeanour returning in full force. He scrunched his eyes up and leant back slightly, preparing to get yelled at.

“You, questioning an order Parker?!” Wilson stepped forward and barked into his face, so close that Peter could feel the man’s hot breath.

“N-no, sir.”

“Get back in line.” Wilson growled and promptly turned away from him to storm across the room and talk to agent Johnson.

Peter made quick work of rushing to the back of the room behind the rest of his group, where he was least likely to be seen or talked to. He didn’t dare look over to Scott because he didn’t want to see that look of pity again.

After a moment Wilson returned back to their side of the room. “Okay, since the other groups strength tests are going to take considerably longer given how many of them there are, I’m gonna take y’all outside to do your run test-“

“Didn’t we do that earlier?” Asked one man, who didn’t get the same treatment for talking out of
Wilson smiled wickedly. “Oh no. This one is much more fun.”

Peter swallowed nervously. He wasn’t opposed to running, he often did it cathartically it was something he enjoyed, but the way the man spoke made him feel like whatever they were about to be doing would anything other than fun. He felt his palms getting clammy again and he went to wipe them against his uniform only to be met with a sharp stinging sensation. He looked down only to notice that he had a deep red line running through the centre of each hand, that were bleeding steadily. He glanced at the floor next to him and saw two small pools of blood also, how hadn’t he noticed? It was probably due to being screamed at but still. He wasn’t really sure what to do, he knew his body would have no issue healing the superficial wounds but it was still gross to walk around like that. Still he felt too awkward to stick his hand up and ask to wash his hands. He didn’t want to draw any more attention to himself so he stuck his hands in his pockets, ignoring the protests from the sensitive skin and attempted to scuff the small blood stains on the floor around so that they’d be less visible. That only got the attention of the man he was standing behind though, who turned around to see what he was doing. Peter gave him a sheepish smile and stopped what he was doing and luckily for him he shrugged it off, after giving him a weird look.

“Line up, my group. Follow me.” Wilson barked and the troop of six obliged, filing into line and being lead back out of the room by the man. Peter looked back at Scott who waved at him and stupidly he went to do the same, forgetting the state of his hands. He stopped himself just in time but that earned him an odd look from Lang. It didn’t matter as there was no time for him to question it, Peter was out the door before he got a chance.

They were lead back outside to the blue zone, to the track at the other side of the field.

“Alright, this test is simple. You’re gonna run until you can’t run no more and I wanna see full on sprinting going on here people. No jogging, no rests, no slowing down. Full pelt one hundred percent of the time for as long as possible.” He grinned evilly. “If you’re getting chased by an enemy you don’t have time to pace yourself, so let’s see how long y’all would survive.”

It wasn’t a complex procedure, easy enough to follow. Peter had done endurance runs during his training back home plenty of times and the few times he’d accompanied Steve on his early morning runs he’d have to run full pelt the entire time just to keep up with him. It didn’t sound particularly pleasant but that was the point of training and it was a lot less nerve wracking than the bench press. He lined up alongside the rest of his group and crouched in a typical runner’s stance, waiting for Wilson’s order.

“Get ready- Parker what the hell are you playing at?” The colonel suddenly screamed making the entire troop jump at the mans abrupt change in tone.

Oh crap, what was he doing wrong now? “Wh-what, sir?”

“Your hands! Good god- boy go clean up and see the medic if you have to!”

“Oh, uh, it-it’s not that bad sir I-”

“NOW PARKER!”

He didn’t wait to be told a third time and he made a beeline for the grey building and into the bathroom, trying to clean himself up as quickly as possible. The slices in his palms were already sealed shut and turning pale at the edges thanks to his accelerated healing, so the process didn’t sting nearly as much as it would have done. He went to exit the bathroom without using the toilet
but thought better of it. He didn’t need to go but it was best to take advantage of the situation without having to ask to use the bathroom later. He did so quickly, washing his hands a second time and rushing out.

He was embarrassed to see that everyone had to wait for him to come back before Wilson would let them start. It made sense otherwise the man would have had to set a separate timer for him but he still felt guilty. He smiled sheepishly at them and went to rejoin the group at the start of the track. “Sorry bout that.”

Wilson stepped out to stop him walking past. “Show me.”

Peter stuck his hands out for the man to inspect, which he did. He didn’t seem surprised by the state of them but Peter knew this was likely due to the man having read files on his abilities. He seemed satisfied that he wasn’t in any immediate threat of perishing so he let him rejoin the group. “Go on. Speak up next time kid.”

“Yes, sir.” If Peter had a penny for every time he’d heard that throughout his life he could have hired Tony as his intern.

He got back into position and Wilson finally gave them the word go and they were off. Again Peter was at the front for a minute or so before two people overtook him, but he didn’t care. He was enjoying the freedom of being able to run as fast as his legs would carry him. He was always that one kid who didn’t hate track days during P.E. Something about the fresh air and the satisfying ache he got in his chest afterwards was enjoyable for him. After being cooped up in a room then underneath that weight, it felt nice to be able to move his limbs freely.

He ran for around fifteen minutes before he saw the people ahead of him slow down, eventually over taking one of them. Wilson barked at them to pick up their speed but they didn’t manage to over take Peter again. He wasn’t sure how much time went past but he saw three of the six of them had called it quits and taken themselves off of the track. He still was only just breaking a sweat, but he was getting bored. Haven gotten over the initial runner’s euphoria he was starting to get bored. Usually when he ran he’d have music on or at least someone to talk to, something to keep his brain occupied, but of course he had neither of those. So, he contented himself by imagining all the scenarios that could lead to him having to run like that, which eventually lead to him pretending he was in an India Jones movie.

Whilst he was lost in his daydream he failed to notice the other group had come outside and joined him on the track, he only noticed when he looked up just as he was about to crash into someone. He dodged between two people and looked around. Was he still meant to be running? He hadn’t heard Wilson say anything. Then again hadn’t even heard a bunch of people start running behind him, he was too busy running away from an imaginary rock ball in an imaginary cave.

“Whatchu slowing down for, Parker?!” He heard Wilson yell. Okay, so he was still meant to be running. How long had it been? Now that he thought about it his legs were starting to get pretty heavy…

He shook the feeling off and tried to get back into his daydream, but it was difficult when he now had to be mindful of dodging in between other people. The track was big enough to fit them all apart equally, was it necessary for them to still insist on weaving into his lane? Rude.

He did pass by Scott though, who he waved to and who looked exhausted already. How long had they been out there? He had no idea, but he did know his legs were now really starting to protest. He was getting a similar feeling to when he’d been lifting the box, that lactic acid build up; like hot lead filling his calves before it turned solid, making them heavy. His chest was aching too from his
lungs expanding more than they were used to. He had been doing his best to regulate his breathing like he was taught to, but know that he’d noticed the pain it was impossible to ignore and he felt himself start panting exhaustedly. He tried to push through it but he could feel himself slowing down again.

“Come on Parker, pick it up!” Wilson screamed again and Peter had to clench his jaw tight to avoid screaming back at him to shut up.

He tried to resume his pace but it was near impossible when his lower half felt disproportionately dense. He didn’t stop running even when he got a metallic taste in the back of his throat and his lungs felt as though they caught on fire. He did stop however when he got dark spots appearing in the corner of his vision. It took a few seconds for his legs to react to his request but he came to a wobbly halt and put his hands on his knees, gasping desperately for the oxygen his brain was being denied.

“Come on DiMarco, you can do better than that! Parker! What did I say about stopping- get your ass moving!”

Peter let out a noise and resumed running once again, barely jogging.

“Aw, is someone tired? Callin’ it quits so soon, Parker?” Wilson laughed and Peter could swear he could hear several of the people who had already sat out chuckle along with him.

‘Kiss asses.’ He thought bitterly.

The tormenting filled him with newfound determination and he managed to pick himself up again. He picked up a decent pace but that only lasted a few minutes before the burning sensation in his chest became too much. He was dizzy and it felt like he was choking, he just couldn’t breathe deeply enough no matter how hard he tried. For a scary moment he thought his lungs were collapsing and he was forced to stop fully again, coughing violently. He felt completely unbalanced, someone rushing past him five feet away from him was enough to almost knock him over even though they made zero contact with him.

“No stopping-” Wilson was unfortunately cut off when Peter felt the burning sensation in his chest rise up the back of his throat and with little warning come pouring out of his mouth. He managed to run off of the track just before it came splashing down onto the asphalt, still coughing up the last remnants of his breakfast. He avoided getting any puke down his uniform though which he considered a win.

He wasn’t surprised by the lack of sympathy he received from his captain. He ignored his words as he staggered over to where the others who had finished their run were congregated. “Your times an hour thirty two, Parker.”

“Yeah. Thanks.” He said snarkily furiously wiping his face. On the inside he was actually rather impressed, he didn’t know he’d be able to maintain a decent speed for so long. He was learning all kinds of things about his body that day. He threw himself down on the grass and placed his head between his knees still trying to get his breath back. He’d changed his mind, Wilson was bad afterall. Peter would like to see him try and run for an hour and a half without pacing himself.

His angry thoughts were interrupted by a man rushing up to him with a bottle of water and a towel.

“You alright, Peter?!”

“Yes, Scott I’m fine. Thanks.” He took items gratefully, using the water to swish out the bitter taste in his mouth.
“I didn’t think you were ever gonna stop, you were running before we got out here and you were going long after I stopped! You alright? Not gonna pass out or anything?” The man went from chattering excitedly back to looking like a frightened parent.

“Nah, I think I’m good.” Peter chuckled in between gulping water.

“Well you wouldn’t be the only one, Perry and Clark fainted just before you.” The man said seriously hoping it would be of some consolation.

“Seriously? Welp. Guess that’s military training for yah.” Peter shrugged. He wasn’t particularly surprised and honestly now that he had sat down and had a moment to recoup, he didn’t care. So, he threw up. It could have been worse and no one else seemed phased by it so why should he? From what he understood it was common for those kinds of things to happen during such harsh training and he could see why it was necessary. People had to know their boundaries in order to improve on them and to know how much they could take during a real life situation; if he was to be able to strategize himself properly during missions or fights, it was useful information to know that he could run away for an hour and a half before he needed to stop.

“Yeah I guess, but he could be a little nicer about it.” Scott waved his hand in Colonel Wilson’s direction scowling.

“The bad guys aren’t gonna be nice.” Peter giggled at his expression.

“Well he’s not a bad guy, he’s a good guy! Or he’s supposed to be- either way he should be teaching us to be good guys!”

“Maybe it’s just another level of preparation. Mental stuff or something, I don’t know.” Peter shrugged, it was amusing to watch Scott argue with himself.

“Well he ought to be a little less harsh next time, that’s all I’m saying.” Scott grumbled before crossing his arms and pouting in an attempt to make Peter laugh, and it worked.

“So, how did you do with the other tests?” Peter asked.

“Don’t even get me started-” But of course Peter had. They chatted until the last ten people on the track gave in, two of them ending up the same way Peter had. It wasn’t long before he heard that god awful siren again that made him want to rip his ears off.

“Looks like it’s lunchtime ladies! Some of y’all must be hungry after losing your breakfast like that, huh?” Wilson smirked.

Chapter End Notes

I hope no one hates me for what I decided to do with Sam’s character he’ll be nice in the end I promise

Please let me know if i made any typos or other such errors in this chapter- I was too done with it to proof read XD
Everyone queued up like before and were lead through the labyrinth of corridors back to the cafeteria. They joined a longer line that was made up of several other groups in different coloured uniforms and Wilson took it upon himself to leave them to their own devices, demanding they meet him back at the blue zone by two thirty. Once he was out of sight Scott ducked out of his spot in line and moved back to stand next to Peter. When it came time for them to take their seats in the hall the pair stood awkwardly for a moment, both unsure about whether or not Peter was going to break off.

“I should go sit over there...Tony’s probably already freaking out that I didn’t go see him at break-“

Scott smiled confidently and clapped a hand on Peter’s shoulder. “It’s cool kid, I’ll catch up with you later.”

“You sure? I feel bad leaving you sitting alone…”

“I did it for like five years in high school, I can handle it. Go see your boss before he has a melt down.” Scott took his own seat at the end of the table furthest from everyone else and waved his hands, urging Peter to go. The high school anecdote didn’t help Peter to feel any better about abandoning him, if anything it made the situation worse, but he knew Scott was right. He saw a flash of red, white and silver at the other end of the room, Steve’s shield. He better get over there before Tony noticed his absence.

“Say hi to your Aunt Tony for me!” Scott called after him cheerily, earning himself a dirty look from the teenager.

He made his way through the cafeteria quickly, dodging spryly in between people, managing not to knock over any trays or ruffle any feathers. He even used the crowd to his advantage, ducking behind larger people when he was in the line of sight of some of the guards, lest he get caught out because of his uniform again. However, this tactic wasn’t fool proof. Just as he was about to make eye contact with Bruce his vision was blocked by a large camouflaged mass. A soldier's chest. Aw, crap.

Peter prepared himself to try his speech for a second time that day, even if it wasn’t going to be believed at least his friends were right there to vouch for him. But before he managed to open his mouth he felt a large hand shove him backwards and he stumbled a bit as a gruff voice growled, “Back to your area, boy-“

“Don’t you dare put your hand on my intern.” Out of nowhere a familiar voice growled far more ferociously, straining the last two words with such bite Peter was surprised the soldier didn’t turn and run away. Of course Tony came to his rescue, placing himself between Peter and the soldier, staring up at him with one of those scary faces that Peter tried his best to avoid seeing. “Peter come on.”

The soldier started to stutter apologies, all of which were ignored. Tony grabbed him by the wrist and gently, but firmly dragged him to their table, where they’d been joined by several people Peter didn’t recognise. He didn’t have a chance to say hi to anyone before Tony was already ranting at him, much like he had predicted. He grabbed Peter by both shoulders and was shaking him with each word, his face flooded with concern with just a dash of anger thrown in.

“What happened? Where have you been I was worried you got hurt or-” Peter didn’t even have to
hear what Tony had to say to know that the man had been frantic for the past four hours, understandably so, though maybe not to that degree.

“Mr. Stark I’m fine really! See, I’m all in one piece! The guard dude just got mad when I tried to leave the blue zone and he didn’t believe me when I said you’d got me clearance-“

“Did you get his name? What did he look like? Is he in here right now, point him out to me-“

Peter leaned in close and lowered his voice, forcing the man to listen to him. “Dad I’m fine, okay? Relax, please. I’m alright.”

Though Tony stopped telling he didn’t seem any more visibly calm. “This is complete horseshit! I actually went around things by the book this time- not pulling a ‘Mr. RichKid’ move and throwing my weight around, I put that request in the second Fury told me you’d be joining us. This is fuck-“

“Language, Anthony.” Steve chimed in from his seat at the table, smiling as per usual.

With that Tony whipped around and pointed an accusing finger at the blond, Peter took the opportunity to slip past him and sit down. “Oh eat shit Rogers-“

“You haven’t had any more coffee today, have you Mr. Stark?” Peter smirked and raised an eyebrow, having put the dots together. Of course Tony was on edge about his sudden disappearance, but Peter wasn’t in any real danger, not in such a highly secure area. His anxiety and temper must’ve been spiked as he was going through caffeine withdrawal.

Tony closed his mouth and looked indignantly at his ward. “...that’s not relevant.”

“Uh huh, of course it’s not.” Peter chuckled and scooted up the bench, beckoning for Tony to sit down.

For the sake of those around them, Clint was quick to change the conversation before Tony could start ranting again. It was clear from the tension around the table that his outbursts had been a frequent occurrence that day. “I grabbed you some cup noodles from the commissary, Pete.”

“Oo yay thanks!” Peter said with genuine excitement and eagerly grabbed the cup. “What?! Don’t look at me like that, Steve hasn’t let me eat these in ages!”

“You’re definitely gonna do well in college if you get excited about subpar ramen.” Tony rolled his eyes.

“Hey, a good thing about growing up poor, you ain’t got the option to be fussy. These are a delicacy to me.” The comment made Tony look mildly uncomfortable, as he often did whenever Peter mentioned his and May’s financial situation during his childhood.

“You’re not surviving on these things, any of you.” Steve squinted at the label making a disgusted face. “The meals here might not taste all that great but they’re packed with way better nutrients than-“

“You’re telling me that is nutritious, Steve? It’s all the same colour.” Nat said miserably poking something grey around her tray, it might of been potatoes or it could’ve been meat Peter wasn’t sure but it made his stomach churn again. The supersoldier gave her an exasperated look but dropped the subject. He still looked exhausted it was obvious he didn’t have the energy to argue.

“Wait, did you say commissary, Clint?” Peter hasn’t picked up on the phrase immediately as his hunger took over his brain.
The archer nodded.

Peter tilted his head like a confused puppy. “Wow, so this place is like a prison.”

“What would you know about prison?” Nat laughed.

Peter pouted. “I’ve seen Orange Is The New Black, I know some stuff.”

“You should not be watching that.” Clint bust out laughing but he seemed serious in his concerns about the adult material.

“What’s that?” Steve seemed to perk up once he saw Clint’s reaction to the comparison.

“Nothing.” All three of them said at the same time, albeit in different tones of urgency.

“You let him watch the Grudge, Clint, I don’t wanna hear it.” Tony grumbled still staring at the table in front of him. He was clearly furious but he was staying withdrawn from the conversation in order to keep himself from exploding at someone. Though Clint’s comment had clearly gotten to him enough to bring him out of his silence.

“Point taken.” The archer shrugged it off as not to feed into Tony’s bad mood any more.

“So, how’s your first day going so far, kiddo?” Steve asked, still blinking confusedly like he was trying to figure out what Orange Is The New Black was.

Peter relayed the entire days events, excluding the name and characteristics of his officer; he wasn’t about to get Scott into anymore trouble and he also didn’t want to give Tony something else to be mad about. In fact he didn’t mention Scott at all not knowing quite how Steve would react to Peter befriendng someone who was on the opposing side of the Germany incident. Besides he was going to enjoy showing off a little. “Guess how much I can lift!”

Clint hummed in thought for a moment. “Uhmm, seven fifty?”

“Not even close.” Peter grinned as the others continued to throw different weights out. “Nope. None of you got it.”

“Well, spit it out then.” Bruce laughed.

“We I don’t know for sure ‘cause I maxed out the machine but- Five tons.” He smiled proudly at their reactions.

“Really?”

“Bullshit.”

“I’m serious! He said the machine didn’t go up any higher so we couldn’t bump it up! It was pretty hard but not like, agonisingly hard.”

“What machine?” Tony joined in the conversation finally, Peter’s numbers having peaked his interest.

“It was like an assisted pull up machine but you stand under the panel instead and it’s got a box thingy-“

“They’re still using that old thing for the new recruits? I designed that like fifteen years ago.” Tony shook his head and returned his focus to the table.
“I knew it! Can I see the blueprints for it?” Peter went on to ask five more questions about the inter
mechanics of it before he let Tony answer.

“I might be able to dig them out when we get home.” His dad smirked, Peter’s enthusiasm finally
getting the better of him.

Peter went on to talk about his run time too and explained how pushed it too hard and made himself
throw up, but surprisingly Tony didn’t freak out about it.

“Yeah, it’s fun when that happens. You’ve done it once now you don’t have to go doing it again.”
Tony chastised gently. Bruce looked more concerned than anyone around the table but since Steve
wasn’t making a fuss he didn’t pipe up.

“It wasn’t just me either, two other guys did and one fainted.” Peter shrugged and went to brush his
hair away from his face when he felt a hand grab his wrist. Tony had his arm clenched in his fist
and was yanking it closer to him. He stared at the man in shock more than pain and said, “Uh-
ow?”

But Tony wasn’t looking at his face he was staring at his palms. “What happened to your hand?”

“Wha- oh! Oh, it’s nothing.” Peter jerked his arm away and rubbed at his palms self consciously,
keeping both hands under the table. He’d left out the minor injury from his story because he
figured he’d get that sort of overreaction. “The weight machine thingy just dug into ‘em a little.”

“A little?” Tony scowled.

Peter sighed and rolled his eyes. “Don’t make a big deal out of it, okay? You know how quick I
heal anyway-“

“That’s not the point-“

“Then what is that point?” Peter hissed. The people he didn’t recognise at the other end of their
table were starting to give quizzical looks over to the pair, and it was obvious they were
questioning why the man was being so overprotective. “Can you just stop? I’m fine.”

Tony seemed to get the hint but he didn’t look happy about it. “I’m so sorry if me caring is
embarrassing.”

Peter rolled his eyes. If his Dad was being this sensitive after half a day without caffeine it was
going to be a long fortnight. “It’s not that you’re just so, OTT sometimes.”

“Don’t use text acronyms in real life conversation.” Tony scoffed.

But Peter saw the slight smile that Tony had on his face, his lips curling ever so slightly so he
continued. “You mean IRL conversation-“

“You’re grounded.” Tony deadpanned but his steely expression broke and he was forced into a
smirk.

“What the hell?!” Peter laughed.

“You mean WTH?”

“You mean ‘can we not use obscenities at the dinner table?’” Steve scowled at the pair.

“Sorry, Steve.” Peter said sheepishly, igniting the snickers he heard across the table from the
people he didn’t recognise. He found it odd that Tony hadn’t introduced him, the man was usually so instant on doing so to keep up appearances. He leaned in close and whispered. “So, who are the people over there?”

“You’ll meet them soon enough.” Tony sighed.

Peter found that response even more odd. They were in the same room, Peter didn’t see any reason for them to have to wait until later. “Bu-

“Don’t argue.” Tony said finally, back to scrolling on his phone. Peter gave him a funny look but listened, ultimately knowing his Dad probably had a reason for what he was saying. That didn’t stop him looking over at the other people though. One girl who didn’t look much older than him snuck a small wave, which he returned, only for them both to be chastised by the men sitting next to them.

“What did I just say?” Tony snapped making Peter pout.

“You said I couldn’t talk to them not that I couldn’t say hi.” Peter cheeked though he instantly regretted it.

“No communication if any kind is that more clear? Or do I need to break it down for you even more?” His Dad then stood up and gestured for him to move. “You’re sitting on the end now since you can’t be trusted.”

“Bu-

“Now.” Tony gave one of his scary faces again this time in Peter’s direction which made him move pretty quickly.

Peter sighed dramatically but complied. “Okay okay, fine-“

“No sass Peter, I am not in the mood.”

“Well clearly-“

“What does the rest of your day look like, Pete?” Steve interjected before Peter got himself screamed at in front of the entire mess hall, sensing that Tony was one comment away from blowing his stack. The man really had been on edge all day and Steve wasn’t convinced it was all down to his coffee cravings.

“Uhh, I don’t know actually. He never said.” Peter shrugged, having not actually thought about it. He figured it would be more PT but maybe that wasn’t practical considering they’d been doing that all day. Tony had said something about more tactical lessons during the evenings but he wasn’t about to ask his Dad for affirmation, not given the mood he was in. “What about you guys, what have you had to do?”

The rest of his part of the table groaned at the question and started telling him about all the ‘boring’ stuff they had to do. Some of which included sparring and entering hyper realistic VR simulations.

“How can you complain about that?! That sounds awesome!”

“It would be if we didn’t have to do the same ones twenty seven times in a row because someone kept messing it up.” Nat snarled shooting a pointed look at Steve.
The soldier sat up and crossed his arms over his chest. “I’m sorry but that is what I would have
done in that situation. There was no need to kill—“

“It’s not about what you would actually do it’s about giving the right answer on paper you idiot!
How many times do we have to go over this?! Do you think I would actually go for their stomach
first when they’ve left their throat wide open? No!”

Clint, Bruce, Nat and Thor all made different gestures and noises of exasperation in tandem and an
argument soon broke out amongst the group. Peter would be lying if he said he regretted asking, it
was rather entertaining, especially since they were giving out information that he probably
shouldn’t have known. In an odd way it was calming to hear the familiar sound of his
dysfunctional family yelling at each other. He contented himself listening to the chaos he’d caused
until he finished his food before he realised he kinda needed to use the bathroom. The only two he
knew of were the ones right by his room or in the blue zone, both of which he couldn’t find himself
and were too far away; he wouldn’t make it back to the meet point in time even if he didn’t get
himself lost. Sure, he could wait until they were lead back by Wilson but he had no guarantee that
he’d be given an opportunity to go before they went back to training. It was doubtful, considering
they’d been given ample time to take care of their needs during the lunch hour.

“Hey uh, where’s the nearest bathroom?” Peter turned to Clint since he was the least involved in
the argument (for once).

“You know the passage that leads off to our dorms?” Peter nodded vaguely but in actuality he had
no idea what corridor the archer was referring to. “Well go down there and turn off like you’re
going to the storeroom—“

“I’ll take him.” Tony stood up holding up his hand for Clint to stop explaining because it was
obvious Peter was already lost. “C’mon, Pete.”

He wanted to protest and insist that he could take himself to the bathroom but he knew it wasn’t
worth the fight. He didn’t want to risk being late or lost because his pride and he also didn’t want
to piss Tony off anymore by making a point.

While they were walking Peter decided to try and help Tony’s bad mood, feeling semi responsible
for it. “I’m sorry if I spooked you by not coming to find you at break. I just didn’t wanna get in
trouble on my first day here.”

Tony sighed and threw an arm over his shoulders. “You did the right thing bubs, I don’t blame you.
I was more angry at the guards than anything else. I was more worried about you getting freaked
out being by yourself.”

Peter smiled thinking that it was rather sweet how Tony didn’t understand his social anxiety but
tried to be mindful of it anyway. “I wasn’t by myself though, I made a friend.”

“Yeah?” Tony raised an eyebrow.

“Uh huh, you know him.” Peter smirked.

“Who?” Tony stopped just outside of the bathroom.

“Oh you had us working together last year.” Peter teased deliberately beating around the bush but
he soon stopped as his father’s expression soured once again. “Ant-Man.”

“Lang is here?” Tony seemed genuinely surprised.
“Yeah, you didn’t know that?” He shifted from foot to foot. He assumed Tony would have been notified given that he and the man had a history together. A history that was less than favoured by S.H.I.E.L.D.’s internal standards from all the rules Scott said the two had broken in order to go against Steve, Peter being one of those rules.

Tony shook off his confusion to usher to the teen into using the restroom, seeming to have noticed Peter’s movements before he did. “Go pee, we can talk more later.”

“Oh, right!” The boy said quickly dashing inside almost as though he’d forgotten where his Dad has been leading him in the first place.

Once Peter exited the restroom the pair started walking back through the hallway to the communal area and Tony used to opportunity to ask Peter a personal question.

“Have you been okay today? With asking to, you know..?” He asked awkwardly causing Peter to blush.

“It hasn’t come up.” He said quickly, in hopes Tony would leave the conversation there.

But of course the man didn’t. He frowned at his son’s answer. “What do you mean it hasn’t come up? With the amount of PT you’ve been doing you should’ve been drinking more than enough water-“

“Tony, can we not?”

“No Peter, this is not the kind of place you wanna give yourself another UTI in-“

“I get it! If I needta go I’ll ask, now can we stop talking about it?”

Tony didn’t want to stop talking about it, it was one of his main worries about Peter being separated from him. He knew if the teen was to have an accident in front of anyone the boy would be mortified. He didn’t want his son deliberately dehydrating himself again either, Bruce had warned how Peter had been reeking havoc on his kidneys with his drinking habits. As much as he wanted to ensure that that wouldn’t happen, he also didn’t want to stress Peter out before he had to part from him again so he relented, promising himself to broach the subject later when they were both in better moods. “Alright, but do you know where you’re going now at least? You grew up in New York, how can your sense of direction be so bad?”

“Hey, it’s my first day cut me some slack!”

Peter felt a lot less stressed after spending a little alone with his Dad and seeing the rest of his family. The rant wasn’t as bad as he’d expected it to be so he was glad that he wasn’t in any kind of trouble. It was Tony he seemed more nervous about splitting up than he did this time. By the time they’d made their way back to the mess hall it was already starting to empty and Peter could see Scott waiting for him at the other end of the room by the door. He was grateful for that since Tony was right, his sense of direction was terrible inside that place.

Tony frowned when it was time for them to go their separate ways, eyebrows knitting together in concern. “You sure you’re doing okay, Pete? I can still try and get you bumped up to our group if-”

“I’m fine, I promise.” Peter smiled confidently, meaning it this time. The day had been a mixed bag of emotions so far but it hadn’t been nearly as bad as it could have been. Now that he knew he was going to get the respite time during the day to be with his family he was feeling a lot more comfortable with the separation; he hoped him expressing that would help settle Tony’s nerves a bit. That and he was excited to see what else the day had in store, he was having fun exploring and
pushing his abilities in a way he’d never been allowed to before. It was refreshing to be treated like an adult. No, Wilson’s manners weren’t exactly to bedside standard, but Peter was willing to deal with that if it meant he wasn’t being treated like he was fragile for once.

“Okay.” Tony said, somewhat glumly. He found it difficult to know what Peter needed from him at different times, it was like he was always stuck between caring for him like a child or expecting him to act like an adult. He’d assumed their time at the compound would be one of the former as he felt the overwhelming urge to protect his son from all the strangers walking around, but it seemed he had been wrong in his assumption. It was hard but he supposed it was just apart of him growing up. It was times like that that made Tony wish he’d come into Peter’s life a lot earlier, so he would have had more time with him without this weird transitional phase. Of course he was proud of his son and happy that he was confident, but it hurt a little when he realised he wasn’t needed. Still, he got to relish in the sleepy, clingy moments when Peter came to him for comfort he just knew that they weren’t going to last much longer. He’d appreciate every bit of Peter’s childhood the boy had left...oh who was he kidding, Peter still slept with a teddy bear and played with LEGO, he had plenty of Dad time left.

“Are you okay D- Mr. Stark?” Peter peered up at him with an odd expression. “Ya kinda spaced out there for a second.”

“Yeah, just been a long day. I’ll see you at dinner okay? Take this, since people are still giving you a hard time because of your uniform.” Tony slipped off the dogtags he was wearing off of his neck and handed them to Peter.

“Cool!” He smiled shaking the jewellery in his hands for a second before stuffing it into his pocket. “Am I gonna get tags like that?”

Tony grinned back. Yep, Peter was still a kid alright. “We’ll look into it.”

“Sweet.” The teen said and looked back across the room at Scott who was waving urgently for him to hurry up. “I gotta go, I’ll see you later!”

Tony fought back the urge to hug him as he scampered off, knowing it would be inappropriate given their current setting. He settled for giving the boy a small wave, as well as a nod to Scott when the pair made eye contact. Again he waited until Peter was fully out of his sight before he let himself walk away with a small sigh.

“Come on kid, we’re gonna be late.” Scott urged as soon as Peter was within ear shot.

“Sorry! I had to go to the bathroom.” The two of them speed walked back to the meeting point, making it with plenty of time to spare. Well, two minutes, but it was long enough for them not to be the last ones there.

“Well, we’re not late I count that as a win.” Scott laughed breathlessly.

Right on the dot, Wilson showed up along with a different agent that wasn’t Johnson this time and took the group to yet another room. Peter had no chance of maneuvering himself around the campus at this rate. He was starting to think the building was sentient or could at least move around because there was no way the floorplan he was imagining made any sense.

The room they were taken to was a small scale lecture style auditorium, with a big screen in the middle of it. There was only about one hundred seats in the room so given it’s small size the recruits were forced to sit next to each other for the most part, but of course Peter and Scott were sure to seat themselves closer to the back of the room away from them. They took their seats, each
desk having a pencil and paper and for a moment Peter started to panic. It seemed he wasn’t the only one worried about the possibility of a test of some kind because many of the other recruits were exchanging nervous glances and whispers too.

“Don’t worry, ladies. There won’t be any written tests during the duration of your training here, only practical ones. After all, you’ve all completed the written entry examinations to get to where you are now.” Wilson strode around the open floor of the room directing a look at Peter and Scott with the latter part of his sentence. “Paper has been provided as I encourage you to take notes on what I’m about to say. In the future you’ll be required to bring your own stationary if you do so wish to continue taking notes. Everything I go over during these sessions comes from experience, both my own and from others in the field so, if you value your time here, it’s important that you take it in. This part is just as crucial to your training as the physical side, if not more. That means pay attention STEVENSON!”

As Wilson screamed the man’s name he slammed his hand hard against the desk in front of him, the sound carrying around the room making Peter wince as it hit his sensitive ears. He prayed no one else would decide to chat whilst Wilson was giving a speech.

“Okay!” Their leader stood up straight and clapped his hands. “First things first we’re going to be reviewing some footage of what NOT to do in the middle of a fight or otherwise covert mission. Let’s get down to basics.”

Peter braced himself for the material he was about to be exposed to, knowing he was likely going to see some intense gore. He was pleasantly surprised when a picture of someone who seemed to be in a similar uniform to his own. So, these were just training videos? That wasn’t so bad.

But as soon as the man played the video Peter realised it wasn’t just a demonstration. The man and woman who were sparring on screen immediately began attacking each other, moving quicker than Peter was able to keep track of. For a minute it looked as though the man had the upper hand, he had the woman pinned to the ground with one arm across her neck as though he was holding an invisible knife to it. Peter drew a quick sketch of their positing just in time to look back up and see why this particular clip was used in the ‘what not to do’ reel. The woman flipped herself around, using her leg to wrap around the man’s torso and flip him upside down. She grabbed his arm at the same time and twisted it behind his back, slamming him face first into the ground. Even through the somewhat grainy footage, a loud popping sound could he heard followed by the man screaming due to what could only be assumed to be a dislocated shoulder.

Several members of group G, including Peter, recoiled in shock having not expected such a graphic scene given the environment it was taking place in that had lured them into a false sense of security.

Wilson paused the video mid scream and walked around the room again. “What did he do wrong? Polinski?”

Polinski obviously didn’t expect to be called on. “Uhh, I-uh, he didn’t secure her legs sir?”

“Wrong. Battrum?”

It was a young woman this time and she seemed more prepared to answer. “He left himself open for attack si-”

“Not what I’m looking for. Parker?”

Peter froze. He didn’t know the answer either but he could barely open his mouth to respond,
immediately panicking. He hated teachers who would adopt that method of getting an answer at school but at least then he usually knew the answer anyway so it was easier to get the moment over with, but Wilson didn’t seem like the type who would take ‘I don’t know’ for an answer. For a horrible few seconds, that felt like an eternity to him, his mouth gaped open and closed like a fish before any sound would actually come out. “He..he uh-”

“Speak up!”

‘God, really dude? Can't you see I’m trying?’ “He wasn’t supporting with his back leg, sir.”

“Meaning?”

Peter certainly hadn’t expected a follow up question, he was expecting to have the word wrong screamed at him and for Wilson to move on to the next poor soul. “Meaning he was off balance. If he was balanced he could have been able to brace himself against her leg and she wouldn’t have had the leverage to flip herself...sir?”

Wilson’s face broke into a sick smile that made Peter feel even more uneasy. “Good! That’s the answer I was looking for! So, you’re not completely clueless huh, Parker?”

‘Jesus Christ, move on already.’ Peter panicked, feeling like a deer in headlights. It was obvious why the man was picking on him he must’ve got some sort of sick satisfaction out of making him uncomfortable. He couldn’t stand the attention being on him. By that point he wished he had just gotten the answer wrong. Surely the man didn’t expect him to answer, but he was still holding eye contact for a solid ten seconds after the derogatory rhetorical question.

After far too long a pause the man moved on, explaining in detail the point Peter had made, going over the logistics and pressure points in the leg that the woman had hit to weaken the man in the video. Peter would have found it interesting if he wasn’t so focussed on catching his breath after holding it for so long. Though his mind was elsewhere thanks to the near panic attack the colonel had to graciously bestowed upon him, Peter’s hand luckily remained in student mode and he continued to make detailed notes. The other hand had made its way into his pocket and was fiddling with the chain on Tony’s dog tags which he found very soothing for some reason.

After he managed to calm himself down, despite his bitterness towards the speaker, the lecture was actually very interesting and Peter found himself enthralled. He covered several sheets of paper, full of diagrams, questions he had, names of maneuvers that he wanted to practise in private. Wilson went on to show several move videos though luckily for Peter’s weak stomach there wasn’t much blood in them, other than one where a man had his teeth busted through his lip as well as having his nose broken due to not interpreting a punch from his sparring partner; when that particular clip showed up Scott covered his eyes, instinctually picking up on the boys aversion to gore probably due to his fatherly instincts. He saved Peter from vomiting all over himself but he couldn’t spare him from Wilson’s ridicule.

“What’s wrong Parker? Can’t take a little blood? How d’you reckon you’ll be able to be an agent then Princess?”

Peter kept his mouth shut as not to prolong the attention being drawn to him once again though he wanted to come back with a witty remark. He was going to have to stifle the Tony Stark part of his brain that had become implanted in him after a year of having to clap back at the sarcastic man if he wanted to survive the next two weeks. Seriously, he never remembered having such an attitude problem before he started spending time with Tony, he ought to get out of the habit. Scott shot him an apologetic look which he brushed off lightly, not wanting the man to feel bad. It wasn’t his fault Wilson was such a dick, like he didn’t already know he had to get better around blood, he was
working on it.

Wilson was going through strategies on how to get out of a chokehold when your hands were bound when Peter had to slide across the vacant seats to get more paper as his sheet was covered on both sides. The officer shot off another witty remark but this time Peter made a point of fully ignoring the man.

“Parker I know you ain’t hard of hearing, you wanna be a smart ass? You and Lang come join me down here for a little demonstration.”

That got the boys attention. Was he being serious? He looked up at Scott who had the same expression of disbelief on his face.

“No, sir.” All heads in the room turnt to Scott.

“What was that Lang?” Wilson hissed furiously but Scott remain calm.

He shrugged and smiled a sarcastically apologetic smile. “I won’t sir. I’m not putting my hands on a kid.”

The room was silent enough to hear a pin drop. Wilson broke the silence by striding up the short steps where Scott was seated, chuckling coldly. He leant over the desk to get right up in Scott’s face, but give the man his due he didn’t back down. He held his ground and even smiled at the man to show he wasn’t intimidated, though he ought to be.

“You’re going to regret disobeying a direct order, Lang.” He whispered so coldly and harshly that Peter, along with the several people close enough to hear the threat, shivered. Though his words weren’t particularly incriminating, the way the man delivered them was enough to make Peter scared for Scott’s life, though clearly Scott didn’t share the same concerns if his cockiness was anything to go by.

Wilson promptly turned away and strode back down the steps, beckoning for Peter to follow behind him, which he did. He wasn’t brave enough to defy the man so boldly as Scott did. “Since I don’t wanna upset Lang’s precious sensibilities, do I have any volunteers to help aid my demonstration?”

The room was silent again for a moment, before a few people stuck their hands up. Peter recognised them to be the same group that would always chuckle along with Wilson’s cruel jokes, so he assumed they were doing so for brownie points.

“Miller. Up you come.”

Of course Wilson picked the biggest guy in the room. He was well over six foot and built like a barn but Peter tried not to let that bother him, he’d taken on worse. Besides it was just a demonstration right? No need to worry.

“Parker, arms behind your back and wrists out.” Oh no, no. Hell no, he didn’t sign up for no bondage shit.

Despite his internal panic he complied and made sure to stay outwardly calm. Though as soon as the cuffs went on him he felt his entire body tense up, immediately going into defense mode. He zoned out as he tried not to let his training get the better of him (even if his body wanted to rebel and fight the Colonel off of him), not fully listening to what Wilson was telling him but he caught the gist. Miller was to stand behind him and grab him around the neck, then Peter was to do his best to get the man off of him by any means necessary then Wilson would critique his method. It
“Don’t hold back either of you. I take it you know how to choke hold someone without crushing their windpipe?” Wilson directed his question towards the burly man and much to Peter’s relief Miller nodded. “Good, that makes my job easier. Choke him out, if you pass out Parker don’t worry we’ll make sure you come to before your Daddy gets too worried.”

Wilson grinned at him, obviously referring to Tony which made Peter’s blood boil; the teasing was too reminiscent of the way that woman from MV corp was talking before all hell broke loose and Tony almost...Peter couldn’t let himself think about that incident not whilst he was about to engage in faux combat. He couldn’t lose control of himself that was no doubt what Wilson wanted. He wasn’t about to let the bully get the better of him.

He ignored the chuckles from Wilson’s usual band of goons and it struck Peter for a moment how much the group reminded him of Flash. He guessed bullies were all the same despite the size and shape of the package they came in. He tried to clear his head and focus, pushing his emotions to the back of his head the way Bruce had taught him during their meditation at home.

“When you’re ready gentlemen.” Wilson nodded and Miller didn’t even give Peter time to brace himself. The large man pounced on him before he could take one last inhale, forcing the last of the air out of his lungs as he did so. Fortunately for Peter, it wouldn’t be long before he freed himself so his lungs could reinflate.

Not two seconds after Miller grabbed him, Peter got over his initial shock and his body took over, much like it had the day he was almost kidnapped in the alley. With his arms behind his back he utilised his legs kicking one out between the man behind him. Miller’s gate was wide so it was easy for Peter to maneuver his leg behind one of his calves, pushing one of the pressure points Wilson had highlighted earlier, effectively kicking out his leg underneath him. As Miller stumbled forward trying to stop himself from collapsing Peter twisted his entire body around, slipping his hands, still linked together, around Miller’s neck. He used his neck to swing himself up and over the man’s head, landing on his feet behind him as the sudden movement caused him to fall to his knees. That was another good thing about the bite it had seemed to make him hypermobile, meaning he could easily force his joints into all kinds of positions with little to no pain, like he had just then having felt zero pressure in his shoulders after practically dislocating and relocating them. The tables had turned and now it was Peter standing behind and choking his improvised partner. It all happened within five seconds, Peter reacting on instinct and reflexes alone.

“Stop! Parker, enough!” Wilson barked causing Peter to jog himself back into his usual brain.

He gently lowered the man, slowly, so that he didn’t fall backwards, leaning Miller back against his legs. He removed his cuffs from around the man’s neck, realising the pressure he must’ve been applying as Miller spluttered and coughed as soon as he did so. Miller grabbed his neck and slumped forwards wheezing, only avoiding smacking his face onto the concrete because Peter caught him by the shoulders. He started to panic that he’d ruptured the man’s windpipe before he took in a deep breath and the colour returned to his face.

“Shit are you-“

“I’m good.” The gruff voice strained out, refusing Peter’s hand to help him stand up.

Peter was flooded with guilt. He’d never meant to hurt anyone, he should’ve controlled himself better. “I’m sorry I didn’t mean to-“

“What’re you apologising for kid, that was the whole point!” Miller spat out still rubbing his neck,
which was already developing a nice purplish bruise.

Wilson cleared his throat. He hadn’t expected Peter to come out the victor clearly, but he had to pretend that he had. “He’s right Parker, you can both sit down now. So, what did Miller do wrong?”

The purpose of the exercise was meant to be picking apart Peter’s defence not Miller’s attack. The whole altercation had Peter worried he’d just made another enemy, should the man’s pride have been hurt. That was the last thing he needed. He made his way back to his seat wide eyed and red faced where Scott was looking at him in awe. “I’m glad I didn’t go up there.”

“Quiet Lang!”

Though the experience was slightly traumatic, it at least got Wilson off of Peter’s case for the rest of the day. He also went on to praise his technique and explain all the things he did right during his short presentation of skill, which helped heal the wound a little. He was still sure not to make eye contact with any of the other recruits though he could feel eyes on him every now and then. The rest of the class passed by all too quickly for Peter, who once again found himself actually captivated by what Wilson has to say. He liked learning the names for certain moves and he sure to write down as much as possible so he could make more detailed notes and descriptions later, even though he’d used up all the extra paper from the surrounding empty desks.

Finally it was approaching six thirty when Wilson declared that they would be finishing for the day. “Those of you waiting to be assigned new bunks in the blue zone please meet back their after dinner, as for the rest of you the evening is yours. Though for other groups it is not mandatory, I like to go the extra mile to get my soldiers in shape and ready for what they’ll be experiencing as an agent. So, before breakfast, I want all of you to meet me by the track for some routine stamina and strength training.”

There were a few grumbles and sighs around the room as people gathered their things but no one verbally protested the request. Peter wasn’t particularly fazed, he was often up at the crack of dawn anyway he might as well get some exercise whilst he was already up. He had a feeling his dad may object to not seeing him all morning but he couldn’t go against orders.

They were lead back to the mess hall and Peter finally had some sort of idea what direction they were meant to be going in. Not that he’d have a hope in hell finding his way on his own but he at least knew they were meant to be heading North Easterly.

“Five thirty tomorrow, ladies. Don’t be late or you’ll be skipping breakfast to make up for lost time, so I make myself clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Enjoy your free time.”

Scott made faces as soon as Wilson started walking away from them making Peter giggle. That was until Wilson called back not turning around. “And I’ll see you at four am, Lang.”

“I can’t wait, sir!” Scott called cheerily.

But Peter stopped laughing and frowned. “Dude, you gotta stop. You’re gonna get yourself in deep trouble if you mess with him I can feel it.”

“Spidey-senses tingling?” Scott laughed, trying to brush Peter off though he knew the boy was right. He just didn’t want the teen to worry about him so it was easier to play it off.
“I’m serious. He’s already got it out for you man, you gotta play it smart.”

“Eh well, another hour and a half of running or whatever is better than getting choke slammed by you that shit was fierce.”

Peter rolled his eyes in response. He knew that Scott was deliberately not taking the conversation seriously to deflect his own nerves, Peter did the same thing with Flash at school. If he turned everything into a joke no one would realise how scared he really was. “Just...just try not to get into any trouble tonight, okay?”

“No promises, I’ll see you tomorrow kid.” Scott said cheerily as he went to fetch himself a tray.

“See ya.” Peter said sadly. He was worried but he knew there wasn’t much he could do, he just hoped Wilson wouldn’t work Scott half to death before the day even began. He tried to shake the thought from his mind and focus on the positives from the day as he made his way over to the Avengers and co table.

Luckily this time none of the guards made a fuss over him walking towards them, probably due to the soldier from earlier being scared shitless by his dad. He was happy he didn’t have to flash Tony’s ID tags at anyone though. As soon as he approached the table Thor locked eyes on him and greeted him in his usual excited manor.

“Spiderling! There you are! Good evening my boy!”

“Hey guys.” He smiled and took a seat, not bothering going to grab himself food yet. He didn’t feel hungry at all he was just craving his bed. By the looks of it so was Steve, the man yawned as he greeted him.

“Hey, sport. Whatcha got there?” Steve references the stack of papers he had clenched in his hand.

“Oh, just some notes from the class, it was really good. We went over a bunch of stuff.” Peter handed them over for Steve to look at.

“I can see that.” He smiled, though Peter couldn’t help but notice the bags under the soldiers eyes. They stood out so prominently on a man who constantly badgered the team about getting their eight hours. “Wow, Pete these are so detailed. Did you draw these?”

Steve was pointing to one of the diagrams Peter had made of the pressure points in people’s sides. “Uh huh, I had to write it all real quick though he was talking super fast.”

“They’re really good.” Steve praised as he handed back the notes.

The compliment made Peter blush. He’d had the privilege of flipping through Steve’s sketchbook a couple of times so having the man commend him on his sketching ability was very humbling, even if he was just trying to encourage him. He chuckled awkwardly. “Thanks. Where’s Mr. Stark and Dr. Banner?”

Peter had just noticed they weren’t anywhere to be seen, he saw Nat and Clint up at the tray window but not his Dad and Bruce.

“Uh, there was a slight problem they had to attend to. I’m sure Tony will be back in a minute.” Steve said a little too quickly and Peter easily picked up on what the man meant due to his lack of including Bruce in that assumption.

“Is Bruce, okay?” He asked quietly.
Steve nodded. “He’s fine bud, don’t worry. Why don’t you go get yourself some food, huh?”

Peter did as he was told, knowing better than to argue with Steve about his lack of appetite. He had yet to try any hot food that came out of the kitchen and he was rather apprehensive given the god awful reviews the rest of the adults had given. To his pleasant surprise it didn’t look all that bad, though he had often prided himself on being a less than fussy eater. Given his upbringing as long as he was allowed some kind of sugar after, he’d eat anything. He passed Nat and Clint on their way back to the table and Nat elected to stand up there with him.

“Hey, short stack.”

“Sup, carrot top.” He grinned even when Nat ruffled his hair into his eyes. She asked him similar questions to Steve albeit in a much more sarcastic manner and Peter took the opportunity to ask Nat about what happened with Bruce. It was well known within the household that the two were an item, but it was just another one of those unspoken things like Peter calling Tony dad and Steve’s unhealthy obsession with recycling. He knew she’d be upfront with him about Bruce’s state whereas the other adults would try and hide the extent of it from him.

“He’s in rough shape. It was a pretty bad turn this time around.” She said seriously.

“Did they like make him do it or was it an accident?”

“They like to call it a control test, but there was nothing controlled about it. We were lucky he didn’t hurt anyone. I just hope he doesn’t remember this one. He’s gonna feel like shit if he does.”

Peter frowned. He didn’t like the idea of Bruce being forced into something like that, he knew how much the doctor despised it without the added factor that it caused him great physical pain. “That ain’t right.”

“He’ll be fine, kid.” Nat bashed into him with her shoulder affectionately, sensing how upset the teen was getting. Peter went up to get his tray and as they were walking back Nat failed to point something out until it was too late. “Oh, and your shoe’s untied.”

“IT- wOAH!” Peter tripped but managed to avoid throwing his tray across the room by spinning wildly in a circle, hopping on one foot as he tried to keep his balance, said foot still trapping the loose shoelace. He managed to stabilize himself for a second but immediately tripped again as he tried to take a step forward. This time both him and his tray were sent crashing to the floor but luckily both of them were still facing up. Nat bust laughing immediately as she went to grab his tray and take it to the table for him, but leaving him on his butt. She wasn’t the only one, Peter heard soft giggling from behind him too.

“I think you dropped this.” Came a sweet voice with a thick accent that Peter couldn’t quite place. He scrambled to his feet and turned around to be met by the girl he got in trouble for waving at earlier, who was laughing and holding out the bottle of orange juice that had bounced off of his tray.

“Oh, uh, thanks! Sorry, did it hit you?” He stammered as he could feel his face turning a beautiful shade of crimson. He took the bottle from her outstretched hand gratefully but he couldn’t help but avoid eye contact.

“It didn’t, no worries.” She said cheerily and stuck out her hand again. “I’m Shuri, by the way.”

He hesitated for a moment, Tony had said he had to wait until he could go introducing himself. But technically he hadn’t initiated it and Tony wasn’t there so he threw caution to the wind. “Hi, I’m
Peter.

“You’re Mr. Stark’s apprentice, no? I’ve seen some of your work, very impressive stuff.” Peter didn’t fail to notice the way her compliment made his heart flutter a little.

“Yeah I am~” he chuckled nervously and rubbed the back of his neck, he wasn’t used to people knowing who he was. He went to continue his conversation but he heard a voice clear it’s throat from behind him. Aw, crackerjacks.

He whipped around and there his Dad was. “Hey, Shuri.”

She nodded graciously, not looking at all intimidated by the man’s presence, though Peter knew she had also been told not to talk to him. “Mr. Stark.”

“U-uh hey, Mr. Stark. Shuri was just uh-“

“Relax kid, I saw you fall on your ass.” Tony smirked at his son’s horrified expression.

Peter stuttered for a moment but Shuri interjected before he could get the words out. “Ah yes, I must admit you seemed much more spry as Spider-Man, though I guess it could be the suit.”

He blushed even harder than before and shot Tony and angry look for having brought up the embarrassing moment again.

“Aw well, not everyone can have such cat-like reflexes as your brother, eh? Maybe he needs a little extra training.” Tony was talking directly to Shuri but the hand he had gripping Peter’s shoulder was getting progressively tighter as he reminded him what group he was meant to be talking to.

“Speaking of him I should get back before he murders me for talking to you, it was nice to meet you Peter I hope we get to talk again.” She gave the pair a small wave and returned to her seat, next to a man Peter now knew was her brother who looked as disgruntled as Tony did. The man gave Tony and understanding nod that he returned as though they were both saying ‘ugh, kids’.

“Come on hot shot.” Tony not so gently pushed Peter back to the table.

“Well I wasn’t just gonna be rude and ignore her.” He hissed back but Tony just shoved him again. “Quit it!”

Once again Tony ignored him and pushed him down into his seat where his less than appetising meal was waiting for him. “Stop, I’ve had enough of being pushed around today!”

That caught Tony’s attention. “What do you mean?”

“Uhh, you know, the halls are always so packed people kept bashing into me.” He said quickly, trying to brush off his comment but Tony still looked at him suspiciously.

“It’s probably because you’re so short, youngling, they may not have been able to see you.” Thor chimed in ‘helpfully’.

“I ain’t that short!”

“Told you we shoulda got him some platform shoes, Tony.” Nat smirked at his indignant expression.

“I’m five eight!” He may have been stretching the truth ever so slightly with that one, but he noticed Shuri was showing an interest in their loud conversation at the other end of the bench.
“Now what about without shoesies?” Clint cackled.

“You know what? Sorry Steve but I’m not hungry I’m going back to my room-“

“D’you know how to get there?” Tony asked feigning innocence.

“...I’ll figure it out.”

“Boy, eat your damn meatloaf.”

“I thought it was a pork chop?” Nat said disgustedly.

“Well, whatever it is eat it.” Tony sighed.

Peter shrugged and started eating whatever it was. “Happy mystery meat Monday I guess.”

“You’re nasty.” Nat grimaced and Peter bit back the urge to open his mouth and do the old ‘see/seafood’ joke but he knew Steve would have had a melt down.

They ate their meals in relative peace with Peter telling Tony the same things he’d already told Steve and the others though he went into slightly more detail now that he had his full audience. It was drawing near to half seven when Peter grew increasingly quiet and starting yawning regularly.

Tony leant in close after Peter zones out in the middle of Clint talking to him. “Wanna head back to the room kiddo?”

Rather than protest Peter nodded and blinked himself awake. They said their goodbyes, assuring the rest of the team they’d see them shortly and the pair started walking back to their dorm. Peter looked back on last time to see if he could see Scott but the G group table was all but empty.

“You alright, bubs?”

“Uh huh. Just tired.” Peter said adding a yawn to the end for effect.

“I can tell.” Tony smiled fondly. “Just so you know, you probably shouldn’t mention Scott to Steve.”

“Yeah I got that.” Peter mumbled. He was too tired for conversation, words took too much energy and brain power.

“Where are you off to?” Tony chuckled as he had to grab Peter around the waist and steer him in the right direction when the teen decided to take a harsh left.

“Thought it was that way.” Peter shook his head.

“Not quite, honey.” Tony managed to corale Peter back to their room before the teen collapsed onto his bed, immediately grabbing his phone.

“Hey dad?”

“Hm?”

“Is there WiFi I can use here?” Tony rolled his eyes and went to give a sarcastic answer about teens being dependant on their phones (not that he was one to talk) but Peter cut him off. “For school, Dad. My teachers and Ned are gonna email my assignments remember?”
“Yeah, gimme your phone.” Tony took it from him and quickly typed in the code he had memorised, doing the same for the boy’s laptop too. He went to hand the devices back to his son but didn’t have the chance to. “Here P- aww.”

The boy was already unconscious, fully dressed on the bottom bunk. He was still half sitting up with his mouth open and Tony marvelled at his ability to fall asleep at the drop of a hat. As much as he wanted to just let the exhausted boy sleep he knew he had to get him into a more comfortable position and his shoes off at the very least. Peter was always so adorable when he was sleeping and Tony hated how the sight made him turn all broody. He walked over to his son and gently stroked his cheek a few times with his thumb, imagining how cute he must’ve been as a toddler and how sad he was to have missed those years, before he had to snap himself out of it. He slapped Peter’s cheek three times to wake the kid up. “Up ya get.”

Peter groaned and shoved Tony’s hand away. “Heeey.”

“I know you’re tired but you’ve gotta hey changed. Besides you’ll pee the bed if you don’t go before you sleep now come on.” Tony helped the now teary teen sit up as he whined pitifully. “I know it.”

“You’re mean.” Peter sniffed and shuffled off in the direction of the bathroom.

“I know, I’m the meanest. Go potty and brush your teeth.” He smirked deliberately goading his son with the baby talk but the kid was too tired to do anything but whine in response. He couldn’t help it, he was too cute when he got like this and it was the only way he could cope with it without cooing. Whilst Peter took care of his nightly routine Tony pulled out the boy’s pyjamas and put away his notes on the desk, then untucking the corners of Peter’s bed so he could clamber into it easier.

The disheveled teen appeared in the hallway with his pants still undone, toothpaste on his shirt and his hair a mess where he’d presumably attempted to comb it. Tony just prayed the young zombie had avoided any other people in the hall. “Jesus Christ, come here.”

Peter was too tired to protest, all the emotional and physical energy he’d spent that day combined with the lack of sleep that night and no nap he was exhausted. The crash seemed to hit him all at once. It was the most tired he’d felt in a long time and honestly, it wasn’t a bad feeling. He knew he’d get a good night’s rest at least. Tony helped strip him of his uniform and change him into his pjs which he would have been mortified about at any other time but he was too tired to care. He went to climb the ladder to his bunk but instead he just kind of leaned against it, as though he was trying to see if he had telekinesis strong enough to will himself up there without moving limbs.

“Bottom bunk tonight, little one.” Tony chuckled and helped pour Peter into the bed closest to the ground. “You’re a mess, Petey, you know that?”

“But you love me anyway.” Peter mumbled, not even bothering to open his eyes.

Tony pulled the blanket up over him. “You’re right I do. Very much.”

“I love you too Dad.”

Tony smiled, those five words making it feel like his arc reactor was overheating. He planted a kiss on the already knocked out boy’s head. “Sweet dreams, Underoos.”

Tony resigned himself to a quiet evening, though he had wanted to have a more in-depth conversation about Peter’s newfound friendship in Scott. He knew he’d have ample opportunity to
talk to the man himself, at some point what he was more interested in is why he hadn’t been notified and why Scott and Peter had been placed in the same group. Surely that couldn’t be a coincidence.

An hour or so after he’d tucked Peter in Steve popped his head through the door. “Hey everything alright in here?”

“Shh!” Tony hissed desperately. “Don’t wake him up.”

“Aww, he’s conked out already?” Steve cooed looking over at Peter.

“I know, if I had known this was how to get him to fall asleep early I would’ve brought him with us last time.”
Coffee Was A Bad Idea

Chapter Summary

Soooo this wasn't the chapter I had intended to post for the next part buuuut I decided to swap a couple around so I have more time to develop the story instead of going all in. Double omo in this one and omo in the next one too, enjoy! Sorry if it's a little rushed.

Peter has a pretty bad day.

The next couple days came and went, all merging together; only being broken up by the time Peter spent passed out in his bunk. Everyday was like the first, Peter being almost too exhausted to finish dinner, but he made Tony keep him awake so that he could do schoolwork and tidy up his notes. His days were grueling and exhausting, but Peter found himself enjoying nearly every minute of it even when Wilson was trying to make things deliberately harder for him. Though each day was filled with different, exciting and challenging tasks the structure of their days remained the same; Peter’s day consisted of strenuous exercise first thing in the morning then transitioning into more practical work towards the afternoon. He was finding with each lecture he was learning more and more, when before he had assumed that none of the material would be new information; as much as Colonel Wilson made it obvious he detested Peter’s presence, the teen found himself looking forward to the latter part of the day more than anything else. He was enjoying learning about all the different strategies and tactics, he made a point of researching and learning all the different codes and acronyms used within average military operations, even learning the NATO phonetic alphabet along with the corresponding code words in one night (much to Tony’s disbelief).

He would also relay his lessons in great detail to his adult team members who always made sure to be equally as enthusiastic as him. They asked him questions like they didn’t fully understand, even though they had learned the same things many years ago, but Peter didn’t need to know that. He was always so excited to talk to them about it, it was impossible not to engage with him. He never noticed the fond smiles they would give each other while he was explaining a tactical error to a ‘very confused’ Clint or Bruce. Though to be fair to him, Thor often was completely oblivious, having bypassed that kind of training being that he was from another world, so god didn’t actually have to play up his ignorance.

Nat had taken a special interest in his combat training, since out of all of them her and Peter had the most similar fighting style, revolving around leg work as well as punches. Without realising it he had adopted a more mixed martial arts style of fighting as opposed to brute strength, which he had an abundance of, and this excited his female counterpart. They often trained together in the evenings and Nat’s private instructions gave him an edge over the rest of the recruits that was becoming more and more apparent with each session, much to everyone’s distaste.

The more he excelled in his classes the more bitter certain members of his group grew towards him, but Peter didn’t let that bother him too much. He had Scott as well as a few other people warming up to him thanks to his bubbly personality. The people he was often partnered with to spar took a liking to him quickly once his friendliness got the better of them.

He’d even been allowed to talk to Shuri and her brother, T’Challa, who Peter later found out was
the Black freaking Panther. He had to make a concerted effort not to have a full on fangirl moment but it was pretty difficult considering he had action figures of the man. Once he found out who they were he couldn’t contain his excitement when it came to tech talk with Shuri who was more than enthusiastic to answer his questions; despite Tony and T’Challa warning the two teenagers to keep their discussions strictly theoretical, due to data protection, they were already making plans to work on a project together. He found out that he’d been right, Shuri wasn’t much older than him only being seventeen, which made him feel a lot better about being the baby of the team. Though even she kept calling him cute, much to his embarrassment.

All in all it had been a good week, though Peter was starting to miss home just a teensy bit. He was mostly missing Ned and MJ but at least he could have contact with them in the evenings, texting constantly with Ned and getting the odd snapchat from MJ here and there (which was more than he’d usually get out of the girl). Tony had warned him to mind what he said, even to Ned who he knew was aware of Peter’s alter ego. Every message or google search or phone call was being closely monitored by S.H.I.E.L.D staff at all times and Peter was careful not to incriminate himself or possibly put Ned in danger by giving away too much information. Luckily the two had the forethought to come up with a code for that very situation ahead of time, so Ned knew not to let on what he knew about Peter’s double life either.

It was the morning of the fifth day when Peter ran into his first big problem. He’d stayed up until gone three the night before practising kicks with Nat after Tony fell asleep (knowing if he Dad caught him awake that late he would have been in big trouble, but of course auntie Nat wasn’t advered to breaking the rules). He was having a great dream about him and MJ hanging out on the rooftop of a building. Just as it was getting interesting he was woken up by Tony shaking him.

“Pete. Petey. Wake up, you alright?”

“Mm?” Peter blinked and sat up, realising where he was. He glanced over at his phone and it read 5:46. “Oh no!”

He barrel rolled off of his bed seeming to have forgotten he was on a bunk bed, but luckily Tony was there to catch him. “Woah, careful—"

“I’m late! I’m so so late!” Peter sprang around the room like a headless chicken trying to get himself dressed in record time. Though he’d had plenty of practise getting changed quickly, the combination of sleep deprivation and panic dulled his skills and he ended up tripping over his pants still muttering obscenities.

“I’m late! I’m so so late!” Peter sprang around the room like a headless chicken trying to get himself dressed in record time. Though he’d had plenty of practise getting changed quickly, the combination of sleep deprivation and panic dulled his skills and he ended up tripping over his pants still muttering obscenities.

“Pete, chill! You’re gonna hurt yourself just take a minute.” Tony chuckled and pulled his son off of the floor.

“I don’t have a minute I’m already late! I-I-I’m gonna get in so much trouble!” Peter shook his head fervently not listening to what his Dad was saying at all.

But Tony grabbed him by both shoulders and forced him to look at him. “Peter. Breathe. Don’t work yourself up into a panic, it was an accident.”

“Yeah well I’m pretty sure the Colonel ain’t gonna see it that way- I’ll see you later!” He brushed past Tony running straight out of the room and down the hall before he could stop him.
“Bub-Peter! At least go...to the bathroom first.” Tony sighed realising his son had already taken off out of earshot. He just hoped he had the wherewithal to do so before he went out to the track. “Guess I’ll make your bed then.”

Fortunately Peter did, but only because his bladder made a very sudden protest in the middle of him sprinting and he was forced to take a detour to the bathroom, only adding more time to his lateness. By the time he made it out to the track the other recruits had already finished their run and were moving on to press ups and other core exercises. He immediately walked over to Wilson, feeling everyone’s eyes on him. The usual culprits snickered at him as he walked red faced across the courtyard.

“Sir, I’m so sorry I-“

“On the track, Parker.” Wilson barked before he even got over to him. Peter nodded and changed direction, jogging back to the track to catch up with the part he’d missed. He was happy that he hadn’t been publicly chastised for being late, he’d expected Wilson to make a massive deal out of it. But he had a feeling that wasn’t going to be the last he heard of it.

He was right. Wilson had him run for the rest of their early morning session and he wouldn’t allow him to join the rest of the group for breakfast. He wanted to protest, knowing how badly his father would react if he didn’t turn up let alone Steve, but he knew better. Wilson has just started to ease up on him, he wasn’t making Peter take part in demo’s anymore and he’d stopped calling on him unnecessarily during class too. Now he was worried that all that was going to start up again.

Once again he was right. Just as he was finishing up his core training Wilson took him to collect the rest of the group after breakfast and Scott ran up to him as soon as they were lead back out.

“I tried to sneak you a cereal bar but I got caught. You okay? What happened this morning?”

Peter chuckled at the sentiment. “Don’t get yourself into trouble dude and yeah I’m fine. I just slept through my alarm.”

“Aw shit kid. You know how Judge gets when people are late-“

“I know, I know.” Peter grimaced. “But I made my time up so hopefully he won’t be too bad-“

“Parker!” Their conversation was cut off by said Colonel screaming across the yard. “You show up late and now you wanna interrupt me?”

“Sorry, sir.”

“Get your ass down here!”

Peter sighed and Scott gave him a sympathetic smile as the teen marched his way to the front of the group.

“Drop.” Peter understood the command and did so, propping himself into a push up position. What he wasn’t expecting however was to feel two feet on his back. He braced himself against the sudden pressure, freezing in place. “Why ain’t you moving?”

Was he serious? Apparently so. Peter was forced to do push ups with the man standing on his back the entire time he spoke to the rest of the group. The weight wasn’t an issue of course, but Wilson’s boots dug uncomfortably into his back. He felt the man deliberately adjusting his foot stance repeatedly so that they dug in even more. He didn’t make a fuss lest he give Wilson more reason to pick on him. It was humiliating but he didn’t have another choice so he tried his best to grin and
bare it.

The rest of the morning went like that, Peter being used as an example for any given reason Wilson could think of. He accidentally slipped in the mud during one of the obstacle courses but apparently that was intentional, so Peter had to redo it three more times before the man was satisfied, making him late for break. He managed to duck in and out of the bathroom and grab some water from the fountain before he was marched back into the weight room. Then Peter was paired with one of the biggest people in his group for sparring. Lovely.

Of course it was nothing he couldn’t handle, but by the end of PT Peter was exhausted. Not only was he running on less than four hours of sleep but also no food, which with his metabolism left him with a dangerously low blood sugar. He was shaking by the time their training was over and he felt light headed and wobbly. As he was walking out of the room Wilson couldn’t resist one last pop at him.

“Good work, Parker.” He chuckled sarcastically and Peter had to drag Scott away before the man said anything.

They took a slow walk to the canteen since Peter was struggling to walk in a straight line and Scott was worried he’d pass out if he rushed him. As Peter expected, Tony was looking around anxiously trying to spot Peter as soon as he walked through the door.

“You okay to walk over there?” Scott said, seeing Tony at the same time Peter did. He knew the poor boy was about to get grilled by his boss for having skipped breakfast and he felt upmost sympathy for him.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine honestly.” He brushed him off, he felt unbalanced sure but he wasn’t about to faint. Not yet anyway.

“Okay...I’ll see you in a bit.” Scott said apprehensively, but he kept a close eye on Peter as he walked away, ready to run over and catch him if he did pass out.

Peter nodded and made his way across the room as quickly as his shaky legs would allow and thankfully one of his team members had the forethought to grab his tray for him. He kept his head down and avoided anyone’s eye before he got there, silently begging them not to say anything about his absence that morning but of course he wasn’t so lucky.

To his surprise it was Steve who got in first, not Tony. “Peter where on earth have you been?! You know you’re not to skip meals under any circumstances—look at you, for goodness sakes you look like you’re gonna pass out! What were you doing?! Why didn’t you at least come and see us on break?!”

Peter stared silently at him for a moment before he sat himself down, sighing. “Can I answer the first question or are you not done?”

Everyone around the table looked at him not expecting such an attitude to come from the usually complacent teenager. The sardonic tone of voice made him sound eerily like Tony and it didn’t suit him.

“Hey. Watch it.” Tony snapped. “What’s gotten into you?”

Peter stared silently at him for a moment before he sat himself down, sighing. “Can I answer the first question or are you not done?”

Everyone around the table looked at him not expecting such an attitude to come from the usually complacent teenager. The sardonic tone of voice made him sound eerily like Tony and it didn’t suit him.

“Hey. Watch it.” Tony snapped. “What’s gotten into you?”

“Sorry. M’sorry Mr. Rogers.” Peter said, regretting taking such a tone against the man who was obviously only concerned. “I’m just tired.”

Steve and Tony exchanged glances, as did the rest of the group and they all seemed to silently
agree to leave the boy alone.

“Eat.” Was all Tony said and Peter wasted no time in obliging. He was starving. He ended up warfing half the tray down in under five minutes. “Jesus, Pete, slow down. You’re gonna make yourself sick.”

“Sorry.” He said sheepishly making an effort to slow down. There were conversations going on all around him but he made little effort to join in or really pay any attention. The only time he did was when Tony was getting up to get more coffee. “Can I have some?”

“You think that’s a good idea?” His Dad quirked an eyebrow. Peter knew what he was hinting at but he also knew the man wouldn’t bring that up in front of the rest of the table.

“Please?” He begged, whipping out the puppy dog eyes. “I can barely stay awake, Mr. Stark.”

The way Peter spoke stabbed at his heart strings; the quiet sweet voice and the use of his last name reminded Tony way too much of the early days when Peter was too scared to ask for anything.

“Fine. Just one.”

Peter smiled a little smugly as soon as Tony’s back was turned and he received an exasperated look from Steve for doing so, which he shrugged off. Sometimes being cute had its perks. Tony was right the coffee was not good, but it was better than nothing. It didn’t take long to kick in either, so he perked up more towards the end of their lunch break. He still remained rather quiet but he felt more human than zombie.

Once it was time to go back Tony grabbed him just as he was getting up from the table, pulling him close to whisper to him. “Go to the bathroom first.”

Peter blushed but nodded. He’d been planning on doing so anyway but having his Dad remind him made him feel like a small child. After he peed (and brushed his teeth because he felt disgusting) he made his way over to where Scott was and the man was just finishing off his own meal and going to bus his tray. As he stood to do so Peter saw one of the other members of G group barge into him, causing his tray to go skidding across the floor and almost knocked Scott over. Peter jogged over to help him clean up the mess before one of the officers yelled at him, but he didn’t get over there quick enough to ask what the other guys deal was.

“What was that about?” Peter hissed as he helped to scrape some half eaten macaroni off the floor.

Scott simply shrugged nonchalantly. “No idea.”

“Did he say anything? Did you say anything?” The two questions had very different inflections as Peter realised that Scott may have opened his big mouth to the wrong person again.

“No words were exchanged it was probably an accident.” Scott chuckled. He always found it amusing when Peter tried to parent him.

“It didn’t look like an accident…”

“It’s no big deal- come on before you’re late again.” Scott changed the subject quickly and pulled Peter towards the lecture hall.

Fortunately they weren’t late. They were early in fact, but that did nothing to quell Wilson’s contempt towards Peter that day. It was as though because they’d gotten off on a bad foot that morning that all Peter’s hand work and good behaviour had been forgotten. Wilson was just as hostile and arrogant as he had been on the first day and Peter was in no mood for it. He did his best
to keep his head down but that was difficult when he kept picking on him for every single question only seeming to get more infuriated when Peter knew the answers.

They were around an hour in and Wilson had let up on him a bit, most likely due to the rest of the group getting fed up with not having the chance to answer. Peter was glad for the break as he was starting to experience something he hadn’t during training before. He started needing to pee. Up until that point he had always been strict on his fluid intake and bathroom regime. Whenever he did drink anything he made sure to sip it slowly and gradually; somehow he’d managed to avoid any close calls up until that point. But where he’d been so hungry and tired he’d forgotten himself, at lunched he downed a whole bottle of water as well as the coffee he guilt tripped Tony for. He was in trouble.

He’d promised his Dad he’d ask if he needed to go and his Dad had assumed he was doing so without any major issue, but in fact he never had to. Peter wasn’t even sure if Wilson would let anyone go during training as he had yet to see anyone ask. Not once had anyone asked to be excused so he supposed that the adults were just able to wait until their breaks to use the facilities. That or they’d been privy to some kind of bladder training that Peter hadn’t as part of their pre agent testing. It wasn’t fair, he didn’t have an adult sized bladder how was he meant to wait until breaks? He didn’t have that kind of control over his kidneys, he couldn’t time it. Besides he did go on his break it wasn’t his fault he had to go again. Okay, maybe it was a little his fault, but what the hell what he supposed to do now?

‘Ask,’ Said the logical side of his brain. But that wasn’t so easy because the emotional side was already reeking havoc. Wilson was in the middle of talking and there was no way Peter was about to interrupt and ask in front of everyone. Even if the man hadn’t taken a particular dislike to him that day he wouldn’t have been able to do that- he could barely do it in school, in front of a familiar group of his peers. These were adults, these were hardened military personnel, he couldn’t make himself ask for a potty break in front of them.

He tried his best to ignore it for a while, but the caffeine was doing a number irritating his bladder. The pressure in his stomach was building rapidly and he knew he had to do something before anyone caught on to his predicament.

He determined that he had three options, all of which were panic inducing. The most straight forward, yet most difficult one, was to bite the bullet and just ask to be excused. But that ran the risk of Wilson making fun of him in front of everyone and possibly not letting him go anyway. He could try and slip out, but he doubted that he could do so without getting caught and then he’d either be forced to sit back down again to be forced to admit where he was going and be ridiculed for it, or even be told he wasn’t allowed to. The third option was to try and hold it until dinner, but Peter knew that was unrealistic. Had it been a good day, where he hadn’t drank any caffeine and wasn’t stressed out he wouldn’t have been able to hold it that long.

Whilst he was having that internal debate his bladder was steadily filling and he couldn’t sit still anymore. He swung both of his legs to one side of his chair, trying to put pressure on his crotch without having to use his hands but it did little to help him.

Scott had noticed the change in body language and was attempting to catch Peter’s eye but the boy refused to look at him. If Wilson saw the two conversing even if it was non-verbal he was scared that the man wouldn’t let him leave to go to the bathroom- if he ever built up the courage to ask. But Scott was persistent, he ended up writing on his sheet of paper and pushing it towards Peter’s section of the desk.

‘What’s wrong?’ It said.
As panicked as he was Peter couldn’t bring himself to admit his need to Scott. Despite knowing the man’s reaction would be nothing less than sympathetic he just couldn’t do it. He didn’t write anything back at first just shaking his head slightly in response but again, Scott didn’t quit and apparently Peter wasn’t as surreptitious in his movements as he once though.

The second note read, ‘Do you have to pee?’ and Peter quickly scribbled it out with his own pen just in case anyone could see. He shook his head again but Scott wasn’t stupid, he knew a potty dance when he saw one. Though he hadn’t known Peter for very long he had noticed the teen made an effort not to drink much, would get quiet and bouncy before their breaks and would always blush whenever Scott mentioned using the bathroom; he’d figured that Peter was a little shy when it came to such matters. He wanted to help but he knew he couldn’t speak for him, the other recruits let alone Wilson would never let him live it down. All he could do was try and encourage Peter to say something for himself but that was no easy feat.

‘Just go I’ll cover for you.’

This time Peter actually wrote something back. ‘I can’t. I know he’s gonna stop me.’

‘He can’t stop you from going to the bathroom I’ll kick up a storm if he tries. Just go.’

That was the extent of Peter’s replies though as he was too busy arguing with himself on the matter. The situation was getting dire and he could feel his bladder threatening to leak every time he fought against the urge to squirm. His brain was going a hundred miles per hour as he tried to think of a solution that wouldn’t end in him embarrassing himself.

“Peter go.” Scott whispered audible causing Peter to shoot him a warning look.

He was running out of time and they both knew it. He had his legs firmly crossed under the desk now but that wasn’t cutting it anymore, he was having to switch positions every few seconds lest his bladder betray him. It was when he leaked and had to bend forward suddenly that an idea struck him. It wasn’t a pleasant one but it covered all bases and he was too desperate and panicked to think about how insane it was.

He decided to give himself a nosebleed.

He didn’t hesitate once the idea came to him, it wasn’t like he hadn’t done it before to get out of things. Admittedly not in several years, but it wasn’t a difficult feat to accomplish. There was no way Wilson would deny him leaving the room if his face was dripping blood- that was a sure health code violation. He made quick work of thrusting the palm of his hand against his nostrils hard, in one swift motion, and he was immediately rewarded by the familiar rush of heat filling his nose before running down his chin. Scott was the only one to witness him do this, who stared on in horror and confusion but Peter didn’t have time to worry about his reaction. He stuck his non bloody hand up in the air to get Wilson’s attention.

“Parker, what- oh for God's sake.”

“Sir, can I-“

“Go.” The man waved his hand flippantly and rolled his eyes. He didn’t wait to be told twice.

Peter dashed out of the room pinching the bridge of his nose as he ran, though he wasn’t truly concerned about it. He was more concerned about keeping his pants dry, a mission he was mere minutes away from failing. Gravity hit him hard as soon as he stood up and his bladder weighed heavily in his abdomen, demanding its contents to be released. He soon gave into those demands as
he got himself to the nearest bathroom much to his relief. He managed to get his pants down just in time to avoid disaster and he audibly moaned as he went. He was too relieved to be embarrassed, at least initially.

He hadn’t escaped the experience completely unscathed, his underwear was thoroughly soaked but with no outward signs of his mini accident on his uniform he was content to deal with that. He was more panicked about the possibility of it happening again. Peter was well aware about his bladders shortcomings, so the likelihood of him getting desperate again before the lecture was over was strong. Now he had to figure out how he was going to combat that. Luckily the self induced nosebleed bought him some time as he actually needed to stop the flow of blood; Despite his accelerated healing for some reason his nose remained one of the few sensitive areas that still took it sweet time repairing itself. Bruce suggested it was due to the delicate capillaries being damaged but Peter surmised his nose was just dumb- that was his expert medical opinion.

As he sat on the toilet with tissue stuck up his nostrils he came up with a plan. He’d hide out in the bathroom for as long as he could without raising suspicion (I.E. until Wilson sent someone in after him) then he’d try and pee again before he left. That way he should be able to manage the next few hours without having to leave again. It might be a tight schedule and he’d probably end up desperate right at the end of class but it was the only option he really had if he wanted to avoid assaulting himself again. A second nosebleed would definitely raise suspicion and no doubt Scott would think him absolutely insane- though he wouldn’t be entirely wrong in thinking so.

‘Oh god Scott.’ Peter suddenly thought. The man had just witnessed him pee dancing like a five year old, all after one cup of coffee. Great now he was going to be too ashamed to face the one friend he’d made by himself.

The idea of going back to the classroom and having everyone looking at him was tipping him over the edge. He suddenly realised how homesick he was. Why couldn’t he have been back in Mr. Brunswick’s class with Ned there? Or why wouldn’t he have been somewhere with his Dad where he could have just Tony-Starked his way out of it? He had failed to notice before since his days had been non-stop but he’d been an anxious wreck the entire time he’d been there and the mental toll was starting to weigh on him all at once. He had to second guess every little thing he did, he was constantly worried about doing something wrong or looking stupid for not knowing something, he could still barely find his way around the place. It always felt like someone was just waiting for him to slip up so they could laugh at him. He missed seeing his family and felt ostracised once again because he was the only one not experiencing the same kind of training...Now that he’d given himself the time to sit and really think about everything, it all became too overwhelming and he felt like he couldn’t breathe. Peter couldn’t stop himself from slipping into a panic attack and he did little to try.

He just leant forward and let it takes its course, propping himself up on his knees as the hyperventilating kicked in. It was extra difficult due to his blocked nasal passages but he didn’t have the mental capacity to care. He’d just nearly pissed himself in front of everyone because he was too scared to ask to go. Maybe they were right maybe he didn’t have what it took to become an agent. His head was swimming and he closed his eyes, waiting for the panic to stop. He wasn’t sure how long he was sitting there but it was long enough for Wilson to send someone in after him, just as he had expected. What he hadn’t expected though was just who came in to check on him.

“Parker? You in here?” It was a woman’s voice, he recognised it as agent Johnson’s. She hadn’t been involved in their training since the first day where she demonstrated her powers, often standing back and observing; making notes and occasionally adjusting people’s posture so that they didn’t injure themselves. She usually disappeared after lunch so Peter was surprised to hear her, let alone in the men’s bathroom.
“Uh, y-yes ma’am.” He stammered out quietly. He was still struggling to breathe and that clearly translated into his voice.

He heard footsteps approaching the stall door and Johnson stood right outside of it. “Open up, kid.”

He opened the door shakily, still with toilet paper shoved up his nose, opening it just enough to look at her through the gap.

“You alright?” Her face was considerably softer than usual, as well as her voice.

“Uh, y-yeah, m’fine.”

“Did you make it?” The question caught him off guard.

“I don’t uh, I don’t know what you m-mean-”

“Cut the crap Parker, I saw you punch yourself in the face.” She said dryly but her eyebrows were still knitted together in concern. “Do I need to grab you a new uniform?”

Peter was in shock. He was sure that no one other than Scott noticed him, but now he was beginning to worry that Wilson may have seen his crazy behaviour as well. “N-no, ma’am.”

“Okay.” She gave him a small sympathetic smile. “Next time just ask kid, you’re not gonna get in trouble. I know Sam can be harsh but he won’t stop you from peeing, ‘aight?”

Peter just nodded and looked towards the ground. He was so embarrassed he couldn’t find it in him to verbally respond. He could feel his ears burning and he was waiting for the ground to open up and swallow him. Johnson could sense his obvious discomfort so luckily she didn’t prolong the moment of emotional torture.

“If that doesn’t stop in the next ten minutes go to the medic.” She gestured to his nose and turned back to walk out of the bathroom.

Though the stem of blood had all but stopped Peter took those last ten minutes to calm himself down, or at least bring himself back from the brink of a mental break down. The interaction with Johnson did nothing to help his panic attack, only adding to his concerns about everyone knowing what his real reason for running out of class was. Not only was he going to have to face Scott he was also going to have to face the fact that his foolproof plan hadn’t worked as well as he thought. Why did he do that? That was so extreme, he should’ve just asked, why did his anxiety riddled brain think that was a viable option? Maybe he really was crazy.

He walked as slowly as he could back to their classroom after making sure to empty his bladder completely before he left the bathroom. He tried to slip in unnoticed but as soon as he opened the door everyone snapped their heads around to look at him. The sight of all those eyes on him made Peter want to throw up.

“Nice of you to join us.” Wilson smiled sarcastically. “Since you’re already up why don’t you come down here and help me show the rest of the group how to disarm an enemy with your back to them?”

“Yes Sir.” Peter sighed and went down to the centre of the room as he was told. He did the demo as instructed, doing his best to ignore all the eyes that were on him so he didn’t have another panic attack in front of the whole room. He avoided eye contact with Scott for the rest of the class too, though the man was desperately trying to catch his attention. Scott even resorted to kicking Peter’s
chair until he finally looked up to snap at him.

“Are you okay?” Scott mouthed.

Peter just shrugged and turned his attention back to his sheet of paper that he was doodling on. He’d long since lost interest in Wilson’s teachings which was unusual for him, but he was stuck in that post panic haze that made it difficult to focus on anything but the hum in his own ears. He felt like he was alone in a room full of people, like an eery out of body experience; it was similar to every time he dissociated, like he was sitting in a room away from his body, watching through a glass window everything he was doing, but he wasn’t the one in control. He’d entered autopilot and he didn’t feel anything, which was a considerable improvement to how he’d felt only fifteen minutes before.

His prediction about needing to go again before the lecture was over was right. With just under an hour left his bladder started to stir but this time Peter didn’t ignore it. As anxiety inducing as it was he decided to actually ask for permission to leave this time; he was too tired and overwhelmed to try and figure out another excuse and Johnson had already told him it was alright to do so. He also wanted to avoid giving himself another nosebleed, mostly because it would be too suspicious but also because he didn’t want Scott to think him completely psychotic. Besides that the usual thoughts of his inadequacies regarding his anxiety issues were creeping up and he wanted to prove them wrong. Wilson had paused for a moment between slides, allowing for people to catch up with the notes they were taking and Peter seized his opportunity.

He stuck his hand in the air and waited for the man to call on him but he didn’t. It was obvious that he’d seen Peter’s arm but chose to ignore it. Peter bit his lip and took a deep breath before he spoke. “Sir?”

“What now Parker?!” Wilson barked making several people jump.

“Uh…” Peter paused, the colonel’s harsh tone making him second guess himself but he couldn’t back down now, he had to ask. “M-may I be excused?”

“What for?”

‘Please don’t make me say it, please don’t make me say it- ‘I-uhm, I need to use the restroom, sir.’” Peter spoke in a quiet voice.

"Hold it.” Wilson said finally, turning back to the board and changing slides.

Peter sighed and put his head in his hands. He hadn’t expected a different answer if he was being honest. At least he tried, but now everyone knew he had to go which was the one thing he’d been trying to avoid. He was beyond humiliated, exhausted both emotionally and physically and despite his best efforts he still needed to use the bathroom and his bladder was starting to rebel. There was twenty minutes left when Peter said ‘screw it’ and got up.

“So, when the agent lifted their leg it- Parker where the hell are you going?” He didn’t answer he just continued walking towards the door. He felt everyone in the room turn to look at him but he didn’t stop to worry about it. He didn’t have time to, he was about to explode. He was just getting through the door as he heard Wilson yell after him again, “Parker you were NOT dismissed!”

The screaming continued as he made his way down the hall but he couldn’t make it out. Peter was hyperventilating again, his desperation having grown tenfold since he stood up and his mind was going just as crazy. He’d just walked out without permission. Wilson was going to kill him, but he had no choice. If he had stayed in the class any longer he would have wet himself and he had no
doubt he would’ve gotten in more trouble for making a mess.

In his frantic state he got himself turned around in the endless hallways. He had been heading towards the cafeteria out of habit as opposed to towards the restrooms near bluezone; he attempted to change direction when he realised his mistake but when he turned around he didn’t recognize where he was at all. He turned again and it was as though he’d been dropped in the middle of a maze. He wanted to cry, how had he gone so wrong? He’d been walking these halls for almost a week now and one bad turn left him completely lost. It was enough to make him cry, he was stuck with a full bladder in the middle of a corridor he’d never been in with no one around to ask for directions. He didn’t know what to do he was too panicked to think.

“Pete?” He heard a familiar voice from behind him but he half thought it was in his imagination. What were the odds that he’d run into his Dad right when he needed him? But then he heard footsteps coming up behind him. “Bubs, what you doing here?”

He wasn’t imagining things, it was Tony. Peter wasn’t sure he’d ever been so happy to see the man in his life. “Da- Mr. Star- I- mm-”

Tony walked straight up to him hearing the panic in Peter’s voice that sent him immediately into Dad mode. “What’s wrong?”

“Help.” Peter cried pitifully. He had his legs crossed so it didn’t take Tony long to realise what was going on.

“Shit- come on.” Tony had several questions but they could wait, he wasted no time dragging Peter to the nearest bathrooms, which luckily weren’t too far away.

He quite literally had to drag him because the boy wasn’t able to move his legs fast enough and keep control of himself at the same time. He had to stop for a moment and grab himself between the legs and Tony thanked whatever deities may be out there that there was no one else around to witness the scene. Peter sniffed and miserably mumbled to himself. “M’not gonna make it.”

“Yes you are.” Tony said, mostly rhetorically and made the rash decision to just pick Peter up. They were a mere twenty steps away so he braced himself to bare the child’s weight, but he found Peter was surprisingly light which was good for his back but slightly concerning. He pushed the thought back to the back of his mind to be dealt with later in favour of getting Peter the last few steps to the bathroom. He brought Peter inside and pushed him into one of the stalls. “Go, go, go, go.”

Peter just barely made it, once again saturating his underwear but ultimately leaving no traces on the outside of his pants. In his relief and panic and all of the stress from that day he lost control of his emotions and started crying quietly, leading Tony to believe he hadn’t made it.

“Aw Petey.” The man sighed quietly, not having been prepared for such a sudden turn of events. He was just going to get himself a cup of coffee he hadn’t expected to run into his son especially in such a state. But his parental instincts kicked in and he pushed the shock aside ready to handle the situation. “Can you open the door?”

The door opened and to his surprise he was met with a dry son, albeit a teary one. “Hey, you didn’t- Bub it’s okay! See you’re fine!”

His words did nothing to comfort the boy though who continued to sob silently. He pulled Peter into a hug feeling kind of awkward about doing so in the middle of a bathroom but he didn’t care. “Peter what happened?”
“I asked to go and he wouldn’t lemme and I-I got turned around and I didn’t know where I was and I couldn’t I didn’t” Peter was cut off as another sob wracked through him and Tony shushed him quietly having gotten the gist of what he was trying to say.

He was furious but he was sure not to let that on in the moment in case Peter mistook his anger as being toward him. He also couldn’t say he was surprised, if anything he had expected Peter to run into that situation a lot sooner but it did nothing to calm him down when he thought of someone denying his already shy son permission to use the bathroom. “Oh honey, it’s alright. It’s not your fault, it’s okay.”

After a few minutes Tony managed to calm him down enough for them to have a cohesive conversation.

“I’m sorry Dad.” Peter pulled out of the hug still sniffling, but now he was furiously rubbing at his eyes. “I know I’m pathetic-”

“Shut your mouth. I’m not gonna listen to any of that-” Tony prepped himself to give his usual speech about not letting Peter slip into his self deprecation but the boy cut him off.

“But it’s true! How am I ever gonna be an agent if I can’t even hold my piss for a fucking hour?!?” Peter snapped angrily.

“Who said that?” Tony furrowed his brows, wondering if someone had said that to his son and he started thinking about what he’d do to them.

“I’m saying that!”

Tony blinked at him slowly, trying to think about the best way to handle the situation. “Well that’s dumb. When you’re on a mission if you have to pee you can just go there’s no one on a powertrip telling you you can’t-”

“You can’t always! What if we’re on a stake out or something? I can’t just get up and walk away! Or in the middle of a fight-”

“Pete we’ve been over that, it doesn’t matter if you’ve gotta go you’ve gotta go. Whatever happens no ones gonna make a big deal about it. Bladder capacity has nothing to do with your ability to be an agent but that’s not relevant right now. Stopping you from using the bathroom is not part of your training, who told you you couldn’t go?”

“It doesn’t matter.” Peter said quietly, that question seemed to quell the teens anger as he stopped making an effort to argue.

“Yes it does Peter, who stopped you?”

“It doesn’t matter! Please? I just wanna forget it..” Peter suddenly looked like he was about to cry again and Tony gave in, but he made a mental note to find out who Peter’s commanding officer was. “It was my fault anyway I shouldn’t have drank so much.”

“Alright, alright, come on. We’ll talk about it later. It’s almost time for dinner anyway.” Tony lead Peter by the shoulders out of the restroom towards the dining hall but as soon as Peter realised where they were he stopped. “What’s wrong?”

“Can I just go back to our room? I’m so tired…”

“Pete you gotta eat something, you’ve barely had anything today-”
“I’ll eat later I just- please? I don’t think I can handle all the noise and the people right now…”

“Hmm. Okay.” Tony gave in. Peter looked so pitiful and after the sudden bathroom emergency Tony didn’t have the heart to play bad cop in that moment. “You want me to come with you?”

“No no, you needta eat. Can you just...can you just keep Steve off my back tonight?” Peter begged. One more disapproving look after the day he had would push him over the edge and he really didn’t want to start crying again.

“Sure bubby, I'll see you in a little while.” Tony had half expected Peter to be clingy after such an emotional outburst but he understood that he might also need some space.

“See you.” After he hugged is dad goodbye he made his way back to his room to continue the rest of his mental breakdown in peace. He’d just walked out of his class without consent and he’d practically bunked off the rest of the day. He was dead. Wilson was going to kill him. Shit- when his dad found out it was Wilson who’d denied him a bathroom break he was going to kill him. Then maybe Scott. Then maybe Peter too for not telling him who he’d been placed with.

It wasn’t like he’d lied to Tony about being in Wilson’s group, the man had just never asked him the name of his commanding officer- so he hadn’t told him. Even when he did ask a couple times Peter had managed to throw him off the conversation before he realised that he hadn’t received an answer. If Tony found out after five days of not knowing, he would figure out that Peter knew the connection Wilson had to both Steve and him. His plan to keep him and Scott’s knowledge a secret was going to come tumbling down and now he couldn’t do anything to stop it. Why had he been so stupid? Why did he have to run into his dad then tell him what had happened? Why couldn’t he have been blessed with a bladder bigger than an acorn?

He didn’t have the energy to think about it all for too long. As soon as Peter got back to his room after cleaning himself up and changing into comfier clothes, he laid down on his bunk. No sooner than his head hit the pillow he was out like a light.

Tony came back just over an hour later to find his son passed out with a tear streaked face. He wanted to leave Peter to sleep but he knew he had to wake him up if the boy was going to get any decent sleep that night. He also had to make sure he ate something before his sugar crashed like it earlier that day.

“Rise and shine Underoos.” He rubbed Peter’s back, speaking gently. “Come on you can’t sleep yet or you’re gonna be up all night again.”

“Mm.” Peter sat up with his hair sticking in sixty different directions and Tony had to bite back a laugh. “M’up.”

“Sorry sweetie, I know you’re tired. Bedtime soon.”

Peter yawned and stretched dramatically. “You’re right. I gotta get my will sorted anyway.”

“What?” Tony chuckled.

“Well I’m dead when I turn up to training tomorrow. I just went AWOL, I should start digging my grave now.”

“I’ll have it sorted. Don’t worry about it you’re not getting in any trouble.”

Peter grumbled as he jumped down from his bunk. “You can’t go fighting my battles for me Dad. I broke the rules I gotta deal with it.”
“We can fight about it later, I’m still mad he told you no I’m the first place-“

“Yeah yeah, I get it.” Peter said flippantly as he stretched again.

“You gotta get some food first.” Tony rolled his eyes. “The canteens closes but-“

“Café de la Peter is open.” Peter grinned devilishly pulling out the candy and soda hoard he had hidden under his bed. The nap had done wonders to improve his mood, even if he was going to have to deal with the repercussions of his actions the next day. He decided he’d tortured himself enough for one day so future Peter could deal with the rest after he had some much needed down time.

“Oh great so I get to deal with you hyped up on sugar.”

“Yup.” Peter popped the P at the same time he cracked open a can of grape soda.

“So you don’t wanna talk about earlier?”

“Nope.” Peter slurped his drink for affect that time.

“Okay.” Tony decided to back off, not wanting to upset Peter again and resolving to deal with the matter on his own without the boy’s consent. “You got any homework?”

“I’m just bouta check.” Peter sighed as he pulled out his laptop. He had a few emails from his teachers as well as a bunch of messages from Ned saying how much he missed him, which after the day he had was really nice to see. He also saw a message from MJ as soon as he went online.

MJ: Hey

Peter smiled. He never usually got messages from the girl let alone one as immediate as that. His response was just as quick.

Peter: Hi

MJ: you busy?

Peter: Nah, why?

MJ’s next message took a minute for her to right which only built the boy’s anticipation.

MJ: we have a couple assignments due and I need help with our calculus hw. It’s too much for me to type out so I was gonna skype you if you’re free.

Peter’s heart stopped.
She wanted to video chat? She had never so much as wanted to call him before and now she wanted to video chat? It was very unexpected and certainly not the most opportune time. He couldn’t talk to her on Skype while Tony was in the room he knew his dad would do or say something to embarrass him, but if he asked him to leave he’d no doubt ask him a bunch of questions as to why. Then again, now that the girl had brought up the idea, Peter found he really wanted to see her. Like, really wanted to see her. Surely he could ask his Dad for a little privacy and he could always lie to him.

“Uh, Dad?”

“Yeah?” The man said absentmindedly scrolling through his phone. It was clear he was expecting another random or naive question.

“Do you, uh, were you planning on going and hanging out with the others tonight?” Peter asked apprehensively. He was trying to sound as nonchalant as possible so that Tony hopefully wouldn’t pick up on his nervous energy, but of course that didn’t work.

His dad slowly looked up from his and turned his head towards Peter, eyeing him suspiciously. “Why?”

He couldn’t backtrack now, not without seeming even more sketchy, so he decided to just bite the bullet and ask. “Well uh, my friend wanted to Skype me tonight about homework.”

“Right, so?”

Tony was really gonna make this difficult for him huh? “So, I was gonna ask if you could like, I don’t know-“

“Fuck off for a bit?” Tony finished helpfully

“I wouldn’t have put it quite like that, but yeah.” Peter shrugged and his Dad laughed.

“Wow, look at you going all pink!” Tony stood up from his reclined position on his bunk and strode across the room to pinch Peter’s cheeks.

“Stop that!” Peter slapped his hands away furiously and turning back towards the laptop.

“You’re so adorable.” Tony laughed and sat down on Peter bottom bunk. “So what does your damsel in distress need help with?”

“AP calculus and she wanted to explain the History assignment-“ Peter stopped when he noticed
Tony grinning again. “What?”

“You just said she.”

“Frick!” Peter sighed and slammed his head on the desk.

Tony gasped in mock horror and dramatically cried, “Such language!”

“Go away.” Peter groaned leaving his head on the desk. He wasn’t in the mood to be teased.

“You go away.” Tony chuckled. “What time do you want me gone?”

Peter picked his head up giving his dad a skeptical look. “You mean you’ll actually leave me alone?”

“I’m not a monster. I can give you a little privacy to talk to your lady friend. Just remember that the call will be monitored so, no funny business.”

“Dad! Stop it, seriously! She’s just my friend why you gotta make it weird all the time?!” Peter yelled as he waved his hands about exasperatedly. He was still a little cranky and over emotional after such a terrible day. “It’s so annoying! I don’t have many friends and you’re making one of the only friendships I’ve got awkward-“

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry. I’ll stop teasing.” Tony came up behind him and put his hands on his shoulders. He enjoyed winding Peter up but even he knew when to stop when he’d pushed it too far. “I mean it. I’m sorry, bubby.”

Peter sighed but relaxed his shoulders. He was still suspicious about his dad keeping his word but he hoped it would last long enough for him to Skype with MJ in peace. “You promise not to come in and try and embarrass me?”

“Pinky promise.” Tony held up the digit. Despite his reservations Peter accepted it, knowing how seriously Tony took the childish vow.

“Okay…”

“What time do you want me gone?”

“At like, eight?” Peter said, confirming the number with both his Dad and MJ simultaneously.

“Alrighty then, I’ll be out of your hair by then.”

Speaking of hair Peter suddenly decided he hated his. He spent half an hour trying to get it to sit right. Since they’d arrived at the compound he had spent zero time styling it and the stubborn curls that refused to lay flat showcased that perfectly. He usually made an effort to tame the coiled locks everyday to train them into behaving but he’d neglected to do so, between not having enough time or energy after training. He was deeply regretting that.

As much as Tony had promised to stop teasing his son, he couldn’t resist commenting on how ridiculous he thought the boy was being. Vanity was never a trait Peter possessed and it was amusing to see the teenager take such a sudden interest in his appearance. “Ah, to be fifteen again. When all you have to worry about is acne, girls, and your hair.”

“Acne?! What acne?!” Peters eyes grew wide and he started moving his head around looking horrified in the mirror.
“Jesus, Pete I was kidding your skin is fine-“

“It better be the amount of money I spend on proactiv every month!”

“Hey you imposed and allowance on yourself ain’t my fault if you wanna spend it on useless shit-“

“Useless?! So my skin does look bad- oh god I’m breaking out on my chin, aren’t I?”

Tony was surprised at how much the boy was reacting to a few missmade comments. He hadn’t seen the boy panic so much over his appearance since the night he went to that party with Ned. He could see the start of a panic attack brewing in him and though he thought his sons upset to be trivial (especially in the grand scheme of things) he felt guilty for having given Peter a hard time over his obvious crush.

“Underoos, hey chill out. I was just joking your skin is fine, you’re fine. MJ’s not gonna care what you look like anyway.” Tony tried to soothe but he’d apparently just made things worse. He watched Peter’s shoulders fall dejectedly.

“Yeah, you’re right.” The boy sighed and shook his head, making Tony wonder what the hell he’d said wrong now.

“What’s the matter..?” The older man said gently sitting further along the bed so he was right next to the boy leaning over the sink. He truly hadn’t meant to upset him, he’d let the novelty of Peter acting like a typical teenager overtake his judgement as a father and he’d accidentally pushed his sensitive son too far.

Peter was still staring at his reflection but he seemed to snap himself out of whatever he was thinking to answer him. He gave a weak smile and chuckled almost convincingly. “Nothing, just dumb teenager stuff.”

Tony opened his mouth to press on but Peter moved back over to his side of the room, digging in his backpack. “Hey, have you seen my Classics and Culture book?”

“I think you put it in the third draw down.” Tony said quietly. He didn’t like how easily Peter had been able to switch in and out of moods. The idea that his son was upset about something but could hide it or push it down like that made him feel uneasy. Tony was more than aware of Peter’s body confidence issues as well as his self esteem in general, he hated the thought that he could’ve just added to those because he had been careless with his words. Despite the nagging feeling in his chest he decided against bringing it up again, knowing it would probably end in him upsetting the teen more. He told himself he’d bring it up again at a better time, when Peter wasn’t emotionally exhausted.

“Thanks.” Peter called back cheerily, having found the textbook he’d been looking for. He made an effort to clear the tension that had built up in the room by changing the subject quickly. “Do you know when I’ll be able to start being an actually agent? Cause some of the guys were saying they’ve gotta go to like, nine more of these training camps before they can officially enlist and they’ve already been at this for like, years so...Not that I’m not enjoying the experience buuuuut-“

“You won’t have to complete the entire course Pete.” Tony chuckled softly. “This is more of a formality, we’ll continue training you at home after this.”

“But that doesn’t answer my question.” Peter deadpanned.

“Does too.”
“Does not! How long is it gonna take for me?”

“We’ll see.”

“That’s not an answer I was a unit of measurement dammit!” The two went back and forth for a while, getting more and more playful in their responses, Tony being deliberately cryptic to make the boy laugh. Sooner enough seven o’clock rolled around and Tony was exiled to sit in Bruce’s room.

“I’ll be back in here by midnight though, okay? Don’t stay up too late. We don’t want a repeat of this morning.”

“I won’t.”

“See you later, kiddo.” With that Tony left Peter to his own devices, though he did plan on stopping by his room at some point that evening to ensure the teen went to bed by an appropriate time. If he didn’t, he knew Steve would and though he promised that he wouldn’t barge in and embarrass him the same couldn’t be said for the motherly blond man.

Peter didn’t know why but he was nervous. He spent most of his school days as well as several days out with MJ by that point, so there was no need for him to be as anxious as he was. He was still paranoid about his unruly hair and now, thanks to Tony, his complexion though he knew he shouldn’t be. His dad had been right, MJ didn’t care what he looked like. If she did she would never have been friends with him in the first place.

For some reason he couldn’t bring himself to press the call button on the Skype app and he waited for MJ to do it herself. Every time he went to do it he felt his heart race and his hands get clammy. So he waited. And waited. And waited. Maybe she’d gotten annoyed by him not calling first and she’d given up on the idea. He was about to message her again when the call came through, which he accepted with shaky hands. Within a second he saw the familiar brunette pop up onto his screen wearing her signature sarcastic smirk.

“Hey, you!” She grinned cheekily.

“Hey, MJ.” Peter chuckled. Though he was still anxious seeing his friends face helped relax him, even if the nerves were replaced by that irritating butterfly feeling he got whenever he saw her, but he’d grown used to that.

“Well, how are ya Mr. Business man? We’ve missed you at school.”

“By we you mean you and Ned right?”

“And Mr. Brunswick- and I don’t know Flash has seemed to miss his favourite emotional punching bag, though he’s been making do with Ned for now.” She was sitting in her room, that Peter noted was not quite what he’d been expecting. Though he wasn’t exactly sure what he was expecting, it definitely wasn’t that. Her room was decidedly more girly than her personality and usual fashion choice, though he had to admit to himself he didn’t have much of an eye for interior decoration as both he and Ned had had the same bedroom’s for the past eight years. Still it was kinda weird to see a girl clad in grunge style clothing sitting in a pink and turquoise pastel room.

“I missed you guys too.” He laughed off her other comments but part of him hoped she’d been joking about Flash giving Ned a hard time. He hated the idea of his friend getting picked on when he wasn’t around, mostly because the big softie wouldn’t stick up for himself the way he would Peter. He shook the thought off.
“When are you gonna be back? Life pretty boring without you to pick on.”

“Why, thank you very much Michelle.” Peter rolled his eyes. “In a couple weeks.”

“Wow that sucks, you’re gonna miss Sissy’s sweet sixteen, however will she cope?” It was obvious MJ meant how will she cope but Peter didn’t quite pick up on that at the time.

“I’m sure she’ll manage.” Peter said flatly. “So, what’s this calculus thing you’re stuck on?”

“Ugh! It’s so stupid right, so I asked her four different times to go over this integrals and logarithms sheet with me, because I’m convinced this bitch has it all wrong.-“ she went on to rant about how the teacher had missed placed the parentheses on several of the equations, rendering them completely unsolvable until Peter pointed out that MJ hadn’t considered implicit differentiation in most of them. They chatted back a forth about the material for a while before MJ abruptly changed the subject. “So, what are you doing anyway? Ned just said something about a business meeting out of state?”

Tony had prepared Peter with a lie beforehand, knowing how terrible he was with coming up with them on the spot. He’d even had him rehearse it several times to ensure the boy was practised enough to give a strong delivery or for it to sound even remotely convincing. “Yeah, it’s this tech conference or something. Mr. Stark wanted me to tag along to take notes, it’s pretty cool stuff.”

MJ quirked an eyebrow but didn’t immediately let on that she wasn’t buying it. “Where you at?”

“Uhh, I’m not really supposed to say what state-“

“No, I mean where are you, like right now. What kind of room are you in?”

That was an odd question, he wasn’t prepared for that one. Well it was simple enough, surely he could lie easily about that. “My hotel room..? Why?”

She shrugged and leaned back in her chair, fiddling with a loose strand of hair. “No reason. Just thought it was kinda weird to have a sink and two sets of bunk beds in a hotel room.”

Peter looked in the window that showed what his webcam was picking up and MJ could indeed see the sink seated opposite his desk; the mirror above said sink aided in reflecting practically the entire room, giving MJ a clear view of everything including the door. He quickly moved his head in the way of the mirror and tried to throw her off topic. “U-uh, uh, let’s just get back to your homework, alright? I’m really not supposed to talk about it-“

“Ohkay, P, don’t get your panties in a twist I’m not gonna get you in trouble.” She smirked at his flustered expression, seemingly knowing she had complete control over the conversation. “I was just wondering, that’s all. Can’t a girl show her best friend she’s interested in his life?”

Peter scowled at her not liking her smugness but he did feel a blossom of warmth in his chest when she called him her best friend. “You’re real nosy, you know that?”

“Of course I do, it’s one of my favourite personality traits of mine.” She flashed him a genuine smile that made his stomach flip.

He sat there staring at her for a moment, noticing how pretty she looked in there green T-shirt she was wearing, he loved her in green...before he snapped out of his daze, feeling like a creep for thinking such things. “Homework. History, what’s it on?”

“An essay assignment, you’ll have it done in no time.” She explained the task they’d been given in
detail, which only took her a few minutes.

“I thought you said it was a lot to explain? Sounds simple enough to me.” Peter laughed and looked up from his notebook to catch her eye. He found that she was already looking at him with an expression he couldn’t quite read.

“Maybe I just wanted an excuse to talk to you.” She said simply and Peter could feel colour flood into his face.

He swallowed thickly and desperately tried to ignore the rave the butterflies were currently having in his stomach. “You never have before?”

She shrugged and looked away from him. “Usually my dad’s home, but he’s out of town for work.”

“You’re home alone?” Peter frowned a little. Not that it was odd for a sixteen year old to have the house to themselves but it just seemed odd to him. MJ’s father, the little he knew about him, had come across as pretty overprotective in the past. Not quite Tony’s level of overprotective but enough to where MJ was constantly on her phone telling him where she was and she had a strict curfew; that she broke. Many, many times. But that was MJ.

She gave him an odd sort of smile, one that came across as more of a grimace, certainly not her usual confident one. “Yeah. To be honest I’m a little freaked out by it.”

Peter’s face softened. It made sense now why she had been so insistent on video chatting rather than them just texting. Part of him felt an odd warmness though, that she had come to him as her source of comfort but ultimately he felt bad for her. Had he been in the city he would’ve gone over to actually hang out, he couldn’t do much from where he was. “Aw, M, you could’ve told me that. You know I wouldn’t have made fun of you for being scared.”

“I know that dumbass, but I knew you’d give me that pity look you’re giving me right now.” She laughed and tucked her feet under her in her chair, spinning it around. “I’ll be fine, it’s just for a couple of days. It’s nice to have the space too, you know?”

“Can’t relate.” Peter chuckled. He’d never been allowed to stay by himself, not even with May he’d always be sent over to Ned’s. The one time he had been allowed to stay home alone for a few hours he’d nearly set the apartment on fire trying to cook eggo waffles in the microwave.

At least he got her to laugh with that comment. MJ kneed full well how suffocating Tony was at times as Peter was very vocal about the little privacy he got at home. “I’m not fully alone at least, Dad left his asshole cat here for me to take care of.”

“You never told me you have a cat!” Peter’s love for animals was immediately sparked causing the girl to roll her eyes.

“Because I don’t.” She stressed. “It’s his, I don’t want anything to do with that thing.”

“I wanna see the cat!” Peter pouted causing her to sigh and roll her eyes again.

“If he comes back here I’ll show you but I ain’t making any promises. I don’t want him to scratch my eye out if I try and pick him up.”

They went back to talking about the essay, bouncing ideas off of one another about possible topics and general structure. Whilst there were talking Peter started to feel a familiar ache in his stomach but he ignored it. He didn’t want to cut MJ off in the middle of a conversation so he could use the
bathroom. Not only was it rude (in his eyes) but it was embarrassing. For some reason the idea of someone else knowing he had basic bodily functions was mortifying, especially MJ. He’d always been extra shy of excusing himself around her when they’d hung out; in person it was easier, they’d usually be with Ned who would make an excuse for him or go with him. Even when they’d spent time alone together, MJ had been able to pick up on his change in body language prompting him to admit he needed to go or otherwise forced him to before it got bad. Both of his friends were understanding of his shyness but it never made those experiences less shameful for him.

He decided to just hold it. He figured MJ would want to hang up after they’d gotten their essays started, which as she said herself wouldn’t take long. He shifted slightly getting into a more comfortable position that eased the pressure enough for him to push it to the back of his mind. That didn’t last long however, the several cans of soda he’d drank that evening as a meal replacement were beginning to catch up with him. It was uncomfortable but he could handle it, for now. As silly as it sounded, he just didn’t want to leave yet. They’d long since forgotten about their homework and moved onto conversations about recent shows they’d gotten into and different antics from various classmates. He was having too much fun listening to her recent stories about the latest outrageous thing Flash had come out with during academic decathlon. But if Peter wanted to remain in the room MJ was going to have to stop making him laugh, every time he did he was reminded how much he needed to pee. His bladder was already tired after holding it for so long during Wilson’s lecture, so his desperation was climbing quickly. He’d learnt his lesson about waiting until the last minute to ask to go, but he didn’t even need to ask. He could go whenever he wanted. He just wanted to wait a little while, maybe until MJ got up to go too so he wouldn’t have to say anything...

“Hey, you okay?” MJ asked when he’d stopped laughing suddenly, tilting her head slightly. Peter paused for a moment to take in how adorable it was when she did that before he realised he’d bent in at the waist a little.

“Uh, yeah I just- dropped my pen.” He was quick to cover his tracks by bending down to pick up the imaginary fallen writing instrument, though that proved to be a big mistake. As soon as he did so he felt his bladder scream in protest and he was forced to cross his legs. The sudden motion made his entire body jerk and he ended up smacking his head on the underside of the desk. “Ow!”

“Careful-pffft!” MJ covered her mouth in a ditches attempt to conceal her laughter but she couldn’t help it when she saw his face. “Don’t look at me like that!”

“You’re mean.” He pouted which only made her laugh harder. She laughed until Peter heard a noise he’d never heard the girl make. “Did you just snort?”

“Shut the fuck up.” She was still smiling and trying not to laugh but there was a bite to her voice. Peter tried not to laugh himself but he was struggling to contain it. As soon as he broke into a smile she started laughing again. “Laugh and you’re dead Parker.”

“I didn’t d-do anything-“ they both started laughing again but Peter had to be especially careful since his bladder was certainly not enjoying the company as much as he was; with every laugh it threatened to spill over.

He continued toughing it out for another ten minutes, but he realised that their call wasn’t going to be ending anytime soon- nor did he want it to. He just really, really needed to use the bathroom. His bladder was tired of all the abuse he’d subjected it to that day so it wasn’t tolerating being forced to hold it without good reason. Well without any reason. It wasn’t that hard- just get up and go, he knew he was being ridiculous holding it when there was no real need for him to. He was trying to pluck up the courage to excuse himself when MJ did it for him.
“I’ll be right back.” MJ said and stood up, leaving her laptop unattended. Why couldn’t Peter just say that? It was so simple, he didn’t even need to admit he had to use the bathroom. Now would be the best chance for him to run and go, MJ was out of the room he wouldn’t have to say anything at all. But if she came back and he wasn’t there she’d probably have more questions about that and god knows he can’t lie for anything. If he just went really quickly maybe he’d make it back before her and that could be avoided all together-

“Ya girl got Lil Joe’s.” MJ came bounding back into her room with a pizza box and enthusiastically threw herself cross legged back into her chair.

Damn it, Peter had missed his chance. “Ugh, don’t even talk to me about pizza, the food here sucks.”

“You still wanna try and tell me you’re at a hotel? Like Tony Stark would stay somewhere with less than three Michelin stars.” She snorted.

“He didn’t pick it, it- it was an agency thing!” Peter huffed in frustration. MJ was so persistent even though he was making it blatantly obvious that he couldn’t say anything. She knew how secret he had to be when it came to work related stuff, so he was getting irritated by her continuously asking about it. He had an incline that she was teasing him deliberately but the ache in his bladder was causing his patience to wear thin.

“Uh huh, sure, P.” MJ laughed. Why did she have to use his initial right now, he didn’t want to be reminded of pee. “What about Virgil's aeneid, on page eleven?”

They carried on with their homework, finally settling on a topic they were both interested in. Outwardly, Peter was making a concerted effort to stay calm but on the inside he was panicking. He could barely sit still and he knew it was becoming noticeable. But he didn’t have a choice it was either squirm or wet himself. He couldn’t believe he had let it get to that point but he’d gone too far to turn back without raising more questions. If he got up now he knew that he’d have to make a mad dash for the restroom and MJ would be sure to comment on it when he got back. That and he knew that his Skype call was being monitored by some security agent somewhere and once that thought him he knew he wouldn’t be able to admit he had to use the bathroom outloud. It was bad enough the thought of MJ knowing so the added notion that a complete stranger would know too was too much for him. He couldn’t say it, he’d have to wait until the call ended. It was getting late anyway, surely he could hold it until the call ended.

He tried to content himself by sitting on his heel to take some of the pressure off but that didn’t work as well as he had hoped. After less than thirty seconds he was forced to change position again, this time slipping a hand beneath his legs. He felt his face turn crimson for doing such a thing with MJ sitting right there but it wasn’t like she was in the room with him, she couldn’t see beneath the desk. But he knew what he was doing and he felt so ashamed for letting it get to that point- for the third time in one day. What was wrong with him? Why couldn’t he just speak up like everyone else?

‘Come on, Peter just say it. Just say you’ll be right back, four little words it’s not hard.’

He’d become noticeably quiet, even more than usual and MJ of course noticed. She kept sneaking glances at him when he was turned away. When she finally caught his eye she gave him a knowing smile, a gentle one as opposed to a teasing one.

“P, you okay?”

‘Tell her, just tell her! Make something up it doesn’t matter stop being so stupid, the bathroom is
literally right down the hall!’

Despite his efforts, Peter was visibly uncomfortable. He’d tried his best to sit still but he just couldn’t anymore, not without his bladder threatening to empty on him. He also couldn’t remove his hand from between his legs due to the same fear, god why had he let it get this bad? “Y-yeah, m’fine.”

“You know you can say if your tired, I’m not gonna get upset.” She smirked and leaned back in her chair.

Peter took the out, despite wanting to protest. It was getting late, coming up to ten o’clock, he knew he ought to be off call by then anyway even if he wasn’t moment’s away from wetting himself. “Uh, it is kinda late I guess-”

“It’s cool, I know you’ve probably got work stuff to do tomorrow. We’ll pick this back up when you’re not busy yeah?”

Peter couldn’t believe his luck; as embarrassed as he was to get caught out for acting weird he was glad that his movements had been perceived for something other than they were. And she wanted to Skype again even after he’d acted like such a kid?

He was about to answer when he felt it. A familiar warm sensation spreading over his crotch. No. No way. He wasn’t. This wasn’t happening.

“...Peter?” MJ looked deadly serious for once, her face flooded with concern.

He opened his mouth and closed it again, looking horrified at his lap. He was still holding himself but it did nothing to stem the flow it was like his bladder had become completely numb; completely giving up on him after it’s day of being abused. No amount of clenching his muscles was doing anything, all he could do was sit there and watch as his sweatpants became saturated, as well as the chair. He knew he had to say something before MJ figured out what was going on but he was in shock. They were just about to hang up couldn’t his bladder have waited two more minutes?

“U-uh, y-yeah M, sure. I’ll-I’ll uh- I’ll call you tomorrow.” He didn’t look up he couldn’t bring himself to see what expression she had on her face. There was no way he’d gotten away with that, she must’ve known what had happened.

“Okay...well goodnight.” She said unsurely. It was obvious she wanted to continue asking if he was okay but she knew Peter well enough to know that he wouldn’t be honest with her, at least not in the moment.

“N-night.” He still didn’t look up. He couldn’t bring himself to. He couldn’t even bring himself to move and for an awkward moment neither of them hung up the call. It was one of the longest moments of his life and he was still going. Finally he heard the familiar beep of the call ending and he breathed a small sigh of relief but it didn’t last long.

He sat frozen for a couple minutes. Both while his bladder emptied and he let the gravity situation sink in. He’d just peed his pants, on Skype with his best friend, in a room he was sharing with his dad. Shit Tony- how was he going to hide this? He had no idea if there was anywhere he could do laundry and- oh god the chair! And the floor- fuck what was he going to do?!

‘Don’t panic, don’t panic. You’re not gonna get anything done if you freak out- Uhm. Change clothes first, yes. That makes sense.’ Even though he was telling himself not to freak out that
wasn’t working out well for him. He grabbed a change of clothes and a towel and ran as fast as he could to the nearest bathroom, something he should have done ten minutes earlier.

He showered quickly but his head was still spinning. How could one day have gone so wrong? And it was all his puny bladders fault. Not only had he messed things up career wise now MJ was going to know what a freak he was. He could feel another panic attack creeping up and he wanted to scream- when would he stop being so pathetic?! He’d brought this all on himself now he was gonna sit there and cry about it?! The shame and guilt all bubbled up into anger and self hatred; he’d had a chance to put a positive spin on the otherwise crappy day by spending some normal teen time with his best friend- something so simple and easy but yet he still managed to fuck it up.

Once he’d cleaned himself up and changed his clothes he had to figure out something to do with the soiled ones. There was a generic laundry hamper in their room that was emptied every day but he couldn’t put his wet things in there, Tony would see them. But he didn’t know where the laundry was or even who did it, he didn’t want some poor government cleaner to have to deal with his urine soaked clothing, especially not after a totally preventable accident. Damp underwear was one thing but completely peed pants was another. He did his best to rinse them in the shower and ring them out, but the material was odd and it was still dripping wet when he had to head back to his room. He still had the chair and the floor to take care of and he had no idea what to do.

As he made his way back to the room he immediately noticed the door was open when he had specifically shut it in case someone was to walk past and see the mess he’d made. It only meant one thing. Someone had either come by to check on him or they were still in his room, either way they would have seen the mess and he was going to have to face them. And he really, really didn’t want to. He just wanted to clean the mess up, go to sleep to try and forget about the terrible day he had and prepare for what was likely to be an even more terrible day tomorrow. He took a deep breath and started towards his room.

“There you are.” Tony said nonchalantly when Peter crept quietly into the room, wet clothes still in hand.

“I’m going to bed now. Sorry I didn’t mean to stay up so late.” Peter’s voice was barely above a whisper. He knew there was no way of getting out of this. To his dismay the floor had already been mopped up as well as the chair being dried as best as it could have been. He looked up at his Dad and his eyes filled with embarrassed, grateful tears. Tony was smiling softly, no hint of teasing on his face. “I’m sorry…”

“What happened bubby?” He said softly, making his way across the room to hug the tearful teenager for a second time that day.

“I… I’m just an idiot!” Peter cried out and started sobbing again, the days events as well as his most recent accident came crashing on top of him and his dad being so nice to him about it only made his guilt and self loathing worse.

Tony gently pried the wet clothing out of Peter’s hands and dumped them in the sink before he pulled the boy onto the bottom bunk of his bed and wrapped him in a bear hug. “Oh Pete. Shh, it’s alright. Just been a rough day huh?”

“Y-y-yeah and now m’cryin’ about it l-like a fucking baby.” Peter stuttered out between sobs trying to pull away from Tony but the man held him firm.

“Having accidents doesn’t make you a baby and neither does crying.” Tony rocked him gently as he spoke but Peter was still hellbent on beating himself up.
“Well i-it’s not an a-accident if it was preven-ventable. It was my own fault I should’ve just gone!”

Tony sighed. Though technically Peter’s logic was sound they both knew it wasn’t as simple as that. “Peter it’s not your fault you couldn’t say anything. We’re still working on that remember? You’re getting so much better at it-“

“I’m fifteen! I’m trying to become a government agent for Christ sakes I should be over this! Most p-people get over this in kindergarten!”

“But you’re not most people you’re you and I wouldn’t change you for anything.” Tony said seriously, talking slightly more sternly than he had been. He pulled Peter to face him, brushing the teens curls out of his eyes. “Everyone has things they struggle with Pete, things they need to work on. Look at me, I’m in my forties and I still can’t ask for help when I need it. It’s taken years for me to get comfortable enough around Bruce and Steve and the others enough for them to push me to ask when I need it. It’s a work in progress- we’re all works in progress. You’re trying, that’s what matters.”

Tony’s words hit home in the teen but it didn’t stop him hating everything about himself in that moment. “It’s not an excuse.”

“It’s not an excuse, it's an explanation. You have an anxiety disorder that you’re being treated for and one of the symptoms is not being able to excuse yourself. As much as you try and find reasons to pick yourself apart Pete, this can’t be one of them, this isn’t your fault. You’ve come along way since we met and you’re still progressing everyday. You’re gonna have shitty times- today being one of them, but that’s okay. We’ll get through them together. It’s not always gonna be like this, one day it’ll be easy-“

“I want that day to be now.” Peter sniffled wetly.

“Soon bubby, just cut yourself some slack in the meantime eh?” Tony wiped some of the tears off of Peter’s face and smiled sadly. “God I hate seeing you cry.”

“And I hate crying, I feel like such a little bi-“ Tony raised his eyebrows. “baby.”

“You’re not a baby.” Tony pulled him in for another hug and kissed the top of his head. “But you’re my baby.”

“Stop being nice to me!” Peter cried again. Tony was never that mushy and all the emotions in the room were too much for him; he was stuck between wanting to curl up in a ball and be babied by the man and punching him in the face.

“My very tired baby.” Tony rubbed his back and Peter was reminded about how exhausted he truly was, wanting to fall asleep against the man right there. Okay, maybe he didn't want to punch him.

“God tomorrow is gonna suck.” Peter sniffed.

“Let me take care of it Pete, please. You don’t deserve to get into trouble-“

“Dad you can’t. If I get special treatment or if you go and try and fix everything it’s just gonna make more problems. Everyone’s gonna treat me like a spoiled brat who doesn’t deserve to be there again-”

“I get that, but I don’t think this should count. You could have been sick or something, it’s not right Peter-“
“Just lemme deal with it. Please. It’ll be fine I’m just embarrassed that’s all. Having you go and yell at the Colonel on my behalf won’t help anything.”

“I wasn’t gonna yell.” Tony frowned. Did he really yell that much?

“I’ll be fine I’m just- I’m just tired and I want this day to be over with.” Peter said sadly, rubbing his eyes for effect. “I’m sorry you had to-“

“Nope. No apologies.” Tony ruffled his hair and stood up, preparing to deal with Peter’s clothes. “It’s my job.”

“But I can-“

“No buts. The only but you should be concerned with is getting your butt into bed.”

“Wow, that was such a dad joke. You should be ashamed.”

Tony shrugged. “Made you smile though didn’t it?”

Peter chuckled softly and pulled his blankets and pillows down onto the bottom bunk, making sure to set several alarms in the morning and asking his dad to do the same so that he didn’t end up being late again. As he was setting the alarms on his phone he saw a message from MJ on Skype. He hadn’t seen it until then but she had messaged him immediately after they hung up.

MJ: you could have just gone you know, I wouldn’t have said anything :p

He cringed and covered his face with the pillow, yelling into it.

“Did she see?” Tony asked having figured it out pretty easily.

“I don’t think so, but I she knew I had to go.”

“Yeah you’re not very subtle about it- Hey!” Peter threw a pillow at his head and pouted.

“I know I’m not!” He sniffed and turned over dramatically to face the wall and show that he was mad about the comment. “But you don’t gotta say it!”

“I’m sorry, bubba.” Tony walked over and brushed Peter’s hair off of his face. “Did she say anything mean?”

Peter shook his head.

“Well that’s good. I won’t have Happy take out a hit on her then.”

Peter huffed out an involuntary laugh. “G’night you dork.”

“Night nerd.”

Though Peter said goodnight, he stayed awake a little while longer, thinking about all the terrible decisions he’d made that day. Between MJ, Scott, Wilson and Tony he had a lot to think about. But eventually the exhaustion set in and he drifted off into an uneasy sleep. That night he had several nightmares revolving around the same topics, everything that could possibly go wrong doing so in many horrific and humiliating ways. He woke up countless times in the night to look at the clock and make sure he hadn’t slept in, but he managed to get a few hours of uninterrupted rest when Tony started playing music from his laptop. It was a habit Peter had been forced to break but he’d confided in Tony that he tended to need background noise in order to drown out the voices in his
head when he was struggling to sleep, and he was touched that the man had remembered. With the white noise playing he was finally able to relax enough to sleep.

Tony didn’t get much sleep, but he didn’t mind. He felt overwhelmingly guilty for all the teen had suffered the day before and he went on his phone to look through the S.H.I.E.L.D databases to find out who Peter had been assigned to, even though his son had begged him not to get involved. When he saw Sam Wilson pop up on his screen he nearly audibly exclaimed. It couldn’t be the same Sam Wilson...but it was. Fuck.

There was no way Fury would have allowed Peter to be put in that man’s group, it had to be a mistake. But it also couldn’t have been a coincidence, Scott and Peter in the same group- Sam’s group? What the hell was the man playing at?

There was no way Peter could have known who Sam was, not unless Scott had told him- though he wasn’t sure how much information he’d given Scott on the situation, Germany had been such a long time ago he doubted he would have given any names. But if Scott did somehow know and had shared that information with Peter, his son would have asked him a billion questions about it by now, surely. No, Tony surmised that Peter had no idea, Scott wouldn’t have been dumb enough to tell him. Had Sam been that harsh on his son the entire time as some sort of twisted revenge on him and Steve? Peter was always so excited about his classes, Tony hadn’t thought he was experiencing any issues, other than the incident that day...Tony didn’t have all the details. Maybe Peter hadn’t fully expressed how badly he needed to use the restroom and Sam had underestimated him, it was a mistake Tony had made himself. Even if he did have some kind of personal vendetta he’d have been an idiot to take it out on Peter so openly, where anyone could spot and make the connection. Then again why should he give that piece of shit the benefit of the doubt? He’d been dumb enough to oppose him the year before when Steve was being an imbecile.

Tony’s head was swimming, going back and forth all night. He didn’t know how he wanted to deal with the situation or whether or not he wanted to tell Steve. All he did know was he wanted Peter away from that man as quickly as possible, as he had no idea what he was capable of. If he acted too rashly however, it would probably backfire on him- either internally getting him into trouble with the higher ups or Peter getting angry with him for interrupting his training. Peter seemed happy in Wilson’s class with Scott, if he pulled him from training it would likely raise more questions; if his son didn’t know by now he certainly would after that. He sat up all night trying to think of the best way of going around the problem, without drawing too much attention to it. But he couldn’t risk someone putting his son in an uncomfortable situation; Peter certainly wouldn’t tell him if something was going on, he was too hellbent on proving himself... He sent an email to Fury asking to meet with him ASAP to discuss their options. All he did know was that he wasn’t going to mention anything else about it to his son, lest the boy start digging for more information and end up into trouble.

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The next morning, Peter didn’t wake up late thank god. He got up twenty minutes before his alarm, switching it off before it woke his dad up unnecessarily. Once he finished his morning duties he found that Tony wasn’t in the room with him. It struck him as odd but he didn’t have time to go and find him, he wanted to get out to the track as early as possible in hopes that he could avoid Wilson yelling at him in front of everyone; he’d prepared himself as best he could for the public ridicule he was about to face after skipping the man’s lecture the day before and he was going to take it on the chin, as much as it would suck.

When he got out there it was still dark outside which was kind of spooky but he tried to ignore the primal childish fear, telling himself the same stuff about manning up and being an agent. The track
was empty, even Wilson wasn’t out there yet, so he took the extra time to get some runtime in while he waited for the others to appear. He wasn’t alone for long however, a few of the other recruits seemed to get the same idea. There was a group of five of them all running before Wilson finally made an appearance.

“Parker. Can you come over here please?” Shit this was it. Peter slowed down and took a few deep breaths before walking over to the man, trying to calm himself and prepare for the screaming. At least there wasn’t many people around to witness it.

“Yes, sir.” He said quietly looking towards the man’s boots instead of up at him.

“Boy look at me when I’m talking to you.”

“Sorry, sir.” Peter adjusted his posture and cringed.

Wilson’s face didn’t bare it’s usual harshness to it and he wasn't looking at Peter with the same disdain as he usually did. He also spoke quietly, almost softly, Peter wasn’t sure if this was because he was trying to seem less threatening or that he didn’t want the other recruits to overhear their conversation. “I’m sorry for what happened yesterday, Parker.”

That took Peter by complete surprise. “I- you- sir?”

“I shouldn’t have said no when you asked. I thought you were just trying to get out of the lecture. I didn’t think you actually needed to leave since you’d already had time out of class. I shouldn’t have denied you that right and I’m sorry.” Wilson said earnestly, maintaining eye contact with Peter the entire time.

“I-it’s okay, Sir, I should’ve- it was my fault.” He was in shock he hadn’t prepared himself to respond to an apology.

“Kid, it’s not your fault.” Wilson sighed and rolled his eyes, looking more like his usual self. “Let’s just move on. It won’t happen again, okay?”

“O-okay. But, uhm, sir?”

“What is it?”

He knew he ought not try his luck but he couldn’t help himself, he had to know. “Did...did Mr. Stark put you up to this?”

Wilson’s face turned from a kind one back to his usual harsh sneer. “No. Why did you run and tell on me?”

“N-no! No sir I didn’t, h-he doesn’t know.” Peter lied but at least it seemed Wilson was telling the truth. That meant Tony hadn’t stuck his nose into Peter’s business which he was grateful for.

Wilson eyed him up and down suspiciously. “Well, let’s keep it that way. Back on the track Parker.”

“Yes sir.” Peter made no protests and ran back out onto the track feeling ten times better than he had the night before. Was he still dreaming or did the Colonel actually just apologise to him? He had to be sure and tell Tony before the man did go rushing in and mess things up. The issue had resolved itself, better than he’d even thought possible.

Whilst he was running he caught sight of Scott and the man waved to him. He waved back feeling
decidedly awkward given everything the man had witnessed the day before, but he tried to push those feelings down. Hopefully Scott wouldn’t hold that against him and if need be he’d explain his anxiety issues to the man. If he made an effort not to overthink things maybe they’d turn out okay, like they just had with Wilson. He told himself he’d bite the bullet and talk to Scott as soon as he got the chance which he assumed would be when they moved on to their core exercises.

However when they were called off of the track Wilson made a point of telling Scott to stay behind and keep running. “Not you Lang, we’ve got all morning!”

Peter frowned. What trouble had the man gotten himself into this time? A pang of guilt ran through him when he thought that it could possibly be due to what happened yesterday, maybe Scott had said something in his defence that got him into trouble. He hoped that wasn’t the case, it wasn’t like Wilson needed anymore reasons to hate Scott. But knowing his friends proclivity for back chat he highly doubted it.

When they’d finished their exercises and were being lead to the mess hall, Scott was still running. Wilson stayed out there barking orders at him and it was agent Johnson who lead them instead. Peter couldn’t bring himself to look at the woman, but when he caught her eye she smiled kindly at him. Somehow that only managed to make him feel worse but he appreciated it nonetheless.

He kept his head down and went to get breakfast, sneaking some food into his pocket much more successfully than Scott had. When he made his way over to their usual table Tony wasn’t there.

“Good morning Peter.” Steve yawned as he sat down, the others greeting him as well.

“Still no sleep, Cap?” Peter asked quietly. Ever since they’d been there Steve looked more and more tired. It was getting to the point where the man could barely keep his eyes open. Every time he asked someone about it they brushed him off. It was frustrating when everyone knew something that he didn’t but he tried not to get too frustrated. He was sure they had good reason but still, Steve was looking awful.

“Eh, last night wasn’t too bad.” Steve smiled only to be cut off by a yawn again.

Peter sighed, knowing by now he wasn’t going to get anywhere. Instead he turned his attention to where his Dad was. “Where’s Mr. Stark?”

“He had some kind of conference call this morning, he should be back in a little while.” Bruce said helpfully as Steve was still busy yawning.

“Okay.” Peter shrugged casually, not wanting to let on the panic he felt rising in his chest. He wanted to talk to him before Tony tried to get Wilson fired or something, he just hoped the call he was on wasn’t related to it. He tried to calm himself down, after all Tony had agreed to let him handle things on his own- but then again his dad often acted out behind his back because he thought he was doing the right thing for him.

He made an effort to make normal conversation with the rest of the group and Shuri came over to chat to him which was always nice. He really hoped he’d be able to have contact with the girl after they both returned home though the incident the night before had knocked his confidence when it came to Skype calls. It was nearing the end of breakfast and Tony still hadn’t returned. Peter was beginning to panic that he wouldn’t have a chance to talk to Tony at all but just as he was about to voice his concerns the man appeared through the doorway.

Peter ran up to him and pulled him aside almost knocking the man over. “Jesus Peter What-“
“Wilson apologised please don’t make a thing out of it!”

Tony’s face dropped when Peter used the man’s last name. Did he know who he was after all? “I wasn’t planning to.”

“Liar I know what you’re like- just please don’t, it’s all sorted now.”

“Peter it’s not just that. Do you know who that man is?”

‘Play dumb, play dumb don’t get Scott in trouble-‘ “Uh…a Colonel?”

Tony eyed Peter skeptically trying to determine whether or not he was genuinely confused or if he was lying. If Peter genuinely didn’t know he didn’t want to risk him finding out and potentially getting himself in the man’s bad books again. “Right. And he shouldn’t be abusing his power like that.”

“But he didn’t do anything! What you gonna do? Tell Fury he didn’t let me go to the bathroom one time? That’s hardly just cause to get him in any real trouble- besides he said he was sorry and that it won’t happen again. Don’t go all overboard-overprotective-Dad on this one.”

Peter was right Tony didn’t really have any significant evidence to show that he wasn’t safe in the man’s hands, or that he was treating him particularly badly. Still something didn’t feel right, he’d feel better if both Peter and Scott were placed in another group. But he didn’t want to draw Peter’s attention to who Sam was- he just…he just didn’t know. He was going to have to discuss matters with Steve he knew it, but the man was already so sleep deprived from sharing a room with Bucky that he’d probably over react as much as he had initially. It was too early in the morning to try and figure all of it out especially by himself. Why was being a parent so complicated? He wanted to just make a decision and get it over with without having to worry about any of the emotional repercussions. “Alright. I’ll leave it. I need to talk to Fury about your training anyway but I’ll leave that part out. But if anything else happens you tell me immediately, understand?”

“Uh huh-“ Peter nodded and went to walk away but Tony grabbed him.

“I mean it Peter this is important.”

“I said okay! Quit manhandling me, Jesus!” Peter brushed his hands off of him and looked around to see Shuri as well as a few of the others giving odd looks towards the pair. Peter walked away quickly so he didn’t give Tony the opportunity to respond. “I’ll see you at lunch, okay?”

His Dad was onto him he knew it. If he found out that he knew who Wilson was he’d figure out pretty soon that it was Scott who told him. Then it would get back to the higher ups that Scott was snooping around the offices and he’d be in heaps more trouble. He had to warn Scott that Tony was about to find out.

He made his way across the dining hall, prepared to go back outside and find Scott there but to his surprise he saw the man at the far end of the hall. He wasn’t alone, he was standing in the middle of three of the other recruits, he recognised as Miller, Thomas and Jacobs.

“If I catch you pulling that shit again, Lang, you’re dead meat-“

“John, John quit man the kids coming.” Thomas slapped at Jacobs chest gesturing back to Peter, which made the other three men turn to look at him.

“Scott?” Peter said nervously.
“Hey, Peter!” Scott called cheerily, his tone sounding total normal. The trio walked away quickly seizing their opportunity.

“What was that about?” Peter asked slowly as he eyed up the others as they walked down the hallway.

“Oh nothing. Come on P, we get to see you freaks use your powers today.” Scott grinned and ushered Peter to follow him. They had been told the day before that they’d be allowed to spar using their powers for the first time so everyone was pretty excited.

“That didn’t look like nothing- isn't that the same dude who bumped into you yesterday?”

“Is it? I don’t remember.” He shrugged nonchalantly but Peter wasn’t buying it. “Anyway, what did-“

“Scott tell me- what the hell was that? Were those guys threatening you?”

“Eh, a little-“

“Why?”

Scott sighed, knowing full well Peter wasn’t going to drop it. “We had a bit of a disagreement yesterday after you left.”

Peter blushed at his disappearance being mentioned. “Why? What happened?”

“When Wilson wouldn’t let you go I kind of kicked off.” Scott chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck. “Ended up getting myself written up. Some of my roomies didn’t take to kindly to the tone I took against a superior officer. Started popping off at me about discipline so I messed around with some of the pipes in the showers.”

Peter rolled his eyes and made an exasperated noise. “Scott for Christ sake! Do you really need to add enemies on your list of problems?”

“They’ve had it out for me since day one, they were just waiting for an excuse to jump on me. It’s not a big deal Pete, I can handle it.” Scott shrugged again.

The idea of his friend getting picked on because of an incident Peter had caused was horrible. He’d been having a tough enough time as it was anyway he didn’t want organised harassment to be added to the list. “But Scott they cant-“

“End of discussion small fry.” Scott kept his tone light but he used his Dad voice again which told Peter not to argue, though he desperately wanted to. That was the second time he’d seen something happen to Scott when he wasn’t there and it was starting to seem as though more was going on that he didn’t know about. “What did Wilson say to you this morning?”

“He said he was sorry for not letting me go when I asked- oh!” Peter remembered what he’d originally wanted to talk to Scott about. “Tony found out.”

“Found out what?”

“That Wilson’s our group leader. I-I acted like I don’t know who he is but I think he’s onto me-“

“Yeah, you can’t lie for shit.” Scott bit his lip obviously deep in thought.

“Hey.” Peter pouted indignantly.
“Wilson never officially wrote me up for hacking his computer. He’s just had me under his boot the entire time. After cussing him out yesterday I think he let on to a few of his favourite pupils that I was looking through some of the files in his office…”

“Well, were you?”

“Only the ones with my name in them. And Wilson’s. I don’t care about anyone else’s business… but by the way their acting something tells me they’ve got some secrets they wanna keep under wraps too. If your records clean why would you be worried about anyone else seeing it right?”

“Right. Christ, Scott.” Peter shook his head. He had no idea what to say, he’d never been in such a situation so he had no advice or frame of reference. Everything was getting more complicated and Peter was beginning to regret not just telling his Dad about all of it.

“It’s not something you need to worry about kid, you’ve got enough on your plate without worrying about me.”

“Well it is kinda worrying when I see three guys threatening you in the hallway, dude…”

“Peter seriously, it’s no big deal just a couple of punks tryna be teachers pet.” Scott shrugged again. “What’re you gonna do about Tony?”

“I don’t know yet, I can’t tell him I know who Wilson is cause you’ll get into trouble. And I’ve already lied and told him I don’t know so he’ll get mad at me.”

“Right.”

“So I guess if he brings it up again I’ll just play dumb and say I had no idea.”

“Smart move. You reckon he’s gonna try and get you pulled from G group?”

“I’m not sure, I hope not.”

“Why?” Scott seemed genuinely confused, Wilson had been nothing but a dick to both of them, why on earth would Peter wanna stay there?

“Cause then I wouldn’t be with you and I don’t feel like making new friends.” Peter said seriously which made Scott smile. “Besides, I’ve got a point to prove to him and everybody that I’m gonna be a great agent. We’ve only got a week left, we can handle it until then.”
The rest of the week progressed as normal, Peter’s training continued getting more and more vigorous by the day. He was finally being able to explore the extent of his powers, which was exciting, but it meant he was even more drained by the evening and often elected to nap after dinner for an hour or so before getting up again. The Skype calls with MJ continued, though Peter was sure not to consume any liquids before or after their calls and he started to include Ned; Ned often acting as a buffer if Peter needed to run to the restroom real quick. Though MJ and Peter tended to stay on call after Ned went to sleep and before Tony came in to badger Peter into doing the same.

“Your dad not back yet?” Peter asked quietly one night. He’d switched the lights off and climbed into his bed with his laptop, prepared to pretend to be asleep with a movie playing when Tony came in to check on him, so he could chat with the girl just that little bit longer.

“No, he was meant to be back the other day but one of his colleagues called and asked for an urgent meeting.” She said somewhat sadly. Despite their rocky relationship Peter could tell how much the girl cared for her father and it was obvious that she missed him. She also seemed especially jumpy, whenever her cat (that he had yet to see much to his disappointment) bumped something around in the other room she’d flinch which made it obvious she was still freaked out about being home alone. “He said he should be back by Friday.”

“What day is it?” Peter asked genuinely. He hadn’t kept track during his time at the compound as there was no need for him to and the days just seemed to blur together.

“You been in prison that long? Peter do you know what year it is? Blink twice if you need help.”

“Fine I’ll check my phone if you’re gonna be like that.” He huffed in faux anger, but he was still smiling. He just couldn’t seem to stop smiling when she was around.

“It’s Tuesday.” She laughed. “You’re gonna be home on Monday right?”
“Uh huh. I don’t think I’ll make it in time for school though, m’not sure.”

“Well, either way Ned’s gonna tackle you when he sees you. He hasn’t been able to hug anyone in a week I’m surprised the poor boy hasn’t exploded.” She rolled her eyes. Little did Peter know the girl intended to greet him in a very similar fashion.

“Yeah, he’s a hugger.” Peter grinned, that was his Ned.

“I’ve noticed. He went to hug me and almost caught my knee in his groin.”

“Jesus.” Peter spluttered before reaching over to grab his phone that was vibrating. He chuckled again and went to reply to the text that he’d gotten.

“I thought Ned went to bed?” MJ quirked an eyebrow.

“Huh? Oh yeah, I think he did. I’m texting Shuri.” Peter said flippantly, continuing to tap on his screen.

He failed to notice but MJ’s tone changed slightly. “Who’s Shuri?”

“This girl I met at the conference. She’s really into tech stuff too.” Peter went on to explain how they were going to be working on a project together soon. This time Peter did notice the girl’s expression sour slightly, but he naively assumed it was down to her not understanding the technical language he was using.

“You never mentioned her before.” MJ said flatly.

Peter shrugged not thinking anything of it. “You never asked.”

They continued chatting for a little while longer, though the conversation died down very quickly after that. Peter noticed but wasn’t sure why until MJ abruptly said:

“You know what, I’m pretty tired. It’s getting late, we should go to sleep.”

Peter thought it was odd considering it was barely nine. The pair had stayed up far later than that before and she’d had no qualms with it. “Everything alright?”

“Yeah. Fine. I’m just tired. I’ll see you later.”

Peter certainly noticed the change in her mood then. Everyday since they’d first Skyped she always said ‘I’ll see you tomorrow’ or something to that effect. Something that implied they’d call the next day. Maybe he was overthinking things. “Well, goodnight.”

“Night.” She hung up the call as soon as she said that, almost too quickly to the point where the Skype’s beep almost cut her off. Peter frowned thinking to himself how the girl had acted rather odd.

He went to use the bathroom before settling himself back down to sleep. Just as he rolled over to do so he shot MJ one last text.

Peter: You sure you’re okay?

He fell asleep before he got a reply, the exhaustion taking over before the anxiety could. Tony came in a couple hours later and woke him up since he was squirming in his sleep. When he got back from the bathroom he checked his phone and saw that she’d left him on read. His dad noticed the drop on his face when he looked at the screen.
“You okay?”

“Yeah.” Peter mumbled half mindedly. He was still half asleep but even in his semi conscious state he knew something was up. “I think I upset MJ.”

“Why, what did you say?”

“I don’t know.” He was genuinely clueless.

Tony smiled to himself when he had his back turned from Peter. His son still had a lot of learning to do when it came to the complexities of the mind of teenage girls, and he felt happy to be apart of that learning curve. It was one of the few big milestones he’d get to share with his son and he found it cute how naive the boy was; it was blatantly obvious to everyone but him that the two teens had a mutual crush on each other, but he had a feeling it would take a long time for Peter to accept that anyone would be interested in him romantically. Not that that was a problem in Tony’s book. Peter was still so young and innocent, something that was rare for a boy his age, and he was intent on keeping him that way for as long as possible. “Let’s worry about that in the morning, yeah?”

“Yeah I guess.” Peter yawned. His eyes were closing involuntarily, making that decision for him.

“Night bubs.”

Every morning since he’d been late that one time, Peter would go down to the track (which he could find all by himself now, even if he did sometimes head down the wrong corridor right at the end) extra early to meet the other recruits before Wilson got there. He’d usually take a bottle of water for Scott who was still receiving his extra punishment for his insolence that day Peter had to rush out of class; which included being made to do extra PT before and after hours, as well as often losing his break privileges as well. The man only made it worse for himself though, as every time he had the opportunity he’d backchat Wilson and it was usually in front of everyone else. No matter how much Peter tried to convince him to back down he just wouldn’t and he couldn’t understand why. Scott was such a nice guy and had made such an effort to make Peter feel less alone in that big scary place but he wouldn’t even help himself.

Each day then went by seemed to get worse for Scott thanks to his big mouth. It had become beyond personal now; Colonel Wilson wasn’t just making Scott do some extra runs every morning he was making him do extra everything. Every task he was made to repeat multiple times, he’d constantly pair him against people three times his size and experience during sparring sessions, he’d even been punishing Scott by not letting him eat breakfast or dinner so the man was surviving on lunch and snacks alone half the time. He always came up with an excuse as to why Scott was being made to skip meals, being held back for ‘one to one’ training, but Peter knew it was all bullshit to keep himself from getting flagged up on the system for abuse or misconduct. Peter had taken to sneaking off to the blue zone in the evenings and giving the man food since he’d been barred from using the vending machines after one of Wilson’s suck ups said he caught Scott ‘tampering with them’.

The harassment from the other recruits had escalated too. There wasn’t anything super alarming that Peter witnessed, but he did notice how there would be a chorus of laughter every time Scott slipped up or did something wrong. The people he was paired with during sparring sessions would often push him just a little too far for Peter’s liking. Never breaking the rules (which boiled down to no lasting bodily harm, such as bruising, drawing blood ect) but they certainly pushed the envelope more and more each time. The shoving or tripping in the mess hall became a common occurrence too, everyday Peter saw the same group of men make Scott drop his tray. It was getting to the point that Peter didn’t feel comfortable saying goodbye to Scott anymore, but every time he voiced that concern he would laugh or shrug him off. And he certainly wouldn’t let Peter say
anything to them lest the teen get himself into trouble, so he felt pretty helpless. It didn’t help that the same group seemed to be Wilson’s personal little pets.

It had all degenerated so quickly and Peter didn’t understand why or how to stop it. He knew there must be more going on that he didn’t know about, but Scott for the life of him would not tell him. He was getting seriously concerned and he kept threatening to Scott that if it escalated he’d be forced to tell his dad what was going on and that was the only thing that seemed to deter his behaviour. He always managed to convince Peter not to but he kept getting a nagging feeling that something just was not right.

When Peter made it out to the track that morning Scott was already dripping with sweat, looking exhausted and he was ready by the side lines with the usual bottle of water. The man stumbled over to him immediately and he looked more than just physically exhausted from the run.

“Thanks, kid.” Scott panted as he pouted the cool liquid not only down his throat but all over his face as well.

“You okay?” Peter eyed him up and down suspiciously. He had massive bags under his eyes. He had since they’d met and Peter assumed that he didn’t sleep well from the stress of being away from his family and having to sleep in an unfamiliar place, which he understood. But that morning they were even more pronounced.

“Yeah, I’m good.” Scott smiled though it looked out of place on his face for some reason Peter couldn’t figure out.

He didn’t have time to dwell on it though as Wilson came out earlier than usual and they all began running again. This time however, the colonel allowed Scott to sit out and recuperate. It seemed as though the man had finally taken pity on him or deemed that he’d received enough punishment for calling him something that Scott wouldn’t repeat to Peter’s innocent ears. Every time Peter glanced over to the two, they were talking which he found to be extremely odd as Wilson seemed to try and ignore Scott’s existence as much as possible when he wasn’t trying to make his life hell directly.

The conversation didn’t seem offensive either which he found doubly odd. Peter tried to use his super hearing to listen in but he was just a little too far away and by the time he’d circle round the track Wilson and Scott had the forethought to cease their conversation when he was within earshot. When they moved on to their warm ups Scott rejoined the group but he deliberately went to a spot far from Peter which made the boy frown. He’d usually line up next to him so they could chatter in between exercises. Was it something he said? He’d barely said two words to him that morning, so that didn’t make sense.

When they were led to the mess hall Scott seemed to hang back and avoid him again, in favour of talking to the colonel so Peter made a point of using the bathroom nearest their location and coming back in time for their private conversation to wrap up. He grabbed Scott as the man went to head into the canteen once Wilson was out of view. “Hey what gives? Why're you avoiding me?”

“Jesus kid! We need to get you a bell or something!” Scott jumped initially as he hadn’t heard Peter approach. Peter had a knack for that, he often found people jumped when he walked up behind them, his footsteps were silent since the bite. It was rather amusing to see people, especially the Avengers and especially Tony, jump when they saw him. Well it wasn’t amusing that time Nat socked him in the jaw- but he hadn’t even done it on purpose that time. Once Scott had recovered he addressed the boy’s question. “I’m not avoiding you kid I just knew you’d ask questions and I couldn't have you do that in front of Wilson.”

“Why? What kind of questions? What were you guys talking about? Was it about the report he
keeps threatening you with? Did those guys do something to you? Is it something to do with Steve and D-Tony?” Peter blurted out practically all in one breath.

“Just like that.” Scott chuckled and started walking again. He didn’t draw attention to what Peter almost called Tony, he’d figured out their relationship on his own. It wasn’t rocket science. “It’s nothing to worry about.”

“So... Soo... Soo... Soo... tell me then?” Peter pried. He knew he sounded like an annoying child but he was worried. “Is it about that report he’s been threatening you with?”

“What? No, no nothing like that. He’s just letting me off the early morning stuff now, says I’ve learnt my lesson since we...had a talk last night. It’s really nothing to worry about.”

The way Scott mentioned having a talk with their superior ranking officer was another red flag that caused a lot of questions to pop up in Peter’s mind but he elected to ignore them. For now. He’d ask them later when Scott’s guard was down because clearly there was a lot more going on behind the man’s words and Peter was not about to drop it. “Well, have you?”

“Have I what?” Scott said confusedly through a yawn.

“Learnt your lesson?” Peter assumed said lesson was referring to the man’s constant backchat and issues with authority.

“Oh. Yeah, sorry I’m a little out of it this morning. Go get some breakfast kid I’ll see you in a bit.” Scott clapped him on the shoulder and pointed over to where his family were sitting before moving to get his own tray. Peter found it suspicious how the man was brushing him off but he was instantly distracted by something else going on at his own table.

Tony looked upset. Not angry, stoic upset like usual but, kinda sad? Peter had never really seen that expression before and he wasn’t sitting in his usual seat. He was sitting next to Steve who was whispering to him about something Peter strained to hear. As soon as he approached the table the pair ceased their conversation, making it abundantly clear to Peter that they were talking about him. “Uh, hi?”

“Hiya, Sport.” Steve said cheerily, a little too cheerily. He was considerably more energetic than he had been the rest of the week, where Peter had become accustomed to the man yawning every five seconds and nodding off in the middle of conversation. His high energy seemed too forced to be real and it only made Peter more skeptical.

Tony simply nodded to him in ways of a greeting and moved to his usual spot at the table, next to his son but avoided eye contact. No one else greeted him even Thor which was especially suspect. Instead they were all focused on their own meals, not speaking a word to one another. What was with everyone this morning?

“Do I smell or something?” Peter eventually asked exasperatedly after at least two minutes of silent chewing; causing all the adults around the table to look at him quizzically.

Of course, Thor took that a bit too literally and leant over the table, taking a deep inhale through his nose before sitting back down. “Not any worse than usual, my friend.”

Steve put his head in his hands and Tony rolled his eyes. Clint and Bruce tried their best to remain neutral but were clearly trying not to laugh where as Nat allowed herself to laugh without abandon.

“Wow Thor, thanks.” Peter said dryly, though a little voice in the back of his head took note of that comment to add to the things he needed to be anxious about later; the list was getting rather long
for it being so early in the morning. He then turned back to his original point. “Anyway! What’s the matter with everyone today? You’re all acting weird.”

Tony sighed and went to open his mouth but Steve kicked him under the table. Very obviously, even though the blond looked in a random direction to try and cover his tracks from Peter. “What the fuck Rogers?!”

“What?” Steve said innocently.

“That fucking hurt with your freaky super strength, god ow!” Tony reached under the table to run his shin and Peter was even more freaked out.

“Okay what the hell is going on?”

“Language.” Tony said flippantly as he took a sip of coffee, still refusing to meet Peter’s eye.

“You just said fuck twice!”

“Language!” Steve and Tony said in unison, with different levels of fury, and the latter clipped Peter around the ear. “And I’m an adult. You’re a child.”

Peter let out a noise of frustration and rubbed the side of his head. God he hated it when Tony pulled that card, it reminded him of the Dad in Matilda. “Only when it suits you I am, now tell me what’s going on!”

That comment got Tony’s attention and the man turned to look at him, eyes blazing but a calm look of intrigue on his face. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Don’t nitpick so you can change the subject!” Peter pouted and pushed his food away from him defiantly, to show he meant business when really it made him look like a toddler.

“Tony just tell him.” Clint sighed and Bruce nodded in agreement since his mouth was full of Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

“Don’t you dare.” Steve growled giving Tony a warning look.

“Tell me what?!” Peter yelled in frustration. It was enough that Scott was hiding something he didn’t need the rest of his companions doing the same.

“We have to go on a mission. Today.” Tony sighed and Steve put his head in his hands. Though he had initially agreed with the blond to not tell him he could tell that Peter was becoming agitated and he wanted to avoid

Peter paused for a moment to let that sink in. “By us I assume I’m not included and that’s why this is a bad thing.”

“Correct. I’ve been trying to get out of it but-“

“It’s cool.” Peter said calmly and everyone gave him a look of shock as though they expected him to kick off. He felt rather smug that he’d defied their expectations by acting mature.

“You’re not upset?” Steve asked cautiously.

“Nah, you guys go on missions all the time without me what’s the big deal?”
“Because we’d be leaving you alone in an unfamiliar place.” Tony said bluntly. His face remained impartial but his eyes were darting around Peter’s face as though he was looking for any signs that the child was lying or panicking, but he found none. Peter really did seem to be taking the news well, when he and Steve had both expected some kind of meltdown; whether that he because Peter was anxious about being alone or angry about being left behind and go on his usual rant about not being a real Avenger.

They’d been arguing all morning about how they’d approach the subject, Steve opting for not telling him at all. Just disappearing and letting T’Challa or Bucky inform him after they’d left. He knew that Peter wouldn’t have a tantrum with them but Tony thought the idea was cruel. He also didn’t want to leave without saying goodbye because who knows? Their mission could go wrong and they might not come back for a while, he didn’t want Peter’s last memory of him be him passed out in his bunk. Even though he fancied himself a pretty sleeper- that wasn’t the point. The point was he wasn’t about to let Peter turn up to lunch and be met with an empty table just to avoid a fussy teenager. Not when it could be avoided, he deserved ample warning when they could provide it. He felt guilty enough the days he had to cut lab sessions short for sudden meetings, he wasn’t about to be a deadbeat Dad like Howard. It wasn’t right.

Peter smirked at the worried look he was getting. It sounded like Tony was suffering more separation anxiety than he was. “Look around Mr. Stark, I’m hardly alone. How long for?”

“Should just be overnight. That’s why Steve didn’t want to tell you, he said we should be back before you woke up-“ Steve kicked Tony under the table again making it clear he didn’t enjoy getting ratted out and the genius groaned. “Kick me one more time Spangles, see what happens!”

“I’ll be fine for one night.” Peter laughed. “I’m not a baby.”

“We know kid, you remind us twenty times a day. God forbid anyone forget you’re fifteen.” Clint rolled his eyes as he swirled his coffee in a cup, going to take a sip before he spat it back into his cup. This time it was his turn to get kicked under the table. “Ow!”

“Why don’t you shout it out a little louder, Barton, so the whole compound can hear you? Give them his date of birth and his blood type while you’re at it!” Tony hissed and turned back to Peter. “We’re leaving at noon but we’ll be back by tomorrow morning. If not all of us, I will.”

“Ohay.” Peter shrugged nonchalantly. “It’s no big deal if you aren’t.”

Tony frowned. Of course he hadn’t wanted Peter to be beside himself upset but he had thought there would be some kind of emotive response. He’d never left the child alone for a night, always sending him to stay with Ned or other agents that Peter was comfortable with like the Maximoff twins, even having Happy stay over one time. The idea of leaving Peter alone for an entire day around strangers was enough to make his arc reactor work overtime. He’d expected Peter to at least mirror his own anxieties but he boy barely reacted, which made him feel stupid for feeling that way. Yes he was being overprotective but he couldn’t help it. “I will be.”

“Okay.” Peter shrugged again. He wasn’t particularly upset about the prospect of an evening to himself. Though Tony tried his best not to be intrusive, it would be nice to have the space to himself without having to be courteous to other people and he could stay on call with MJ as long as he wanted...given the girl wasn’t still in a weird mood of course. Besides it was an opportunity to show the rest of the team that he was mature, then maybe he’d be able to spend nights alone back at the tower which in turn would give him some unsupervised time in the lab...

“And Bucky will be here if you need anything, you know where our room is.” Steve interjected. It seemed he was just as anxious about leaving the teen as Tony was.
Peter nodded. Though he had yet to see the man he knew The Winter Soldier was also at the compound for training, he just preferred his privacy. From what he could gather Bucky wasn’t a fan of the loud noises and people in the cafeteria, which Peter himself could totally understand. His and Steve’s room was also the furthest away from everyone else’s and Peter had a pretty good idea why; he wasn’t stupid and it certainly didn’t take a genius to figure it out. He’d heard the comments Tony had made to Steve and he was aware of Bucky’s PTSD. The man clearly suffered from night terrors and that’s why Steve had been so tired. He felt bad for the man and he certainly wouldn’t be bothering him unnecessarily. He’d met Bucky a few times since the Germany incident (where the soldier had apologised profusely about the entire affair, reacting similarly to Steve just with less emotion) and the man had always been exceedingly nice to him so he’d be sure to return the favour and not bother him.

“And you can call us. We’ll have our phones on us.” Steve continued listing all of Peter’s options for help or sources of comfort, including listing all of the acquaintances he’d made.

“Uh huh, and the emergency numbers are on the fridge and I’ll tell the babysitter to leave the hall light on.” Peter smirked. Steve’s obvious concern was very touching but he was definitely going overboard, even Tony was rolling his eyes. “I’ll be fine, I promise.”

Before breakfast was over all over the Avengers left to go to their own rooms to get ready for the mission they had ahead and Peter took the opportunity to go with them; mostly because he wanted to say a proper goodbye to his Dad beforehand.

“Are you sure you’re gonna be okay?” Tony said worriedly, knowing Peter would be more honest now that they were alone (even if the boy tried to lie, which he so often did, he was terrible at it and Tony would be able to pressure him into telling the truth when they were by themselves). Though he was desperately trying not to show it, he really didn’t want to leave without Peter. He didn’t want to leave his boy in the hands of people he barely knew. Of course he knew his son was safe from harm but Peter also had anxiety issues, refused to ask anyone for any kind of help and he wasn’t in the company of people who would know what signs to look out for should Peter need said help. He knew full well if something happened when he wasn’t there Peter wouldn’t go to anyone about it and he’d have to deal with it when he came back. What if he had a nightmare or a panic attack or an accident or he got sick-

‘Dammit Stark get ahold of yourself. It’s less than twenty four hours, he’ll be fine. He’s a big boy.’ Tony shook his head. ‘But he’s our boy- and he can barely reach the top shelf in the fridge!’

“Uh huh, like you said you’ll be back by tomorrow.” Peter smiled confidently, interrupting Tony’s internal debate. He could sense how anxious his Dad was and he wanted to ease his mind. “But how come they didn’t send someone else if they knew you guys were in training?”

“It’s unfinished Avengers business. Nothing major just a few loose ends that need to be tied.”

Peter chuckled again. Trust Tony to be as cryptic and vague as possible. “You could just say classified.”

The man looked up briefly from the bag he was packing. “Classified.”

Peter rolled his eyes and continued to watch as the man busied himself around the room packing things. He took the time to check his phone again, feeling disgruntled when MJ still hadn’t replied to him. For a moment when she saw he was online Peter saw he typing, but after a few minutes the three little dots disappeared again. Should he text her again to see what was up? Was she mad at him for something? It wasn’t like MJ to be anything but direct so the behaviour was so out of character it was worrying. But he didn’t have time to think about that now, he would just try and
call the girl later. It was almost time for him to head back to the blue zone but he could tell his Dad wanted him to linger as long as possible, even if the man would never come out and say it.

“You better start heading back bud, don’t want you to be late.” Tony said after a moment of pretending to double check everything, somewhat sadly.

“I know. Well- have fun! Bring me back a memento.” Peter jumped down from his perch on his bunk to hug him.

His comment made Tony chuckle. “It’s not the kind of place you’ll want knickknacks from, bubs.”

“A postcard then.” Peter shrugged before squeezing the man tightly. “Stay safe.”

“As always.” Tony hugged him back leaning his chin on top of the boy’s wild hair. They lingered in the hug just a second longer than usual because he just didn’t want to let go. What was it about leaving his kid behind that made saying goodbye so difficult? It wasn’t like he was never gonna see him again. Thoughts like that made Tony’s mind say ‘what if’; what if he didn’t come back, what if this was the last hug and he just didn’t know it yet- but he was quick to push those out of his mind. They made him feel sick but at his age though life experience, he’d developed the necessary coping skills to deal with such anxious thoughts, whereas Peter didn’t. That’s why he was glad that Peter didn’t seem to be nearly as anxious as he felt. “I’ll see you tomorrow, bubby. You call if you need anything, alright?”

“I will.” Peter smiled and the pair walked out of the room, splitting off and going in separate directions down the hallway. Tony tried to ignore the dull ache in his chest he felt when he had to turn his back on Peter, but just as he did he heard the boy call after him. “Wait, Dad!”

“What?” Tony raised his eyebrows and turned around to see the kid bounding down the hallway after him. He was half expecting Peter to ask for another hug.

“Toothbrush.” Pete held up the green and white piece of plastic.

“Oh.” Tony blinked and grabbed said item from him. He was a little shocked he’d forgotten such an important and generic thing but he guessed his mind had been elsewhere. He couldn’t help but feel the tiniest bit of disappointment that Peter hadn’t in fact just been wanting a little more attention. “Thanks.”

He went to turn away again after tossing the object in his bag but Peter grabbed him before he could, nearly tackling him in another hug. Peter really needed to learn to control his super strength when he was excited, he damn near winded him. But Tony didn’t mind one bit. “I love you, Dad.”

“I love you too.” Tony would never dare admit it but he was suddenly slightly misty eyed. Damn they needed to dust these hallways better. Fuck, no matter how many times he heard those words they still set off his dust mite allergies.

As quickly as Peter had appeared he was gone again, breaking away from the hug and sprinting down the hallway. “I’ll see you tomorrow- good luck!”

“See you tomorrow, kiddo.” Tony smiled despite himself. He added one last comment with a wink, intending it to be a joke. “And stay out of trouble!”

Little did he know his jokey comment with no real bite to it should have been a genuine threat, because unfortunately Peter didn’t follow his advice. He was a good kid he had no worries about the boy behaving himself in his absence, especially in not such a short amount of time. And Peter hadn’t intended to break the man’s trust in him, but things happen. Especially in a place full of
special agents and mutants in a confined space—some of which had certain grudges. Unbeknownst to them their time apart would go anything but smoothly; But they’d both realise that later.
Okay so this chapter is a clusterfuck. Again it didn’t go how I wanted but I’m low-key over the whole training thing and I wanna get on with the storyline that I have set up for the next four or five chapters or so (which feature both fluff but some darker stuff-then I plan to get back to the more cutesy light hearted stuff). Sooo yeah. All will be revealed in the next chapter regarding what’s been going on with Scott behind the scenes.

I’m posting this at almost five in the morning so please forgive the lack of proof reading, I’m just tryna get on a better update schedule XD

The rest of the day went smoothly. Well, smoothish. Up until lunch anyway, that’s when Peter’s calm demeanour started to unravel and unbeknownst to him that would soon cause all hell to break loose. Once Peter returned to his group and he caught up with Scott, he couldn’t help but notice the man was acting odd still and not in the same way as he had before. Him and Wilson were exchanging glances often, but it was more than that. Now Scott seemed really jumpy and skittish, especially when other recruits passed by him so Peter decided their break would be the right time to start asking those questions he had earlier.

Scott however, had preempted this. He already had lined up a list of things to talk to Peter about to try and throw him off, theoretical conundrums about scientific topics he knew the boy found interesting. But it didn’t work to throw him off the scent.

“So, what happened last night for you and Wilson to have this little chat?”

“Oh, you know.” Scott said nonchalantly and shrugged his shoulders. Then for a moment there was an uncomfortable silence as Peter waited for him to continue and Scott waited for Peter to move on. Neither of those two things happened.

“No. I don’t know.” Peter prompted and crossed his arms, trying to do his best serious-Stark impression. He was getting pretty good at it too, it seemed, as Scott shuffled uncomfortably- Tony really was a good mentor. The teen made it clear he wasn’t getting out of it.

“Look, it’s not a big deal okay? I was just...exhausted after all the extra work outs and stuff, so I went to talk to him and he let me off.” Scott rambled but his eyes darted around and he refused to look at Peter directly.
“That’s crap and you know it.” Peter deadpanned. He wasn’t going to beat around the bush, his experience with Steve trying to hide stuff from him earlier that day had let him know that being direct was the best way to go. He didn’t want to play games anymore, something had been going on all week and he was sick of seeing Scott deteriorate more and more. That and from what he’d witnessed of Wilson’s character the man was less than understanding. Peter doubted that Scott had just had a friendly talk with the guy and the whole thing had blown over. Sure, he had apologised to Peter after the embarrassing endeavour the week before but that was different. Peter hadn’t been deliberately antagonising the Colonel by undermining him and challenging him at any given opportunity. In his mind it was out on the question that the pair had a reasonable, constructive conversation, they were both too hot headed. “What really happened, Scott?”

The man sighed and looked off into the distance as though he was coming to terms with the fact that he couldn’t keep his secrets for much longer. Peter was persistent, annoyingly so, but he couldn’t blame the kid for being curious. Obviously it was fishy that overnight he’d gone from being locked in a bullfight with his superior officer and being worked near to death, to being rather chummy with him the very next day. “I backed down. I gave up fighting him, turns out he’s not the asshole, I am.”

Peter seemed satisfied with that vague, disingenuous answer initially. He hadn’t picked up on the obvious signs of deception, not yet. “Well, yeah you were making life difficult for yourself but he’s still an asshole too. Do you not remember that dude breaking his leg and he made a joke out of it? Or him threatening you with that report thing? Or him almost making me pee my pants?”

“Some of his actions are somewhat...unethical I agree. It’s just not as bad as I thought it was.” Scott shrugged and made his way over to the water fountain, with Peter following closely behind, but he whipped his head around at the last example Peter gave, giving the boy one of the most serious looks he’d ever given him. “Though that last one is unforgivable and I made a point of that.”

“Unethical? They were damn right immoral Scott and you know it!” Peter gawked. He was defending Wilson now? The man who had single handedly pushed him to near physical exhaustion as well as plenty of psychological distress simultaneously, for eleven days- as well as practically encouraging the other recruits to bully Scott or at the very least turning a blind eye to it, was not in their bad books anymore? What the hell had the two talked about for Scott to make such a drastic turn around in one night?

“What was immoral was me reading his file in the first place, we started off on a bad foot.”

“But you said that was an accident.” Peter said suspiciously, recalling the story of the events that Scott had told him. How Scott had only broken into the room in the first place to search how long he would be kept at the facility; he hadn’t been graced with any information as to why or where he
was let alone when he would be allowed to go home. He had just wanted to know when he’d be allowed to see his little girl again and when he’d typed his name into the database, one of the first files that popped up was the Germany report, then Sam’s name and his curiosity had peaked despite himself and well... Peter knew what happened after that. Scott had inadvertently made himself an enemy.

“It was. But me being a dick to try and keep the attention off of you only made me a target for other things.” Scott cut himself off again and it finally clicked into place in Peter’s mind why Scott had been making things so hard for himself. “So we talked it out and now everything’s... just peachy.”

It took a minute for the dots to connect in Peter’s head. “Wait so you...you kept getting yourself in trouble so he wouldn’t pick on me..?”

“Well, duh.” Scott chuckled but his face softened when he saw Peter’s horrified expression. “Why else did you think I was doing it?”

“I don’t know! I thought it was personal because of the file thing- or you just have a combative personality- I don’t know!”

“I mean those are both true. But after you ran out that day I knew he’d likely give you a hard time to make an example of you and I wasn’t about to let that happen. So, I became a thorn in his side to keep him occupied. I figured; If he thought you ignoring him was disrespectful when you just had to use the damn bathroom and he was the one ignoring you - I’d show him what true disrespect was.” Scott looked as though he was doing some self reflection for a moment but he soon shook it off, resuming his usually quirky smile. “But it doesn’t matter now anyway kid, I took care of it.”

Peter’s head was still spinning from the realisation that all of the turmoil his friend had been enduring was due to him. If he was better at standing up for himself Scott would never have felt the need to protect him. He hung his head ashamedly as the guilt washed over him. “I’m sorry.”

Scott’s face fell and he put a hand on Peter’s shoulder. “Hey, hey, it’s not a big deal Pete.”

“Quit saying that, it is a big deal!” Peter sniffed. “Why last night? Why not last w-week or Friday? Something must’ve happened S-Scott. And what do you mean you took care of it? What’s it?”

Scott frowned again. He hadn’t needed to know Peter long to know that when he stuttered it was a
bad sign. He didn’t want to reveal the whole story to him, he’d been warned against it, but it was obvious that the teenager was working himself up and Scott felt he deserved an answer. “I…Well…”

The way Scott paused only made Peter more anxious. In the entire time he’d known him the man had never run out of things to say, so for him not to be able to find the right words set off that anxious feeling in his stomach.

“In you come ladies!” Wilson could be heard screaming at the other end of the hallway.

“No not now! Scott what were you gonna-“

“Come on kid, we can talk later.” Scott breathed a sigh of relief having been saved by the bell. Perfect timing. Ugh.

They were ushered into their classroom where Scott managed to evade Peter’s questioning again. That twisty, sick feeling in the kids stomach only intensified every time Scott and Wilson exchanged glances. The weirdest part was that Scott was made to sit out from the group sparring exercises, for no discernible reason, at least none that Peter knew of. Something sketchy was going on he knew it, nothing about the story Scott had told him made sense and now he was not only being allowed to cease his extra punishment but he wasn’t even made to interact with the other recruits? It was then Peter noticed the looks Scott was getting, not only from Wilson but a few of the other recruits too. He saw three of them in particular giving Scott the evil eye whenever the man so much as shifted in his seat and of course it was the usual culprits; Miller, Thomas and Jacobs. God dammit. Had Wilson put Scott into some kind of protective custody or something to keep him away from those assholes? Or was it the other way around…What the hell had gone on last night? Peter had no idea but he was starting to form his own plot line in his head of the possibilities…as if he didn’t have enough things to think about.

There was no doubt about it, the three other recruits were definitely giving Scott dirty looks and the man was returning them. There was no denying it. Peter couldn’t help but notice them even from all the way across the room.

Unfortunately Peter noticed this whilst he was meant to be deflecting a punch from private Perry and as a result he failed to do so. He made a mistake very similar to that Bruce made the day he went Hulk and Peter discovered the handy filtration system in his suit. He didn’t have time to shudder at the memory as he turned his head back a split second too late and Perry’s fist connected with his left eye. Ow.
He fell flat on his ass for the second time since he’d been at the compound though this one was much less comedic, as it was combined with a blinding pain spanning across the side of his face. His sparring patterned immediately dropped to the floor beside him. “Shit! Parker you okay? I’m so sorry!”

“I-it’s okay! It’s my fault I wasn’t paying- ow- attention.” Peter tried to reassure him but it was difficult when there were three of him, his vision having blurred, he wasn’t sure which Perry he was meant to be looking at. “Nice hook you got there.”

“I thought you would’ve blocked it before I’m so-“

“Move it, Perry.” Wilson had strode across the room pulling the private out of the way and crouching down next to Peter. He looped an arm under him and pulled him up. “Up you get, kid, you’re alright. Stand up.”

Peter did, albeit slightly wobbly. His head was spinning and he had a gross metallic taste in his mouth. Instinctively he flinched away from Wilson’s touch though, despite the punch he still had his wits about him and he didn’t trust the man. Especially not after the shadiness he’d witnessed going on between him and Scott. If Peter had noticed the threatening, hate filled looks three of his group members were giving Scott the colonel no doubt had; especially given he and Scott were also looking at each other constantly and the man wasn’t doing anything about it.

Wilson ignored his physical protests though and lead the boy over to a bench, pushing him down onto it. Wilson hissed when he saw the state of Peter’s face which made the teen worried about how bad it was, if even the stone faced man had a visible reaction. “Move your hand, Parker. Johnson, you got him?”

“Yeah.” She rolled her eyes tiredly at the man as she was already heading over there with a rudimentary first aid kit. Wilson backed off, much to Peter’s relief as the man’s presence so close to him was making his fight or flight kick in, to allow Johnson to get a closer look at Peter’s face. “Oo, yep. That’s a shiner.”

“Great.” Peter grumbled as he took the ice pack she held out to him. The pain was already fading to an ache, he just hoped that his accelerated healing would have the bruise gone before Tony saw or his dad would flip. Oh wait...his dad wasn’t going to be back until tomorrow…

As the realisation hit him Peter sunk down further in his chair, suddenly feeling really upset about something he’d been totally fine with not hours before. “How bad is it?”
“If I had a mirror I’d show you. It’s going a pretty shade of purple already, nice work Perry!” She called over with a smirk but the young soldier didn’t react favourably. He looked more guilty than ever and so did Peter, it wasn’t his fault. It was Wilson’s and Scott’s for that matter for being so...weird. He knew ultimately it was his own fault though, he’d broken concentration one of the most important things not to do in during a sparring session, especially with highly skilled agents who in this case had super powers.

Johnson flashed a torch in his eye and got him to look side to side, then went through the basic concussion questions that Peter knew off by heart from Bruce. “You’ll live. But how about you just sit out on this one huh?”

Peter nodded. He was too preoccupied to focus on sparring in the first place and now he had a headache. And he was more than a little embarrassed; he’d made a rookie mistake that ended in him getting punched and he’d even heard a couple of people snickering when Wilson had to pick him off the ground. He wasn’t in the mood to join back in with the class, it was easy stuff anyway. Training Wheels back home was a much more worthy opponent and at least it would have the forethought not to punch him when he wasn’t looking. So, Peter sat out for the rest of the session and to his surprise agent Johnson sat with him. Since the incident where she’d called him out on his bloody plan to get out of the lecture and go to the bathroom he’d avoided her like the plague; she could see right through him and he didn’t much care for it, not from someone he barely knew. He already knew he couldn’t trust everyone in that facility, as safe as it was, Wilson showed him that so he was very wary of the woman. Of course she had been nothing but nice to him, even going so far to being especially lenient on him, which he assumed was due to his age. She seemed to have a soft spot for him but he was too embarrassed to face her ever since his little pee emergency. He didn’t need another person who viewed him like a baby, even if that’s how he had acted, he was trying to be a professional. Though having someone sit with him when he wasn’t feeling his best wasn’t the worst thing in the world, he had to admit, especially when he was suddenly feeling very, very homesick…

“So, what’s up with you today? You’re usually on the ball all the time, it’s not like you to slip up like that.” Johnson asked though she didn’t make eye contact, she continued to stare off at the other recruits which Peter was grateful for. It made everything less awkward.

“I uh, I don’t k-know.” Peter shrugged. He didn’t exactly feel like opening up in that moment and he knew nothing he could say would be an excuse for his mistake. If he wanted to be an agent he knew a bad day or other outside variables couldn’t impact on his ability to fight; how could he be an Avenger if he’d get distracted easily and possibly endanger himself or others? It was too risky.

“Distracted ‘cause you’re team’s off galavanting without you?”
“No.” Peter said a little too quickly. The reminder that he was essentially alone wasn’t welcomed in the boy’s already anxious mind. He had felt fine about them leaving before, he’d even thought his dad was being a little silly worrying so much but now he had changed his mind. He suddenly felt very small and very alone in such a big place. Now his head hurt and he just wanted to see his family. He mentally kicked himself as he realised he’d forgotten to say a proper goodbye to everyone other than Tony…god he was such a baby. He was never going to make it as an agent. He wasn’t cut out for this.

The woman seemed to read his mind. “It’s okay to have off days kid. Everyone has them.”

Peter simply nodded in response then occupied himself by scuffing his shoe against the floor instead of trying to hold a conversation. His mind was swimming between Scott’s odd behaviour to the sudden onset of crippling anxiety he was feeling with Tony being gone and now his brain decided to remind him that even things back home were going wrong; he’d somehow managed to upset one of his only two friends. Why now? Of course it had to be now, when would his brain ever give him a break? His day was going from bad to weird to worse.

He continuously tried to catch Scott’s eye but the man was equally persistent in dodging it and Peter was starting to get irritated. There was no need for Scott to cut him out like that, he hadn’t done anything wrong. Yeah, he was being pushy but so what? He was concerned, and becoming increasingly frustrated with the man trying to avoid him. The rest of the session ticked by painfully slowly between the lack of mental stimulation (other than the slideshow of shit his brain was showing him- just to keep his anxiety fresh), the ache in his face and now Scott blatantly ignoring him. There was no way he just didn’t see Peter trying to get his attention and the teen knew he wasn’t just distracted; every so often he managed to catch Scott’s gaze for a split second when he checked to see if Peter was still looking at him, immediately changing the direction of his eyes when he realised he was. It got to the point where Peter considered just getting up and walking over to him, it’s not like he could just run away but his thoughts must’ve been extra loud that day because as the idea crossed his mind none other than Colonel Wilson placed himself directly in his line of sight, blocking Scott from his view.

So, Peter gave up. He just sat there silently for the rest of the hour, staring at the floor, rebutting all of agent Johnson’s attempts at conversation. He felt a bit guilty since the woman was trying so hard to make him feel better but he also didn’t have the energy to care. Of course he didn’t want to be intentionally rude but he had too many thoughts running through his head to try and make sense of other people’s words on top. His mind was racing and he wanted to talk it out with someone just not her. The only person he wanted to talk to had already left by then and he wouldn’t see him until tomorrow. Of course Tony left right when he needed him. Typical.

Finally class ended and they were let out to go to lunch but Peter didn’t even bother to try and go after Scott. If the man wanted to talk to him, he’d have to make the effort to approach him first because Peter wasn’t about to try just to get rejected again. Whenever people treated him like a kid it made him want to act like it so if Scott was going to treat him like a child who couldn’t handle things he’d live up to the man’s expectations. He definitely didn’t feel up to handling getting
blanked like that again he was feeling too fragile. Besides, Peter had never done anything in front of Scott for the man to not trust his maturity, he’d never been anything but adult around the man. Well..maybe he had been a bit babyish at times especially the whole having to run out of class to pee thing...but still! That wasn’t just cause for Scott to treat him that way. He didn’t deserve to be treated like an infant.

He made his way out of the room quickly, being one of the first people to leave so he would avoid Scott, but as he left he couldn’t help but hear one last comment from Wilson; though it wasn’t directed towards him, just about him.

“Skye, I know you have a soft spot for kids but you can’t pick favourites. Especially not _that one_.”

Now what the hell was that supposed to mean?! Peter hadn’t even done anything!

His day just kept getting weirder and weirder and all he wanted was to be greeted by his family at lunch but with a deep dread in his stomach he realised once again that said family was absent. There was no feisty redhead, or goofy blond, or serious archer and there wasn’t a quiet spoken doctor, or smiley soldier in sight. Well, maybe that last one but not _his_ smiley soldier- and certainly not one that would fuss at him for not eating his vegetables. But worst of all there was no arrogant, egotistical genius with a god complex and a heart of gold that Peter suddenly missed so much. Just empty spaces in the seats they should have been in, which to Peter was very metaphorical and he hated how the sight of the empty bench invoked such a guttural, emotional response. He knew he was being ridiculous. He’d only seen them that morning but with the day he was having it felt like ages ago. The smell of that days lunch made his stomach turn anyway, only adding to the churning sensation his anxiety was giving, so he decided to skip the meal. Besides there was no one there who would miss him, Steve wasn’t there to bash him into eating...

If he wasn’t eating he could at least spend his time doing something productive. Like heading back to his room to check his phone and see if MJ had got back to him. Maybe once he was in there he’d text Tony, just to see if they’d made it to their destination okay. Not that Peter knew where they were going. Maybe he was on a plane...well it wouldn’t hurt to send a text. Well...then again if they were busy Tony probably wouldn’t see a text- so he’d just ring him instead. It wasn’t a big deal just a quick friendly call, it’s not like he needed to hear his Dad’s voice or anything. It wasn’t like he was starting to get that creeping feeling in his chest that the MV were about to capture his Dad and shoot him again- a feeling he hadn’t gotten in quite a while, which he now found it very difficult to cope with having not needed to for so long. Nope that wasn’t it at all he just- he just needed to-screw it, who was he kidding? He needed his dad.

“Pick up, pick up, pick up-“

And Tony did after only the second ring. “Underoos?”
“Uh- h-hi Mr Uhm..Mr. Stark.” Peter stuttered unsurely, the term of address feeling unnatural in his mouth given his current state of emotional distress. He didn’t know what kind of company Tony was around or whether or not it was safe for him to address the man in his usual way and the man had used one of his covert nicknames so...

“What happened to Dad?” Peter could hear the smirk in the man’s voice as well as what sounded like an engine of some kind. “It’s just us here, Pete.”

Peter audibly sighed in relief. he really didn’t feel like pretending right then. “Oh good, where are you?”

“On the mission buddy, remember?” Tony chuckled but he stopped when he heard Peter sigh in frustration. Okay, so the teen wasn’t in the mood for friendly banter and something must be up for him to call in the first place, after all. “In the quinjet still.”

“Aww what?! How come I always miss out on the fun stuff?!” Peter whined petulantly causing Tony to chuckle again. The teen hadn’t had a chance to go in the craft yet though he had begged the man to find an excuse for them to use it for months.

“You’ll get to ride in it soon enough.” Tony said still chuckling, though his voice changed as he continued. He lost the comedic lilt and he sounded more serious, like his usual voice but Peter still heard a touch of concern thrown in there. After knowing the man for so long he came to realise Tony wasn’t quite as good at hiding his emotions as everyone thought he was, he could always tell when the man was worrying about something; especially when that something was him. “Is everything alright, kiddo?”

“Huh? Oh, uh, yeah I just uhm. I-I thought I’d check in, you know, make sure you guys left okay and to make sure you didn’t forget anything cause like- you know, if you did I could run it up to you, or like you could turn back-or something. It’s not like you hafta, I know you guys don’t need...I don’t know, is this a bad time? I’m sorry I know you said to call if it was an emergency I shouldn’t have-“

“No, I said to contact me if you needed anything.”

Tony cut him off. By the sounds of it Tony stood up and walked in another direction, assumedly away from his team members so that he could have a more private conversation with the clearly stressed boy. “Talk to me. What’s wrong?”
“Nothing I just-“

“Cut the crap. I know you and you’re a terrible liar. What’s wrong bubby?” Tony said sternly, though the use of his affectionate nickname lowered Peter’s defences.

Peter bit his lip considering what he should say. A big part of him wanted to come clean about everything, now that the man wasn’t in the building to go and directly confront anyone. But Peter wasn’t naïve to think that Tony wouldn’t be able to do anything from a distance. If he explained the depths of his worries he had no doubt the man would just fly himself back to the compound and go right up to Wilson and possibly Scott to deliver a mouthful of abuse. Besides, Peter didn’t have any real experiences or evidence to give the man for a factual basis to his worries, up until that point he’d barely witnessed anything. Yeah, it was still weird but not exactly ‘freak your Dad out so he has to miss work to come and comfort you’ weird. Just uncomfortable. It could all be in his head anyway, he had yet to get a direct answer from Scott so maybe he was just over reacting. But he didn’t want to lie because he was awful at it and Tony would only worry about him more. Fuck, calling him was a mistake after all. “I just...it’s just..I don’t know.”

“Petey, what is it?” Tony lowered his voice again speaking as gently as Peter had ever heard him which made him pangs of guilt coarse through him for distracting the man whilst he was meant to be on a mission.

“I just miss you.” Peter said quickly. It wasn’t a lie and Peter knew that Tony wouldn’t react badly to the admission, if anything it made the man of iron feel a lot better about his own anxieties. And in all honesty Peter would take any comfort he could get right then; if he couldn’t get advice about what to do about the whole Scott situation, Tony always had a way of clearing his head.

“What happened to being fine for one night huh?” Tony chuckled but his tone was far from teasing.

“I...I don’t...mm..” Though he knew the man wasn’t being serious the comment only confirmed how pathetic Peter felt in his own head. It hadn’t even been five hours since he’d seen his dad and he was already calling him?

“Oh, Pete.” Tony muttered under his breath and sighed. “Why didn’t you tell me, huh? I knew it was going to be too much leaving you there overnight-“

“No-no! I’m fine, it’s stupid, I’m sorry I shouldn’t have called you just for that-“
“Hush. Peter it’s okay, I promise. I’m glad you did instead of sitting there and pretending you’re fine. You’re allowed to be upset, I’d be worried if you weren’t.” Tony soothed.

“Everything okay, T?” Peter heard someone- Clint- call in the background.

Then Tony pressed the phone against his chest as though Peter wouldn’t be able to hear him speak. “Yep. Just talking to Spider-Baby.”

“Dad!” Peter whined. He detested the nickname and Tony often saved it for moments he wanted to embarrass him most and Peter was sure he had used it to get a rise out of him, which worked. “I- I’ll be okay, it was just weird sitting alone at lunch.”

“Bullshit you didn’t eat.”

“Okay guilty-“

“You’re eating dinner. Steve told Bucky to drag you if need be.”

“But he doesn’t like going in there with all the people?”

“No, but he’ll it for you, kid, so no messing around alright? Don’t give the old man a hard time.” Tony said sternly.

“Alright, alright. And I did eat for your information.”

“Blue raspberry air heads don’t count- no Steven he’s not eating candy before dinner!” Tony sighed as he yelled back at the blond soldier who was fussing about Peter spoiling his appetite and the teen couldn’t help but snicker. “See the trouble you’re getting me into, kid?”

“Sorry.” Peter giggled but his voice fell quiet again and Tony somehow picked up on the silent shift.

“Pete?” Tony prompted gently.
“I’m sorry.” Peter said quietly and sniffed.

“Bud.” Tony sighed. ‘Shit, Pete why couldn’t you have done this before I left when I coulda hugged you, huh?’ He walked a little further away from the prying ears again, all the way to the back of the ship. “Do you need me to come back?”

“No, I’m fine I’m just being a baby I don’t know what’s wrong with me.” Peter sniffed again and ran his hand through his hair, trying to calm himself down before he started crying.

“Not a baby, my baby and if you need me I’ll be there.”

“Stop saying that you weirdo, you’re getting soft.” Peter chuckled. That was the second time Tony had used that phrase and it sounded so odd coming from him even if it did make Peter’s chest heat up when he said it. He had a feeling his Dad was counting on that kind of reaction to try and cheer Peter up and it worked.

“There’s nothing wrong with you. It’s okay to get overwhelmed.”

“But I was fine before it’s just, everything’s going wrong.” Peter said before he could catch himself. Crap, Tony had lowered his defences so he’d spill what was really going and he’d been naive enough to take the bait. Damnit.

“Like what, Pete?”

‘Think fast, Peter. If you don’t answer quick enough he won’t believe you.’ What else was he worried about that he could tell his dad? Oh yeah. “MJ still hasn’t texted me back and I’ve texted her four times now. I know it’s a dumb thing to get upset over but I don’t know what her deal is, I didn’t even do anything this time.”

Tony sighed, seemingly in relief that it wasn’t something serious but also due to the fact he wasn’t sure how to help Peter without hinting to the fact that she had a crush on him. If he tried to give Peter advice regarding his ‘love life’ it was sure to end in the sensitive teen getting offended and he really didn’t want to add to his bad mood. “You want some honest life advice?”
“What..?”

“Just apologise. Even though you don’t know what you did wrong, trust me, apologise anyway.”

“You mean like you should’ve done with Pepper?” Peters deadpanned.

“Watch it.” Tony growled.

“Sorry- But I did say sorry and she still didn’t answer.”

“Give her some space, Pete. Who knows what’s going on in her head right now.”

Peter was silent for a moment. “I don’t understand girls.”

Tony couldn’t help but smile. “Neither do I bud, neither do I.”

Peter asked a few more questions about the mission they were on (to which he revived no straight forward answers, just as he’d suspected) when he groaned a little as he moved his head to fast, his head and eye pounding painfully with each heart beat that followed.

“You okay?”

“Oh yeah, just got a headache. I got punched in the face-“

“You WHAT?!“

“It was an accident!” Peter said quickly, regretting having mentioned it so casually without expressing that it wasn’t intentional in the first place. “I got distracted and I didn’t block a punch when we were sparring. I shouldn’t have told you I knew you’d freak out I just didn’t want you to come back and see bruises on my and panic or get mad that I didn’t say nothin’.”
“Anything Peter, didn’t say anything. Don’t use double negatives you’re smarter than that.” Tony chided, rubbing his temples with his unoccupied hand stressedly. “I’ve been gone for a couple hours and you manage to get yourself hurt?”

“I’m fine! I’ve just got a bit of a headache now.” Peter grimaced when he looked in the mirror, having not done so until that point. Johnson had been right it was a pretty shade of purple. He could only imagine what it must’ve looked like at the time considering his healing rate; he just hoped any remnants of his mistake would have dissipated by the time his family got back. Peter didn’t fail to hear the others fussing in the background once they heard about Peter’s minor injury but the chatter cheered him up especially once Tony began arguing with them to shut up some he was on the phone.

Peter stayed on call with Tony for as long as he could, only hanging up when he had to get back to his group. His dad managed to bring him back from the edge of a panic attack which he was grateful for, but he couldn’t help but still feel pathetic for having to ring him in the first place, no matter how much Tony told him otherwise. The pair made sure to make their goodbyes quick as possible as not to prolong the upset for either of them. Tony did say before he went though that Peter probably wouldn’t be able to contact him until after eight or so that night, which the teen took on the chin; Tony sweetened the deal by promising he’d tell him all about their mission that night after they’d completed it and he’d recant all the gory details. Peter didn’t want to make a fuss about it after he’d already proved himself to be a child enough that day. At least he’d be able to talk to his Dad before bed and then he’d see him in the morning, so no big deal right?

After he hung up Peter shot one last text to his female best friend and left his room, leaving his phone behind and heading to the bathroom before going to the lecture hall. He was dreading it, he didn’t want to have to sit next to Scott after the man had been avoiding him all day, but he conceded with himself that it would be fine. They weren’t meant to talk among themselves anyway so it would be easy to ignore him back. He made his way through the cafeteria, not stopping to look for Scott like he usually would and he ended up walking straight past him.

“Hey Pete-“ Scott started, but the kid didn’t stop. He marched past, not even offering him a glance. “Peter? Yo, wait up!”

But he didn’t. Peter carries on storming down the hallway, not gracing Scott with a response until the man jogged to get ahead of him, blocking his path. “Kid, what’s up with you?”

“Nothing.” Peter said quietly, moving to barge past the man but he put a hand on his chest to stop him.

“Hey, what’s gotten into you?”
“What’s gotten into you ?!” Peter bit back snappily. “You’re the one who’s been acting weird- not me! I try to talk to you and you brush me off and act like everything’s fine- but when you were gonna tell me Wilson conveniently called us in three minutes early- cause that’s not sketchy at all! And the-then you keep giving these weird looks to him and Miller and those- other two keep looking at you but you kept ignoring me and I got hit in the face cause you’re being weird and-“

“Peter- Peter! Calm down, dude, take a breath.” Scott grabbed Peter by the shoulders and shook him a little, trying to snap him out of his frantic, angry state. “Ouch your eye...I know this morning has been more than a little weird, I get that, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to ignore you I just didn’t wanna draw more attention to ourselves.”

Peter crossed his arms over his chest. “What do you mean more attention?”

“Look, I can’t tell you, alright? I want to just so you’ll stop freaking out but I can’t. Just know that it’s being dealt with and you don’t-“

“I don’t have to worry, yeah yeah I get it. I’m just a stupid kid I can’t be trusted. Whatever.” Peter muttered sulkily and once again went to walk about but this time Scott spun him around, more forcefully this time.

“Uh uh. Stop that.” Scott used his stern dad voice again, making Peter squirm uncomfortably. “Quit with the moody teenager shit. It’s not that Pete, I’m just not having you get dragged into all this, it ain’t worth it. There was some stuff going on, some stuff I didn’t tell you. But I had my reasons, I don’t care if you like it or not you are just a kid. I’m not having a kid get into trouble over me.”

“Who said I’d get in trouble?”

“I did. You’d wanna try and fix everything but you can’t-“

“I don’t need protecting Scott, if you hadn’t noticed I’m an agent too, just like you. We’re in the same boat here- you didn’t have to protect me from Wilson either-“

“No you’re right, I didn’t. I understand that now after I spoke to him.”
“Fine.” Peter huffed and walked away quicker than Scott could grab him, walking into the lecture hall and slamming himself down in his seat and crossing his arms. The man was being agonisingly cryptic to try and stop Peter from asking questions and it had worked. He became too utterly frustrated to continue the conversation any longer. If Scott wanted to shut him out, fine. Two could play at that game.

Scott followed closely behind. “You’re being really immature, you know that?”

Peter wanted to respond with a well articulated argument, highlighting how Scott had been treating him as a child so he had decided to act as such- but he didn’t waste his energy. He chose to make his point in a way that conveyed his point rather eloquently in his opinion. A much simpler, yet effective way to showcase his grievance with the situation. He stuck his tongue out at him with an accompanying fart noise.

“Oh-Peter come on!” Scott hissed, taking his own seat and staring incredulously at the boy.

“Settle down people!” Wilson barked, causing the room to fall silent as he begun that days lecture. It was more technical, talking about how to file case reports and evidence, the difference between the different types of forms, all the logistic stuff that Peter found quite interesting. It was very informative and as he had yet to be cleared for patrol or any other kind of official work, it was all new to him. He knew very little about the diplomatic side of their work and he was a little surprised to see how intricate some of the written work was. He highly doubted that Thor would have the patience to sit down and do write ups every time he went on call, but then again it occurred to Peter than there may be some exceptions to the rules. Plenty exceptions had been made for him after all. The only time he’d had a glimpse into that side of things was when he’d had to report to Fury after...well he didn’t want to think about that in that moment. Or ever really.

He’d sat in on briefings here and there and he’s seen the mountains of paperwork his team had to fill out every time they went somewhere on official business. Well Steve has to fill out, it was usually the blond tasked with filing everything since the other members of the Avengers seemed to palm all of the boring stuff on to him. He never complained but still, maybe now Peter could help him if he could only focus on the lecture; which was very difficult when Scott kept trying to communicate with him, in a similar way to Peter had during their PT. Much like their sparring lesson though, Peter ignored him in the same way and Dr. Pym’s proverbial protege didn’t like how the tables had turned on him.

“Peter stop being a brat and just look at me.”

“Kid I said I was sorry for not telling you I just- it’s complicated okay-“
The more Peter elected to ignore him the more persistent Scott got.

“I know you don’t need protecting, you’re a strong independent black woman and you don’t need no man I get it - can you just drop the attitude for five minutes and let me explain?!”

That last attempt got to Peter and he couldn’t resist retorting. “I’ve given you ample opportunity to explain what’s been going on, Scott and you made the executive decision not to tell me. So fine. Don’t tell me. I don’t care anymore and I’m done trying to convince you. But if you’re so buddy-buddy with Wilson now why don’t you spend your breaks with him from now on?”

“You are not being serious right now.” But Peter didn’t respond, going back to pretending he was deeply enthralled in Wilson’s lecture. “You are such a teenager, oh my god.”

The rest of the session went that way, Scott trying and failing to apologise to the teen and Peter getting more and more bitter each time he opened his mouth. As much as he wanted to give in Peter was too tired and cranky to back down, even though he wanted to. He didn’t want to argue with his only friend when every other member of his support system was miles away but he couldn’t stop now. He was proving a point. Though he wasn’t exactly sure what that point was…

That didn’t stop him from leaving the classroom as quickly as possible, running through to the dining area (much to the people whose paths he crossed displeasure, he half expected a teacher to appear saying “no running in the hallways!”) to his usual table before Scott had the chance to catch up with him, knowing full well that Scott wouldn’t be allowed to approach his table given the company he kept. He sat with his back towards Scott’s end of the room, grabbing a tray of whatever mush was on offer that evening and shovelling it into his mouth at an alarming rate in an attempt to leave the same room as him as quickly as possible. Shuri waved to him, giving him a quizzical look, possibly asking him where his family was or why he was eating like a starved wild animal but Peter simply waved back and resumed tearing into his food. He ended up almost making himself sick but he knew he had to eat. Peter knew Steve well enough to believe the threat of Bucky dragging him forcefully back to the canteen if he didn’t and he saw said Winter Soldier’s head pop around the door at his end of the hall.

Bucky made eye contact with him almost immediately and Peter couldn’t help but notice how flustered he looked. He’d only ever seen the man look serious and stoic, very refined and introverted at all times, barely cracking a smile other than when he was talking directly to Peter; but this time the man looked particularly disheveled, lines previously unnoticed in his face becoming very apparent, aging him at least ten years. His dark rimmed eyes were darting back and forth around the room and Peter recognised the pattern instantly; he was looking for exits, threats, every little noise was changing the direction of his gaze. And there were a lot of noises, Peter’s sensitive ears could attest to that. He was clearly uncomfortable and Peter wanted him to leave before he either ended up hurting someone else or had some kind of panic attack. Bucky looked at him and mouthed ‘you okay, kid?’
Peter nodded vigorously, mouthing back ‘I’m fine’ then made a hand motion that said ‘go, go.’ Bucky looked Peter up and down a few times, eyes bouncing between his face and his tray. Once he was satisfied that Peter was following instructions and didn’t seem to be in any immediate danger he nodded and slipped back out of view. The teen sighed in relief, both because he wanted to avoid Bucky getting stressed out but also because he didn’t want to have anything else to worry about that day.

He was starting to regret not letting Scott say his piece earlier, he should have given him one more chance. It wasn’t like the man was doing anything deliberately to upset him, in fact it was quite the opposite. He’d been trying to shelter him from something, what that something was Peter had no clue but he should have appreciated it all the same. It obviously was something not very nice and Scott had mentioned not getting him into trouble...Peter didn’t know many details about Scott’s early life but the man had mentioned he’d been in a lot of trouble himself- warning Peter to not google his name which the teen had promised not to, even though he promised Scott that he wouldn’t view him any differently. With that exchange in his mind Peter felt like a bit of a dick for shutting the man down all afternoon.

After he’d finished eating he looked back to see if Scott was still there but he wasn’t, much to Peter’s disappointment. He vowed that he’d make it up to the man in the morning as there wasn’t much else he could do that night. Not without going all the way back to the blue zone and he didn’t particularly want to risk facing Wilson or any of the other assholes he’d grown to know and hate with the mood he was in. He wasn’t sure he’d be able to contain himself.

So he slunk back to his room, trying his best to take his mind off of everything. He had planned on trying to call MJ but once he checked his phone he realised she still had no interest in speaking to him. Left on read, again. With a sigh he saw that while he hadn’t received a text from someone he wanted to hear from, he received a text he really didn’t want to see instead.

Mr. Stark: Hey kiddo. Something came up. You probably won’t be able to reach me tonight. If there’s an emergency contact Fury. I’ll see you in the morning.

Great. Just great. As if it didn’t sting enough that Tony had to be deliberately unaffectionate due to the fact that someone could stumble across their text conversations, but it also meant he wouldn’t be able to call his dad like he thought he’d be able to before bed. He’d been holding out hope that he’d hear his voice before he went to sleep and it was one of the only things stopping him from breaking down again. God, he had to get ahold of himself, what was with him? Since he’d been there his anxiety had been through the roof, worse than it had been in ages. The entire day he’d felt like he was biting back a panic attack and that’s when he realised something. He’d forgetting his anxiety meds at home. Ah. Well, that would explain some of it. He’d been off of it for about a week and a half now, so all remnants of the meds would have been dumped out of his system by then thanks to his metabolism. If Tony found out he would kill him.
So he was off of his meds, in an uncomfortable place away from his family, who had left him to go on some likely highly dangerous mission and he had no way to contact them; he’d also been punched in the face, had an argument with the only friend he’d made who was acting sketchy as all hell, as well as being in a stalemate with one of his only friends back home and that was all in one day. With all that anyone would be upset and Peter allowed himself to feel that way, for once cutting himself some slack. He did have one thing he could do though. He called one of the only people he could.

“Hey P!” The familiar smiley face popped up after the first Skype ring.

“Hi Ned.” Peter smiled softly but Ned saw through him in a heartbeat.

“Uh oh. That wasn’t a happy Peter hi. What’s up?”

Peter knew better than to lie to Ned and best friend made him feel better immediately, as did the conversation that followed. Ned had an amazing talent for listening- which sounded absurd but anyone who was in crisis who went to the boy to offload would agree that Ned was an incredible listener. Obviously Peter couldn’t give certain details due to the calls being monitored but his friend got the gist of what he was going through, enough to give some advice and offer support. For Peter, just knowing that he’d been able to tell convey all the thoughts running through his head was a weight off of his mind. A burden shared is a burden halved and Peter really did start to feel better. Ned stayed on call with him for as long as he could, they did some school work for a while, watched a couple of movies, discussed upcoming Lego projects, anything to take Peter’s mind off of everything.

Peter did have something that was plaguing his mind in particular though, something Ned might have some insight into. “Did you talk to MJ today?”

He half expected Ned to say the girl hadn’t been at school or seemed upset or something but the other teen gave him an odd look. “Yeah? She’s like, my only other friend dude.”

“Was she okay?”

“Well, she made fun of my mismatched socks and called Mrs. Clark a discount Wal-Mart Barbie to her face so yeah, no different to usual.” Peter huffed a half hearted laugh through his nose, trying to seem nonchalant but Ned, of course, picked up on it instantly. “Why d’you ask?”
“I don’t know man.” Peter rubbed the back of his neck and cast his eyes down and away from his screen. He didn’t want to say that she had been blatantly ignoring him, as he knew Ned would likely message the girl trying to fix the problem but ultimately make it worse. As much as he appreciated his friends protective nature and his need to try and fix all of Peter’s problems, he didn’t want Ned to go in all guns blazing and mess things up between them even more. He knew if he asked Ned not to he could trust his friend not to say anything but he also knew that he kept his heart on his sleeve. Even if he didn’t say anything directly Ned would likely act odd with the girl the next day if he knew she’d upset Peter and MJ would pick up on that immediately; it wouldn’t take a genius to connect the dots and realise that Peter had talked about her behind her back.

Ned sensed his hesitation. “I won’t say anything, P. Did something happen?”

“Nah, I was just gonna ask if she got back our assignment yet. I thought Mr. Hall was meant to give them back today.”

Ned knew he was lying, but after only just having cheered Peter up after the crappy day he was having he didn’t feel like drawing attention to it. He silently conceded to ask MJ what was up the next day at school. The duo stayed on call until eleven thirty, when Ned’s mom came in yelling at the teen to go to bed.

“EDWARD IF I HAVE TO TELL YOU ONE MORE- oh hi Peter, honey!”

“Hi Donna.” Peter chuckled. Suddenly the woman bore a strong resemblance to Molly Weasley from Harry Potter and Peter drew more comparisons as he watched Ned get smacked upside the head. Ned had a bunch of siblings, his parents practically adopted Peter and the couple consisted of a loud, sometimes overbearing but loving mother and an equally loving but scatterbrained dad; Peter even lived with his aunt, although she was such the anthesis version of Petunia it wasn’t even funny. Hey...that makes him Harry! Sweet! And he could picture MJ as Hermione, she was pretty smart- god he was such a dork. Why was he like this?

After he finished nerding out and said his goodnights to Ned and his mom, Peter decided to take himself to bed also. It was late and as much as he didn’t want to sleep he was tired after such an emotional day; that and he didn’t want to risk a repeat of the week before when he’d slept in, that was the last thing he needed. He begrudgingly went through his nightly routine, getting settled in his bunk and deliberately facing the wall instead of the rest of the room. That way he wouldn’t have to acknowledge the fact that he was utterly alone in said room. It was weird, after spending over a week sharing a room with Tony he’d become accustomed to all the little sounds that came along with that; him shuffling around the room, the man muttering to himself or sighing when he was answering emails, the snoring (though Tony was adamant that he didn’t). But the room was silent other than the occasional sounds of fabric rubbing together when Peter shifted uncomfortably


in bed. He just couldn’t relax not in such a quiet room, so he did something he was pretty ashamed of and he would never admit to anyone. It was something a boy his age probably shouldn’t need to do but in that moment he didn’t care, he just wanted to sleep to make the time go by faster.

He pulled out his laptop and went onto YouTube, finding an old video of Tony giving a seminar on the various uses for Badassium. Peter had seen all of Tony’s lectures and interviews countless times before but that was one of his favourites. He let the video play, the sound of Tony’s voice managing to calm his nerves enough just so he could fall into a fitful sleep, lulling him like some sort of weird, arrogant lullaby. As ashamed as he felt at least he wouldn’t have to be alone for much longer, or so he thought.

He woke up as usual, bright and early and desperate to pee. After running to the bathroom half asleep, he woke himself up by brushing his teeth; Tony would be back by then! He’d promised! But he hadn’t woken up in the night, he was a pretty light sleeper so it was unlikely Tony had managed to slip in without him noticing. With that thought in mind Peter rushed back to his room, where his suspicions had been confirmed. Tony’s bed was still made, his side of the room completely untouched since he had left the day before and there were no signs of the man having been there since. Peter sighed dejectedly, he should have known something else would go wrong. Of course Tony wouldn’t be back like he said he would. Of course he was going to have to face more time alone the one time he didn’t want space. His dad was always free and suffocating when he wanted to be left alone but now that he missed him and needed him he was busy. Ugh.

No, Peter knew better than to blame his dad, he was just upset. It wasn’t Tony’s fault, work was important and Peter didn’t expect him to drop everything and come and coddle a fifteen year old who was being clingy- even though he knew Tony would in a heartbeat if he asked him to. That knowledge made him feel slightly better but not by much. He grabbed his phone to see what Tony had to say about his absence, but to Peter’s dismay he had no texts. No missed calls. Only the last text Tony had sent him the day before. Alarm bells starting ringing in his head. That was not a good sign.

There was no way Tony would have gone that long without contacting him. Both because the man himself had terrible separation anxiety but he knew what Peter was like. He knew better than to tell Peter he’d be back by a certain time and then not show up without at least warning him, especially given their phone call the day before when Peter admitted to being upset about being left behind. Something had to be wrong.

Peter tried to calm himself, he really did. He told himself that something minor probably happened, a hiccup in their plans, nothing they couldn’t handle. There was nothing they couldn’t handle his family were the best superheroes in the world, they could take care of themselves. There might’ve been a problem where Tony couldn’t use his phone or whatever…but then again, even the worlds best superheroes had been known to make mistakes. And get themselves into trouble…
Peter quickly got dressed and made his way out of his room, but he didn’t head out to the track. He made his way to Steve and Bucky’s quarters. As much as he didn’t want to bother the latter, he felt justified that these were extenuating circumstances. Maybe someone had managed to contact him before- well before whatever happened to where Tony couldn’t call his own damn adopted child with extreme anxiety issues, to let said child know he was okay!

Peter hesitated for a moment. It was still very early, maybe he was overreacting...but then again Tony had said he’d be back before he woke up and the man knew how early his days started; and with no texts to imply he’d be late...either way it was before six o’clock in the morning and Peter didn’t want to wake Bucky up, not when he knew the soldier barely slept as it was. However as he was debating whether or not to knock he heard movement on the other side of the door. He didn’t even need to knock Bucky had sensed his presence the same way Peter had.

The dark haired man looked considerably less stressed than he had the night before, which Peter assumed was a good sign. If he wasn’t frantic about the Avengers going AWOL maybe he didn’t need to worry so much. “Hey kid.”

“Uh h-hi Mr. Barnes, sorry to bother you I uhm- I-I- uhm…” Peter tried to continue but the words were getting stuck in his throat. Bucky allowed him a minute or so to try and work through his stuttering, giving him ample time to catch up with himself before he interjected, which Peter greatly appreciated; so often people would get bored or frustrated waiting for him to speak so they’d either finish his sentence for him or walk away, or in some of the worst cases make fun of him or yell abuse. Even Tony had made the mistake of doing some of those things on occasion, so Bucky being patient with him meant a lot.

“You’re not a bother Peter and it’s Bucky, remember?” The man gave him a small smile. “Worried about the team?”

Peter nodded anxiously.

“I haven’t heard anything either, kid. But I ain’t worried. It’s not a very intense mission. It’s more likely they got lost than anything bad happened to ‘em.” Bucky said simply, knowing full well if he let on too much information Peter would only worry more. “If they call while you’re in training I’ll come and find ya, sound good?”

Peter nodded quickly again and scurried off after muttering his thanks. Though he was keeping up his mantra, repeating words of logic in his mind, his anxiety was working just as hard to keep him scared out of his wits; no matter how much he tried pictures of the worst scenarios possible kept appearing in his head, playing like a horror movie. He was definitely more than a little relieved to see Scott out on the track that morning and even more relieved that the man met him halfway, approaching each other with equal enthusiasm.
“I’m sorry!” They both said in unison then gave each other quizzical looks. “Why are you so sorry you go first- Quit it!”

Peter Shut his mouth and gestured for Scott to go first but the man shook his head initially. But Peter crosses his arms and for a moment the pair were in a Mexican standoff until Scott broke. “God! Okay- I hate awkward silence! I’m sorry about yesterday, kid.”

“Why are you sorry? I’m the one who was being a brat.”

“No it’s my fault. If I had just been upfront with you from the beginning, you wouldn’t have ended up getting upset like that and I understand-“

“You’re not obliged to tell me anything, though. I was just in a bad mood and I took it out on you. And I appreciate you trying to protect me this entire time and- and I promise I’ll stop asking about stuff you don’t want me to know about. I’m sorry for being pushy and being a brat...”

Scott paused for a second. He looked like he had more to say but thought better against it. “Can this stop being awkward now?”

“Please.” Peter sighed.

Now that he and Scott had patched things up Peter had resigned to himself to stop asking questions. Yes, he was still very wary of the entire situation, noted each and every weird look his friend exchanged with their colonel as well as those shared between three men who were known to be giving Scott a hard time, but he didn’t press the issue. He wanted to avoid having another rift between them, especially after the man had spent all morning consoling him about his missing teammates. He was still desperate to ask what was going on but it wasn’t worth it and he knew that, fighting his curious nature that had gotten him into this mess in the first place. Peter’s head was all in a mess as it was there was no point him shooting himself in the foot by losing Scott’s company too. Besides, they only had a matter of days left surely Scott could survive that long without getting himself into trouble, especially now that he and Wilson seemed to be on decent terms.

He was wrong. The moment of peace wouldn’t even last until lunch time.

They went on first break at the usual time, Scott trying to convince Peter not to go into the administration building to call Nick Fury.
“But Bucky said he’d come and find me if he heard anything a-and he hasn’t!”

Scott grabbed Peter by the shoulders and started steering him towards their designated break areas and away from the gate that separated them from the main building. “Well maybe Bucky’s caught up with something at the moment or they’re already back and he’s busy chatting with them-“

“Can’t I just go and che-“

“Nope.” Scott popped the P and continued pushing Peter to their usual spot in the yard. “Come on, kid, quit torturing yourself. I’m sure you’ll see them at lunch."

“But what if-“

“Nope.”

“But I-“

“Nnnope! Come on hotshot!”

Somehow Scott managed to prevent Peter from running off to find the prosthetic limbed soldier, throughout their break but Peter got increasingly agitated the entire time. It was obvious how anxious he was becoming and to be honest Scott couldn’t blame him. Peter was a little... dependent on the adults for a boy his age. Not that there was anything wrong with that, Scott hoped that Cassie would be as close to him when she became a teenager but that was the problem. Peter wasn’t attached to his mentor in a professional way, it was obvious the boy viewed the man as a father figure which Scott found rather cute. So he was more than understanding as to why Peter was close to having a small mental break down all morning. Even if your dad was Iron Man you’d still be within your rights to get worried if you hadn’t heard from them in over twelve hours when they had explicitly stated they’d be back by a certain time. It made him think about his own daughter. He had promised her they’d go out for ice cream that night before he’d been taken into S.H.I.E.L.D custody. He could only imagine how his little girl felt not knowing where her daddy was or when he’d be back or even why he’d left...the thought alone made him feel sick, so his heart really went out to his younger counterpart.

And Scott was desperate to keep the boys spirits up and his mind off of things, even if that meant engaging in annoying the teen. “Come on, sidekick-“
“Sidekick? I ain’t no sidekick!”

“Uhhh- Ant-Man and Spider-Man? It’s so derivative! You’re one hundred percent my sidekick!”

“I was bitten by a spider, I have spider powers! And I had my name picked out before I even knew you existed!” Peter huffed. “Anyway that logic you should be my sidekick! I’m higher up in the food chain!”

“Pffft- you should see the size of my daughter’s pet ant, we’ll see who’s higher up in the food chain then.” Scott snorted before he took in Peter’s tilted head and the confused look plastered on his face. “Anyway- you’re so itty bitty! You’re sidekick sized!”

“You literally turn into a frickin’ microbe- I don’t wanna hear it! Size don’t matter!”

Scott opened his mouth to make a comment but deemed it too inappropriate in front of the innocent fifteen year old and closed his mouth again. As he was catching himself, Peter went to sneak off again taking the opportunity to slip away whilst he was distracted. “Hey-”

“I’m just going to the bathroom!” Peter held his hands up defensively. “Am I allowed to do that Colonel Wilson, Sir-“

“Hey!” Scott said sternly. “You said you’d drop it-“

“I did! I am I just- can I-“

“Yes, go, god you don’t have to ask for permission. But if I see you take a detour to that building I will tackle you.” Scott waved his hand gesturing for Peter to go. Peter cackled at the threat.

“I’d like to see you try and catch me old man!” He called back as he scampered off into the blue zone bunks. He wasn’t planning on heading back to find Bucky, he didn’t need to. He’d slipped his phone into his pocket when he left his room that morning. Of course he actually did need to use the bathroom by that point, which he did quickly but his main focus was checking his mobile for any calls or texts. He knew before he looked that he’d received nothing but it didn’t help the disappointment that fell on him any less soul crushing. ‘God, guys, where are you?’
Peter hung round in the bathroom for longer than needed. Much longer. He was gnawing his fingernails, till they almost bled and pacing around the cubical, ruminating about all the awful, horrific things that could be happening to his family right now. Just as he was beginning to work himself up into a full panic attack someone else came into the bathroom, pushing back the door full force so it slammed into the cement wall which made the teen nearly jump out of his skin. And drop his phone. Which fell in the toilet.

Great.

“Ugh! Gross!” He tried his best not to gag as he fished out his phone from the murky water but he couldn’t help but feel nauseated. Not only because of the bacteria now covering his left hand (which he scrubbed violently until the skin turned raw) but he’d now lost his only possible point of contact, not only with Tony but with Ned too- who, with the day he was having, he was likely going to need to call at some point to help ground him. Now he couldn’t even do that- fuck! The screen fizzed, flickered and turned white before it turned off completely, though he wasn’t surprised. It didn’t take someone with an apprenticeship under possibly the smartest man in the world to figure out that his phone was utterly busted. Oh good, as if he didn’t have enough things to worry about now the tears were coming. And he couldn’t stop them. Fantastic.

It was getting close to the end of break and Peter knew he had to pull himself together and go back outside. He couldn’t hide out in the bathroom all day or skip class again, it was bound to raise suspicion. He’d already spent way too long in there and Scott was waiting on him.

Wait, come to think of it, where was Scott? Peter realised with a start that the man should have been in to check on him long before then. Though it occurred to him, maybe the man had decided to give him a bit of privacy given the emotional state he was in but that didn’t seem like Scott. He was less than tactile at the best of times and he doubted the man trusted him enough not to sneak off and find Bucky like he’d been trying to do all morning. If he had wanted to Peter could have climbed out of the window of the c-wing dorm, which faced away from Scott’s current field of vision, so it would have been easy for him to run away if he’d wanted to. He knew Scott knew that too with his background in burglary, the man most definitely would have been aware of all possible exits. So, where was he?

Peter left the bathroom quickly after that, shoving his fried phone in his pocket and headed back out to where he’d left Scott. But the man wasn’t there. What the hell? Okay, now Peter was really starting to develop abandonment issues. He looked around the barren, concrete yard, his eyes scanning the perimeter of the ten foot tall wire fence and past them, onto the track and obstacle courses. Nothing. No sign of the man anywhere. The panic Peter was already experiencing in his chest about his housemates doubled as he desperately looked around. Maybe Scott had headed back into the main building without him, but that would be weird since they weren’t meant to go anywhere during training hours unescorted and the fact that Scott would not have left Peter unattended- he’d barely been allowed to go to the bathroom on his own.
Peter headed back inside the building to look around, again being greeted with nothing. No substantial evidence that Scott had even been through there. He checked the dorms and the bathrooms and the various offices and storage closets; he was running out of places and he was running out of time. The alarm that marked the end of break sounded but Peter didn’t head out immediately, he wasn’t going back to class without Scott, no way no how. It wasn’t until he went back outside and made a pass round the back of the building that he heard something.

“You fucking proud of what you did Lang, huh? You think that was a smart thing to do?” A deep voice growled and then there was the sound of two objects colliding that was sickeningly familiar, accompanied with grunts and groans. Someone was getting punched. “God I knew you were an idiot but I didn’t think you’d be so stupid to think you’d get away with that shit you pulled. We warned you didn’t we?”

Peter turned the corner and he found his ears had been right. Miller and Thomas had Scott pinned against a brick wall and Jacobs was punching the man in the gut, repeatedly. Where Scott’s shirt had been lifted slightly Peter could see old and fresh bruises scattered across the man’s torso, indicating that this wasn’t the first backyard beatdown the man had revived. He blinked a few times to take in the scene and make sure that it was really happening, not some kind of anxiety induced hallucination. But it wasn’t. It was real. And Peter saw red. Literally.

Quicker than he had time to think about what he was doing, his body snapped into action. He sprang forward, taking a standing leap of at least fifteen feet, the length of a car, and jumped onto Millers back. He simultaneously kicked the other two men in the face and swung himself around to face the largest man. Peter already knew Miller was out matched when it came to fighting from all of the training experience they had together, so he knew exactly where the man’s weak spots and shortcomings were and he made good use of them.

There was shouting, a lot of shouting, but Peter didn’t really take any of it in even though some of it was coming out of his mouth. It was like his brain had switched off completely, his head clear of all complex thought and reason, just emotion remained. One emotion in particular; Rage. Pure, unbridled rage and for once it felt good. Scarily good. He wasn’t thinking anymore, he didn’t have to listen to all the horrible things his brain had to tell him, all of the worries and anxieties were gone there was just anger. That anger fuelled his body and he was finally able to put some of his training into practise with almost worthy opponents. The bullies didn’t stand a chance against the boy whilst he was in that state but dear god, did they deserve it. Peter bounced between the three men, repeatedly kicking and punching them; hitting them and hitting them, over and over, not stopping. He didn’t want to stop. The release felt good, all of his pent up emotions were finally allowed to come out. All the fear and anxiety he’d felt in the last twenty-four hours was bubbling up and pouring out of him, running like electricity out of his chest and down his spine, into his limbs causing them to jerk and punch and kick- colliding with any body part they could reach. He’d lost control of himself and he knew it but he didn’t stop. He...he couldn’t stop. Not now. He’d already gone too far, his body had taken over- it was like he was having an out of body experience. It frightened him, he was trying to stop himself but everytime he pulled away his fists just pulled back, harder, forcing themselves back into Miller's face repeatedly. He was scared. He
wanted it to be over now. It wasn’t really happening surely. He was still in the bathroom having a panic attack, this was all some kind of fever dream. But it wasn’t a dream it was a waking nightmare and he couldn’t wake up. He couldn’t snap out of it. He’d never felt so- so-

“PETER STOP!” Scott bellowed finally snapping Peter out of his daze as he ripped the boy off of the unconscious man’s chest.

He hadn’t noticed but he was bawling. Sobbing uncontrollably as he’d repeatedly pummelled the three men with abandon. Scott grabbed him from behind pulling them both to the ground, wrapping his arms around Peter and he gently started rocking him. He was whispering frantically clearly freaking out just as much as Peter was. “It’s okay, it’s okay, it was an accident, you’re okay. Fuck-it- it’s alright, it’s alright.”

It was clear that he’d hurt them, badly, but not enough to cause any real significant damage. Well, no lasting damage, but concussions and broken bones for sure. There were a few teeth scattered around and the teen wasn’t sure which belonged to who. Considering how out of control he’d felt it was amazing how his body had known not to inflict fatal harm on the men despite the boy’s fury. The training that had been drilled into his head about necessary force had seemed to work, he’d only gone as far as to incapacitate the men, not kill them like he had initially wanted to. They’d been hurting Scott that made them bad right? But he’d hurt them back...he’d hurt people. Heroes weren’t meant to hurt people.

“I-I-I didn’t. I didn’t mean to.” Peter said though he didn’t even tell his mouth to move. He was switching off, going into autopilot.

“I know kid, I know you didn’t. It’s gonna be okay, just, just calm down. Everything’s gonna be okay.” Scott said gently and the pair heard footsteps running up behind them.

“Ah shit.” It was Wilson. Of course it was Wilson. But the man sounded oddly calm, more exasperated then shocked or upset. “Christ Parker, what have you done?”

Oh god, what had he done?
Communication Is Key

Chapter Summary

Finally everyone sits down and talks and the truth comes out about the clusterfuck of a situation Peter and Scott got themselves into :P

This chapter, then part of the next one and then finally the team will be going home! XD it's been fun looking into the whole training camp idea but I'm definitely over it and I'm excited to post the next one that has been waiting in the wings for a while- thank you for being patient with me! I hope I explained what was going on clearly too because I lowkey confused myself writing this one. XD

Also I'm sorry if the spacing is weird- I uploaded this chapter from my phone! And please forgive the lack of proofreading, I just couldn't bring myself to read through 32 pages again XD

“God I hope he’s okay. He’s going to be going out of his mind by the time we get back.” Tony said agitatedly. He was tapping his foot against the floor, annoying those around him, whilst staring off dispondantly at nothing at all. He meant his head against his hand, using his elbow and his arm rest to support himself.

“He’ll be fine, Tony. He’s tougher than you give him credit for.” Steve tried to soothe but even he didn’t sound very convinced by his own words.

“You didn’t hear him yesterday. He was so upset and I promised him I’d call him last night and that I’d be there this morning and now I can’t even tell him why we’re late!” Tony snapped, gradually building himself up into a panic attack of his own. Christ, where had the mission gone so wrong? It was meant to be easy, in and out. They’d greatly underestimated the complexity of the task at hand and didn’t do appropriate risk assessments beforehand. Tony blamed it on having to spend two weeks in that god awful facility, all the dumb shit he had to do had made his brain melt causing them all to make stupid, rookie mistakes that were beneath them. He just wanted to get back to his son.

They were all exhausted, grimy and in differing levels of both emotional and physical distress. Clint had gotten bruised up pretty badly so they’d had to leave him behind to get medical treatment. At first they’d though the man had broken his spine but it turned out to be only a few fractured vertebrae and a slipped disc; easily fixable given the tech and funds Tony had readily available, but excruciatingly painful all the same and he was most certainly not cleared for travel. Nat had insisted on staying behind with him so Bruce was on edge. The doctor himself had been forced to go green unexpectedly so he was in searing amounts of physical pain and emotional discomfort and was silently trying to hold himself together without his lover there to console him; hauled up under a blanket at the far corner of the control room, eating vast amounts of candy to try and self soothe. He was reserved as always, not allowing anyone to help him, or even touch him- he hadn’t spoken a word since he’d woken up, only answering questions by nodding or shaking his head. To add to the oodles of fun they were having with their two injured teammates- Thor and Steve had a blazing argument over some tactical errors that had caused the sudden break down of their mission, which lead to them having to cut comms and go dead for the remainder of the day.
The two blamed each other when really Tony surmised that it had been both of their faults as they’d failed to communicate properly. However, that comment had only escalated the argument and now they were in a stalemate. The air in the quinjet was tense enough and to add to all that they were all worried about Peter, but no one more than Tony.

“He’ll be alright, Tony.” Thor tried to comfort by clapping a large hand on the man’s shoulder. “He has his friend in there as well as James, he’s in safe hands my friend.”

Tony nodded but Thor’s little pep talk didn’t exactly help at all if anything it made him more irritated. He wanted to snap the gods arm for invading his personal space but he knew that was just the old Tony talking, reverting back into his old, cold manner to try and protect himself from any more emotional upset. He’d changed in more ways than one since Peter had come around, changed for the better but whenever Tony was in work mode or upset about something, especially when he was away from Peter for an extended period of time, he turned back into Tony Stark the character. The front. It was a weird coping mechanism but he supposed it was least less destructive than his alcoholism and his long time friends definitely agreed. He not only missed Peter for the boys sake but his own as well; he just couldn’t seem to relax when the kid wasn’t around, the young man had such a calming influence on him even though Peter himself was always hyper. Knowing that happy hyper kid was probably sitting alone worrying about him made Tony feel sick and he just wanted to get back as soon as possible. Had the Iron Man suit not taken significant damage he would have flown himself back to the compound, it would have been much quicker. In the meantime he was stuck in a ship full of grumpy assholes who were trying their best to comfort him but were ultimately making him feel worse.

But Tony knew it wasn’t their fault. Besides, being short and snappy with his friends who were also concerned wouldn’t help him get back to his son any quicker. God he hoped he was okay. Yes, the boy was fifteen and perfectly capable of taking care of himself physically for a day and a half but it was his emotional state he was concerned with, especially given the teary phone call and broken promises. He hated feeling so helpless.

The second the ship touched the ground Tony was off of it, leaving Steve and Thor to help a weak and sore Bruce off of the jet. He rushed inside the administration building to sign back in but he stopped in his tracks the second he saw Nick Fury standing there. Their debrief from their almost failed mission wasn’t meant to be held until that afternoon so why was Nick already there? And why was Pepper giving him that look?

“What’s happened?” His heart was beating double time and his mouth went dry as his fatherly instincts kicked. Pepper looked upset, very upset, almost scared. He’d seen that look before more than once and Tony’s mind immediately started jumping to conclusions about what could possibly be happening. It had to be something to do with Peter.

Pepper opened her mouth to speak but Nick cut her off. “There’s been an incident.”

“That’s not something any father wants to hear. “Oh my god- what? Where is he- is he okay- is he hurt?!”

Nick held his hands together in front of himself and sighed through his nose, almost like a laugh. “He ain’t hurt.”

‘Dear god, someone please tell me he didn’t have a panic attack or peed his pants or something.’ Tony groaned internally but ultimately he breathed a deep sigh of relief knowing Peter hadn’t managed to injure himself for the second time since he’d left him. “Then what kind of incident?”

“Miss Potts if you could escort Captain Rodgers to the interview room and fill him in whilst I take
Mr. Stark to the hospital wing—"

“...You just said he isn’t hurt!”

“Oh, he isn’t.” Nick said quietly. Pepper nodded curtly in response to the tall man’s request and gave Tony a sympathetic look. The two had spoken privately since the incident on their arrival at the compound and well... Tony was glad he wasn’t on her bad side at the time. One night whilst Peter was busy pretending to be asleep, Tony had gone to the woman’s quarters and to her spoken in great detail about everything that had happened in recent months; Pepper knew how Tony’s relationship with Peter had developed into something far more than professional.

“Fury I really think you should let Tony see him first—” Pepper tried to reason, her blue eyes darting in between the two men.

“He’ll see him after I’ve gotten a chance to explain the situation.” Nick said finally, firmly but he kept the smile on his face. It seemed Pepper had already had this conversation and Fury was growing tired with reasoning with her.

“Let me see my son Nick.” Tony growled. He didn’t care what had happened he needed to see him and confirm that he was alright with his own eyes. It was nearing lunchtime, so much could have happened in the twenty four hours that he hadn’t seen his boy and he wasn’t about to let pirate Pete stop him from doing so. All the possible scenarios running through his head were making him feel physically ill.

“Tony for the kids sake I think it’s better if we have a little talk first. The last thing he needs is you screaming at him.” Fury barked, clearly losing his patience. “The longer you stand here and argue with me the longer this shit is gonna take. Now come on, Pepper and Steve will take good care of him.”

Peter had been sitting in a room on his own for two and a half hours. After he’d lost control and attacked those three other recruits he’d been shoved into an office with no windows by two scary soldiers, being told not to leave under any circumstances and he’d complied. He vaguely remembered a group having swarmed around the scene of the incident after Wilson had found Scott struggling to pull Peter back, recruits in different coloured uniforms gawking at him as the colonel helped pick the two up and dragged them through the crowd. It was a blurry memory and it felt like days ago for the teen having been segregated with nothing but his own thoughts for hours. In that time he’d had more than a few major panic attacks, thrown up in a trashcan twice and convinced himself that his life was over. He’d just assaulted three people, badly, for no reason. Well that wasn’t entirely true- they had been beating Scott up, but still he knew he should have handled it differently. He should have ran for help, or confronted them verbally or reported them. He should have told someone, he should have told Tony. Why didn’t he just tell Tony? He had the perfect opportunity to the night before but he didn’t. He should have made Scott tell him what was going on sooner and he should have told Tony what Wilson was doing sooner maybe then none of this would have happened but it was too late. The damage was done. He’d be kicked out of S.H.I.E.L.D, possibly sent to federal prison, if not he’d still never be able to become an agent. And he deserved it. He’d broken not only his own moral code but undoubtedly countless laws and rules in what he did; if he couldn’t keep his emotions in check during training he’d never have the emotional stamina to be a hero of any kind let alone a fucking Avenger. It was the same feeling he’d had that day he’d broken Flash’s nose only much, much worse. This time he hadn’t done the bare minimum to get someone away from him, or in this case Scott, he’d hurt them deliberately. It wasn’t like last time either; yeah he’d lost his cool that night at the party but he still controlled
himself, like Tony had said- he hadn’t just kept hitting him, he stopped. But this time he didn’t, he just kept wailing on Miller specifically, until someone pulled him back, his dad was going to be so disappointed. Not just disappointed- Tony was going to kill him.

If Tony was even alive himself. Fuck. He still didn’t know if his team was okay or if anyone had heard from them. He didn’t know anything, he didn’t even know if Scott was alright, the man had been whisked away to medical too. Why had he been so fucking stupid?!

It was an endless loop of self hatred and anger and fear. A loop that was only broken when the locked door to the room Peter was in finally opened and he was met by a familiar though unexpected face. “Hi sweetie.”

“Hi Miss. Potts.”

She smiled at him sadly, obviously taking in the emotional wreck of a teenager that was sitting in front of her. Why did everytime Peter met up with the woman he had to be in some kind of crisis? It would have been nice to meet his Dad’s ex-fiancé under better circumstances, not when he was desperate to pee or crying in a room that stank of puke and shame. As soon as she saw the state of the trashcan and Peter’s tearstained face she rushed forward. “Oh dear, sweetheart are you alright?”

Peter nodded and grimaced when he looked over at the remnants of his last meal. The woman didn’t look convinced, her lips pressing into a thin line, but it was obvious that she didn’t want to push him on the subject given his current condition.

“I’ve been sent to fetch you. You okay to stand up there?” She asked gently, stepping forward in case Peter passed out which he looked like he was going to.

The teen nodded his head in response to her question, not trusting himself to open his mouth. He stood up and walked shakily to the door that Pepper was propping open for him to walk through. As soon as the door was shut behind them, still smiling kindly. “How’re you doing hon?”

“G-good ma’am, you?” Peter mumbled quietly, answering robotically. It was hard to focus when he could hear his own heartbeat.

“Not bad. Now don’t worry, I’m just taking you to see someone who wants to ask you a few questions.”

“A-about what?” His asked automatically, the unpiloted response falling out of his mouth before he had a chance to realise what he was saying. Of course he knew what he was being questioned for. She gave him a sympathetic look. It was obvious from her body language that she wanted to hug him to make him feel better, but given the circumstances and the fact that she didn’t know him very well yet (despite what Tony had told her about him, which was a lot), she knew it was unprofessional. She also didn’t know how well Peter would react to physical affection in that moment. “I think you know what, sweetie. It’s okay, you’re not in any trouble.”

“Tony’s mad isn’t he…” Peter said under his breath, mostly just thinking out loud he hadn’t expected a response.

“Just a little bit.” She gave him another sympathetic look and it was obvious she understood the dread Peter was feeling due to Tony’s explosive temper- something she knew about all too well. “But you won’t be seeing Tony just yet.”

Peter wanted to ask more questions but he couldn’t bring himself to, he just followed silently to an
office where two people sat inside, neither of which looked particularly happy. But it wasn’t who he’d expected, it wasn’t two random officers or federal investigators. It was Bruce and Steve; the pair were still in their uniforms and covered in dirt and debris. Clearly they hadn’t had a chance to get showered after their mission thanks to Peter and the teen felt an overwhelming stab of guilt in his stomach as soon as he laid eyes on them. Bruce also looked particularly grey, with big bags under his eyes and he was sitting stiffly in his seat. He must have had to go Hulk during their escapades and now the poor man had to sit there and deal with his nonsense too? Way to mess things up for everyone Peter...

“Come and sit down Pete.” Steve said tiredly, gesturing to a seat opposite them. Peter wanted to decline the offer but the looks the pair were giving him were enough to silence any thoughts of disobeying their request so he sat down promptly, keeping his head down. He’d never been in trouble with them before, at least not seriously and he didn’t know what to expect.

He didn’t look up for a few minutes and there was a sickeningly awkward silence. When he finally built up the courage to look up Steve was making direct eye contact with him, sitting backwards on a chair. Any other time Peter would have laughed at the similarity to the man’s PSA videos, but nothing was funny in that moment.

“Wanna tell us what happened today, bud?” Steve asked bluntly. Peter couldn’t read the man’s expression or tone of voice and he wasn’t sure where to start. He knew he had to come clean about everything that had happened but Tony had said not to tell Steve about Wilson, or even Scott though he supposed it didn’t matter now, since everything was going to be coming to an end, all because of one stupid mistake...

“I..I just..I..” Peter stammered and before he knew it he had tears running down his face. He started sobbing uncontrollably again, before his brain had a chance to register what was happening or he had a chance to compose himself. “I just had a really bad day, okay?”

Clearly neither of the two men seated in the room with him had expected that kind of response as their eyes went wide and they both rushed forward to comfort the boy. They’d anticipated Peter would either be completely switched off and emotionally withdrawn, overly apologetic or still furiously angry- both with them and the men he’d brutally beaten; hence why they had been asked to see the boy before Tony. But breaking down in tears certainly wasn’t what they had prepared for and if anything it was more worrying than the other possibilities they’d accounted for. Steve and Bruce exchanged worried looks as though they were asking one another what the hell they should do and it was the doctor who ended up taking initiative. They had, prior to Peter’s entry, discussed their good cop-bad cop interrogation strategy but all plans went out of the window as they both rushed forward to console the distraught teenager.

Bruce crouched down in front of Peter seat, which took a lot of effort considering he was still in pain from the shift, and tried to get the boy to make eye contact. “Pete, look at me. It’s okay, it’s all gonna be alright you just need to breathe with me, okay? Like we practiced.”

It took fifteen minutes of Bruce breathing with him and Steve gently rubbing the boys back for Peter to even begin to be able to speak. “I’m sorry- I’m so so sorry- I-I know I’ve messed everything up and I’m going away and I’m sorry-“

“Peter you’re not going anywhere, we just need to get to the bottom of what happened.” Bruce soothed looking back at Steve who was grimacing. Did the kid really think he was going to be sent away for a single fight? Yes, he was in trouble, deep trouble but this was by no means an offence punishable by exile. They’d all been in more than a few scraps in their years, some of which being among themselves so it wasn’t nearly as serious as being excommunicated- especially not for an
isolated incident. But of course Peter would think that, the kid was so easily scared which made the whole affair even more perplexing to the adults. They had limited information but they’d never imagined in a million years that Peter would have gotten into such a brawl in their absence. Not their sweet, quiet, polite kid who made friends with everyone— it was so scarily out of character that’s why they had to find out what was going on. It wouldn’t have been as simple as Peter getting mad and lashing out, he just wasn’t that kind of kid.

“We can’t help if you don’t tell us anything.” Steve said gently. He’d never seen Peter in such a state and frankly it was scaring him; it made him want to back down completely and forget trying to interrogate him, but he resisted the urge. He knew it was too important but try telling his heart that when he was watching a fifteen year old break down in tears.

Peter tried to talk, he really did but everytime he tried to he ended up stammering so badly that he’d cry more and it was painful to watch, let alone painful for him to keep trying and failing. It was humiliating and it was getting to the point that both Steve and Bruce were worried Peter would pass from lack of oxygen. They had to calm him down before the teen became inconsolable and they had to get Tony to come and handle it- which would have rendered the whole ordeal pointless.

“Look, how about we give you all the information we know and you can fill in the blanks, does that sound easier?” Steve suggested. Maybe if Peter didn’t have to be the one to kick start the conversation it would take some of the pressure off, enough for them to open a dialogue at least.

Peter sniffed and nodded.

“Okay but first of all, what happened to your eye?” Bruce asked, peering at the fading but still prominent markings on the boys face. Peter recanted the story of how he got them and the doctor went through similar first aid that Johnson had at the time; that was part of the reason Bruce had elected to stay with Steve rather than heading back to his bunk to rest. If Peter had sustained any injuries himself he wanted to be the one to deal with them as he knew the teen wasn’t comfortable with any other doctors at that point (due to the possible discovery of his powers but also it made him extremely anxious); that and he knew Peter was likely to have a panic attack at some point. Of course Steve was more than capable of handling one of those, he had single handedly rehabilitated Bucky after all, Bruce had always connected with Peter during those moments. The doctor saw a lot of himself in the young boy, they had similar ways of thinking and similar issues surrounding their mental health. Bruce knew all too well what it felt like to lose control and Peter was likely to need comfort after what had happened, in more ways than one.

Bruce also used the bruising as an excuse to get Peter more relaxed. Distracting him either a separate conversation long enough for him to calm himself down. The diversion tactic worked and the teen was able to speak again without stuttering too badly and Bruce had worked to lower his defences a little bit, though Peter was obviously still on edge.

Once Peter had finished explaining the earlier accident that resulted in injury, it was time to move on to the latter one where he played a significantly different role. All three males were dreading it, albeit for different reasons. Peter, obviously because he’d have to relive the events which were causing him unbearable amounts of guilt and regret, then only to be grilled about all the terrible choices he’d made as though he wasn’t doing that enough himself. Steve and Bruce weren’t looking forward to it for a whole other reason; of course they didn’t want to see Peter upset all over again but they’d also been instructed to get his side of the story. They’d been given very little information on what had happened, Fury seeming to be deliberately vague and they understood why. They were meant to remain as impartial as they could given their closeness to the boy.

“S-so what did they tell you?” Peter sniffed, wiping his face with his sleeve before Bruce handed
him a tissue, finally being ready to talk about what they were there for.

Steve was the one who took initiative then, taking the lead in their impromptu investigation. “That you were spotted heading around the blue building when you were supposed to be in line to head back to your training and when an officer went after you he found you attacking four people—“

“Four?!” Peter interrupted, his tone instantly going from reserved and apologetic to sharp and questioning. It was an improvement from him sobbing but the edge to his voice definitely put Steve back into interrogation mode.

The story Steve was weaving wasn’t what the pair of adults had been told at all. They’d been informed by Pepper that Peter was found having beaten up three people after stopping said trio from assaulting another recruit. It was the identity and the reasoning that they weren’t told about; that being Steve knew full well that Peter hadn’t hit four people and that he wouldn’t have done anything of the sort without a good reason, but he was trying to invoke a reaction. If Peter thought that lies were being told about the incident he’d be more likely to be forthcoming with the truth to counteract them. It worked. “Yes, four. There’s four people in the medbay right now—“

“I did not hit Scott! I would never! Is that what that fucktard said—“

“Don’t start cursing, but Scott who and who are you calling an f-tard?” Steve snapped but he instantly regretted it as Peter jumped in his seat as though he was flinching away from a punch. It broke Steve’s heart that Peter would ever think he’d react with physical violence towards him, even if it was a subconscious reaction. He chalked it up to Peter being already emotionally exhausted and frightened after the days events, but it didn’t do much to make him feel better about it. The blond’s reaction was to hug the child and say he was sorry for yelling to comfort him and make him feel secure that he wasn’t in trouble; but he couldn’t. He had to remain at a distance if they were going to get anywhere, he’d have to wait to coddle the teen after. But he did make the effort to move his chair back slightly, in hopes that would calm the shaking child a bit.

“...no one.” Peter said quietly after a moment in response to Steve’s question.

“Pete.” Steve started but Peter interjected quickly.

“I was told not to talk to you about him.”

“By who?” Steve eyed the teen suspiciously. Jesus how deep did all this go, what had Peter gotten himself into?

“D-Tony.”

Steve paused for a moment and looked over to Bruce, clearly perplexed. So Tony knew something about all this but the genius hadn’t mentioned anything of the sort to any of them. So this wasn’t an isolated incident as they had once assumed?

It was the doctor who spoke then. “Pete it’s a bit late for all that now, don’t you think?”

“I don’t...I don’t want to get anyone in trouble.” Peter sniffed.

“If you tell the truth now, we can help make sure that doesn’t happen.” Bruce looked to Steve to confirm the promises he was making and the blond nodded. He continued. “But you have to be honest with us and I’m sure Tony would agree.”

“Where is he?” Peter looked up, his eyes shining brightly with fresh tears at the mention of his father, especially given Bruce had used past tense; inadvertently of course, he was merely using
such an inference because Tony wasn’t currently present but he should have chosen his words more carefully given the fragile emotional state Peter was in.

“Once we’re finished up here we’ll take you to see him, sport. We promise.” Steve bargained knowing full well that Peter would be more willing to answer their questions with that reward at the end of it.

“Is he okay?” Peter sniffed and the two elder men nodded but didn’t offer any more information. That wasn’t enough to quell his anxieties entirely but it calmed his nerves enough to answer their question in return.

“Corporal Wilson.” Peter said after a moment, keeping his eyes cast to the ground because he was unsure I’d Steve’s reaction. “Your old sidekick. He’s my group leader.”

Steve visibly sat back looking bewildered. That was the last name he had expected to hear out of the teens mouth. “Sam is your- how do you even know that?”

“It’s a long story-“

“Well we have all the time in the world Peter, you made sure of that. Now start talking.” Steve sounded angry and Peter winced.

“I-I told dad I didn’t know who he was, so it’s not his fault! B-but he said not to tell you that he was here I don’t know w-why!” Peter went on to explain all of what Scott had told him and the context in which the man had procured that information; though Peter kept reiterating how it wasn’t Scott’s fault, how he hadn’t meant to break the rules and he shouldn’t be punished for breaking data protection. He continued with the detailed synopsis of the fortnights events up until that point, how the man had treated him for the duration of his stay (including but not exclusive to the part where Peter almost wet himself and was forced to do push ups with the man on his back) and how Peter believed that Sam was behind the organised bullying he now thought Scott had been suffering; he explained why he thought this in great detail too, giving examples of the man’s mid conduct, how he had forced Scott to adhere to near inhumane living conditions by overworking him just to make an example to the rest of the group.

Where as it had taken so long to get the boy to start talking, once he had started his stream of consciousness it was difficult to get him to stop. Peter didn’t answer any of the questions that were thrown his way as he was too busy talking himself in circles, having rhetorical debates about what he’d witnessed going on between Scott and the other recruits. He expressed all his regrets about not telling Tony or reporting the incidents he had seen so someone; recanting the multiple instances in the mess hall and the time he caught the three men threatening Scott in the hallway. How he should have realised the degree of it all earlier, how it shouldn’t have gotten that far...how there was no way Wilson didn’t know what was going on and how Peter believed he’d taken a role in it.

Bruce and Steve sat back and listened to all of it, including Peter’s recently developed theory that Sam had orchestrated some kind of organised bullying ring to get back at Scott for breaking into his office and divulging private information but neither of them bought into the idea, knowing the kind of person Sam was. Of course Peter didn’t have that luxury, all he knew about Sam had come from a couple reports, some theories and a game of ‘rumours’. They didn’t blame Peter for his assumptions, from the kids point of view it made sense and he made a convincing argument but as adults and as a third party who could look at the situation objectively they knew it didn’t make sense.

“It’s his little fucking guard dogs who were started all of it I just finished it! It was three on one and Scott didn’t even do anything! Well...other than the whole shower thing- but still that’s not just
cause to pin someone against a wall and beat the crap out of them! Now they’ve actually been caught Wilson wants to turn round and say I attacked people for no reason when he’s the one who- who- ugh!” Peter panted. Going back over everything that happened had made the anger he’d felt before come bubbling back up. The guilt subsided to make way for the waves of frustration and he was getting himself worked up again. Those bastards had been terrorising Scott for no reason all because he’d been rude to an officer- that didn’t make sense to him. Why would they take such offence to that when it didn’t directly affect them, unless they were getting something out of it? Unless Wilson was coaxing them, promising them something in return, bribing them because Scott had figured out who he was. In Peter’s mind that was the only thing that made sense- and he had verbalised this theory to the adults in the room.

“Well, did you?” Steve said after a moment.

“Did I…” Peter’s mouth dropped open and he stared at the blond man. “Are you fucking serious? After everything I just told you-“

“Well I don’t know, I wasn’t there.” Steve knew he was being unfair and it pained him to do so, but he was well versed in interrogation techniques. After being filled in on what had happened by Pepper she passed on the message that Fury had tasked him (and then Bruce) with getting Peter’s side of the story, knowing the boy would respond better to people he knew. Steve believed Peter, of course he did but he knew Sam. Sam would never have done that kind of thing, it didn’t add up. He knew that something had to have gone wrong somewhere, that Peter had gotten the wrong impression or that there was a lot more to the story that the teen didn’t realise- which he didn’t blame the boy for. What Steve couldn’t figure out was if Tony knew Sam was there why he hadn’t told him…

“The only one who was caught doing anything Peter was you. The men who you beat up gave statements. How Scott had lured them behind the building and you attacked them for no reason. It’s three against two Peter. Three who have impeccable records against two- a teenager and a criminal.” Steve goaded.

“That’s not fair! You were a war criminal up until last year for Christ sake! And what about Wilson, huh? Thanks to you I doubt he has an impeccable record, why does he have to say about all this huh?”

Steve tried to backtrack but it was obvious he’d pushed his bad cop role a little too far with the already emotionally fragile teenage boy; the added lie about the statements had obviously pushed him over the edge. He was about to retract that last part, admit that no statements had been taken as they were given the chance, thanks to Fury, to sort the matter internally (that and the fact that two of them were still unconscious from the concussions Peter had given them) but he didn’t get the chance. “Peter-“

But the teen wasn’t in the mood to listen. He wasn’t stupid, he knew full well what Steve was doing, Thant he was only trying to get more information but Peter had given that to him! He’s just spent half an hour explaining everything in detail, wasted all that energy just to be questioned more. Did Steve not understand how difficult it had been to say all of that in the first place? He wasn’t in the mood to deal with all this, he was tired and stressed and he just wanted his Dad- he didn’t need any of this. “No this is bullshit and you know it! I’ve told the truth I don’t know what else you want from me! What’s the point of me talking if you’re not even gonna believe me-“

“We do Pete, we do believe you.” Bruce was quick to interject as he could see the rising tensions in the room were getting them nowhere. “You understand why Steve is emotionally invested in this the same way you are with Scott so let’s just take a step back, guys, alright?”
“I wanna see Tony.” Peter said finally, running his hands through his hair and trying his best to take deep breaths, but he was slipping again. He could feel it the familiar pressure building up in his chest, making it difficult to breathe or even think.

Steve’s tone softened considerably as he tried his best to resume the normal warm, gentle voice he usually addressed Peter in, but the teen was in no mood to hear it. “In a bit, pal-“

“No, you lied to me! You said once I told you everything I could see him- I wanna see my dad!” Peter yelled and stood up, accidentally sending his chair hurtling across the room and into the wall, shattering the plastic base into pieces. It scared him. He was usually good at controlling his super strength but apparently he couldn’t control himself at all that day. His hands flew to his face to cover his mouth as he gawked at the now broken item of furniture, shaking slightly. Peter’s voice dropped from shouting to being barely above a whisper. “I-I didn’t mean to-“

“I know.” Steve stood and walked slowly over to the trembling teen and grabbed him, sitting him down manually in his own seat. He and Bruce exchanged another worried look, silently conceding that their interview was over, that they’d prolonged the torture enough it was time to get the boy’s father figure involved. He patted Peter’s shoulder comfortingly, to show that he wasn’t upset by his accidentally destructive outburst; it wasn’t like he or even Bruce had never broken something like that when they were upset and they had years of practise on Peter. “I know, kid. Just sit there I’ll go see what's going on, okay?”

Peter did as he was told, curling into a ball in the arm chair, hugging his knees close to his chest while Steve left to find out when he’d be able to see his dad.

“It’s gonna be okay Pete. You’re not in trouble.” Bruce said gently but retracted his statement when Peter gave him a dry look. “Well you are in trouble, just not as much as you think. You’re not gonna get sent away or kicked out of S.H.I.E.L.D or anything.”

“Tony is going to murder me, Bruce.” Peter mumbled under his breath. He was starting to regret asking to see the man once he realised that Tony was going to be less than happy to see him under the circumstances.

“Yeah, I have no doubt your dad’s gonna be pretty upset. But not murder, at least not in the first degree-“

“Not helping.”

“Fair enough.”

Steve came back not ten minutes later and Peter felt as though he was going to throw up again. The blond beckoned for the two remaining men to follow him and lead them down a few winding passages to an area of the campus Peter hadn’t been to before. He stopped right outside another office door, gesturing for Peter to go inside and that was when the boy realised that Tony was going to be less than happy to see him under the circumstances.

“Yeah, I have no doubt your dad’s gonna be pretty upset. But not murder, at least not in the first degree-“

That wasn’t Tony’s voice. Shit.

He opened the door and stepped inside seeing that Tony was in fact there, but his ears hadn’t
deceived him they weren’t alone. “Nice to see you again, Mr. Parker.”

Fury held out his hand to shake Peter’s which was cold and clammy but the older agent didn’t comment on that. He gave Peter a warm smile and continued addressing him. “We were just finishing up here, I’ll let you two have some privacy. Once he’s finished parenting, I’ll have a chat with you.”

Fury nodded to Tony before leaving, shutting the door behind him, leaving the pair alone. Tony was leaning casually against one wall with his arms crossed but his face showed Peter that there was nothing casual about the situation. Tony was staring at him with cold, angry eyes that bored right through him, making him want to run back out of the room and hide. Anything to get away from the man he had literally begged to see not fifteen minutes before.

Tony’s initial reaction was to run over and hug the kid he’d spent the last day worrying himself sick about, to tell him everything would be okay. But he couldn’t do that right? He had to make a point that Peter had done something wrong first, he couldn’t reward bad habits with affection and coddling- or was that just the Howard Stark in him talking? Peter looked awful and he knew his son; it was obvious the kid couldn’t feel worse about what had happened and he was likely beating himself up more than Tony ever could. No, he had to remain strong. Just for a little bit because he knew the second he broke and hugged his son that all authority and critical thinking would go out of the window. He had to make his point first, give his mad boss speech then he could give the mad dad speech and get to the part where he could comfort him. But how could he remain stern when Peter was standing there, his big brown eyes all bloodshot and sad, sniffling like he was waiting to get beaten.

“So, you wanna tell me why?” Tony adorned his signature Stark voice, one that Peter recognised from the early days in their relationship. The use of his old persona made the hard part of being strict and stoic a lot easier, though inside he still yearned to skip over the talking part and go straight to the hugging; not only for Peter’s sake but his own. He wanted some physical affection after the terrible day he’d just had.

“I didn’t mean to. I-I just lost it and they were-” but Peter trailed off as Tony held his hand up to stop him.

“I don’t mean the fight, Peter. I couldn’t care less about that.” Tony meant that. He had zero tolerance for that kind of bullying, as much as he currently detested Scott, those assholes had definitely deserved it. Did he wish it was his son who had to take them down a peg? Of course, but only because he knew how adults Peter now felt afterwards. “I meant why did you lie to me?”

Peter blinked a few times having clearly not expecting that response and hadn’t prepared to answer such a direct question. “I..I..”

Tony moved from his spot leaning against the wall with his arms folded to the centre of the room, gesturing at the screens that lined one of the desks at the far side of it. “Me and Fury watched your whole confession so you don’t have to repeat the story. I heard what you said about why you did what you did and I understand. What I don’t understand is when I ever gave you the impression that it was okay to lie to me.”

“You- you didn’t.”

“Oh I didn’t? So do you care to explain how any of that was okay? How you lied to my face on multiple occasions to protect your little friend. If you had just come to me in the first place you would have-“
Peter shuffled where he stood, staring at the floor and fiddling with the cuffs of his shirt. “I know, I know I should have-“

“Quiet. I’m talking. Something you should have done a week ago.” Peter flinched at the sudden harshness of Tony’s voice which nearly weakened the man’s resolve but he remained focussed; also technically he had asked the child a question...but still- he was upset okay? “If you had told me then, this whole thing could have been avoided.”

“I’m sorry..”

“That’s not an answer Peter. I asked you a question and I expect an explanation. Why did you lie to me?”

“I...I don’t..” Peter started to say ‘I don’t know’ but it was obvious from both the look on Tony's face and the voice in his own head that the man was not about to take that as an answer. It also wasn’t true and he knew Tony knew that, his dad likely already knew why but he just wanted a verbal admission. “I didn’t want to get Scott into trouble..”

“Right. So let me get this straight.” Tony pushed off of the wall and started pacing around the room slowly, gesticulating as he spoke. “You met this guy, who you had met once before on your first day, where he openly admitted to you that he had committed a federal offence by breaking into an office and hacking filed on a computer. And rather than thinking, ‘Hm, this dude seems like trouble maybe I shouldn’t trust him or maybe I should tell my dad about that’ you proceeded to be friends with him. That in and of itself isn’t that bad, stupid, but still you’re a smart boy, or so I thought up until I listened to what you told Steve just now- a smart boy wouldn’t have let himself get dragged into this ridiculous conspiracy theory against one of his teams former associates-“

“Tha-“ Peter started but Tony shot him another look that made him close his mouth.

“Sorry but what about what I just said was incorrect?”

Peter but his lip before answering. He knew it probably wasn’t a good idea to oppose his already furious father but he had to defend himself. He was willing to hold his hands up and say he was in the wrong, he knew he was, but he deserved a chance to explain himself at least. Not even to defend his actions just to give reason for them. “I was just gonna say, that’s the point...he’s a former associate, which means he did something bad and that’s why he got demoted-“

Tony huffed a laugh with no humour behind it and shook his head. “That’s not why he was demoted, but you’d know that if you hadn’t jumped to conclusions along with your new little buddy and asked me. I could have looked into it for you and told you all about it-“

“Everytime I ask about Germany you avoid the question-“

“Uh uh! This is not a Germany issue, that’s still nothing to do with you.” Tony snapped. “And I have my reasons for keeping that from you- this very reason. You clearly aren’t mature enough yet to understand the diplomacy around all this-“

“You’ve never even tried! Maybe if you explained it to me sooner I would be able to understand and this-“

“This wouldn’t have happened?” Tony said quietly, making Peter instantly regret having even opened his mouth because he knew the next words that came out of Tony’s mouth wouldn’t be spoken. They would be yelled, and he was right. “So it’s my fault that you decided to get yourself involved in some random guys shit and it’s my fault you lied to me and got yourself into a fight
over something you didn’t even understand in the first place?! Huh?!”

“N-no..it’s not-“

“Damn right it’s not! This is on you kid! You did this, take some fucking responsibility!” Tony bellowed. He turned away from Peter for a second because knew he was close to losing his cool himself and he really didn’t want that to happen. As much as he agreed with the sentiment of what he just said, seeing Peter cower slightly was enough for him to catch himself. He didn’t need to add the shit pile by yelling at the kid, that wouldn’t do anyone any good. From his own childhood experience he knew that shaming Peter for something he already felt guilty about would only cause more issues down the line and in all honesty, he wasn’t just mad at Peter; he was mad at himself.

He agreed with what the boy had said, he should have explained things to him earlier. He should have been more approachable, made the teen feel more comfortable coming to him with what was going on. If he wasn’t so prone to overreacting to things Peter might have asked him about Sam sooner and he could have explained and the whole thing could have been avoided; or if he didn’t have a proclivity for blowing things out of proportion Peter might have confided in him about what was happening to Scott and he could have helped investigate that. Why hadn’t he pressed the boy when he came to him that time he left the lecture? He had known then Peter was lying to him about knowing the colonels past but he ignored his instincts. He’d trusted a teenager over his own gut; kids lie, they get in trouble, they make bad choices and bad friends. Scott fucking Lang. He was the adult in the situation, he should have known better than to involve a fifteen year old in his shit. It was his fault Peter was in this position in the first place. If he hadn’t spread half truths and obscured ‘facts’ that he’d appropriated illegally, based off of a single report to a teenager things wouldn’t have developed the way he did. He had known Scott was an idiot from what Dr. Pym had told him after the man broke into his facility, but this? This really took the cake. Well he’d picked the wrong kid to involve in his shenanigans, Tony’s kid. And he was going to pay dearly for that mistake, Tony would make sure of that.

But Scott could be dealt with later. Right now he was dealing with his son and he needed a clear head in order to do so. There was a tense silence for a moment while Tony collected himself. He couldn’t take his frustrations at himself and Scott out on the teen; yes, Peter needed to be reprimanded for his own behaviour that much was obvious; but not scolded to that degree. He was still his sweet, sensitive kid who cried when he watched The Lion King- he could only handle so much. After the day he’d had it was obvious Peter was way past his limit.

“I-I’m sorry dad..” Peter sniffled, breaking the silence whilst Tony was busy composing himself.

Tony sighed through his nose, feeling considerably calmer after his internal crisis. “Oh, I know you are. But if you think you’re sorry now you’re gonna be even more sorry once we go and talk to Sam.”

“Sam?! I don’t wanna talk to him!” Peter’s eyes widened. “I wanna talk to Scott first!”

“Oh, you’re talking to him. Scott too. I need to have a word with both of them anyway, so come on.” Tony opened the door and gestured for Peter to follow him through it but the teen stayed glued to the wall, shaking his head reverently.

“No Dad please I don’t wanna I just I don’t-“

“You’re not getting out of this bubs, I’m sorry. Fury wants this shit sorted out now and so do I. This needs to be done.”

“Why do I have to talk to him though?! Can’t you make Steve get the confession out of him-“
“Peter.” Tony snapped a little again. He was trying his best to be less harsh but Peter was pushing his luck with his already short temper. At the end of the day he was still Tony Stark and Tony Stark wasn’t renowned for his patience or his ability to function without copies amounts of caffeine- in which he had had zero that day. ‘I could stand here for an hour and try and explain it to you, but I’d rather let the man tell you himself, alright? I’m tired and sore and way over my emotional limit for today- I know you are too. All I wanna do is shower and go to bed so can you shut your mouth for five minutes and do as I say without argument for once, please?’

“Okay...m’sorry.” Peter hung his head, feeling even more guilty for Tony highlighting the inconveniences he’d caused through his carelessness and Tony sighed. So much for not making him feel worse, Anthony.

“I know.” Tony sighed and wrapped an arm around Peter’s shoulders, leading him back down into the labyrinth of corridors; finally allowing himself to be of some physical comfort to the boy and Peter instantly leaned into his touch. “Let’s just get this over and done with, huh?”

Once they reached yet another room (Peter was getting really sick of this building, god he couldn’t wait to go home- he was even missing JARVIS) Tony paused before knocking. “Do you need to go to the bathroom first?”

Peter shook his head, not even having the spare energy to be embarrassed at the question; his mind was too occupied with making him the walking, talking personification of generalised anxiety disorder.

“Okay.” Tony nodded and knocked against the door. He could see how bad Peter’s anxiety was but there wasn’t much he could do. There was no use in prolonging the inevitable and he knew should they wait longer it would only make it worse. Better just to get the whole ordeal over with so they could all just relax. After Tony ripped Scott and Sam a new one, of course- though maybe he’d wait until Peter was out of the room. Then again maybe not because the second he opened the door and laid eyes on the pair his knuckles were itching to make contact with their faces. Wait, Tony. Not yet.

The offending two were there, obviously, but so was Steve and Fury. Bruce had been forced to go and rest as he was no longer needed now that Tony was there to comfort Peter and Steve had taken the opportunity to talk to Sam about the whole thing. It was Sam himself who addressed the pair first, nodding to each of them. “Hi Peter. Tony.”

“Hi..” Peter said in a quiet voice, staying one step behind his father

“We have some things we need to set straight huh?” The colonel said gently. It was the same tone of voice he had used that day when he’d apologised to Peter but the teens head was swimming, telling him that that was the enemy, the bad guy he shouldn’t be talking to him. But Scott was standing right next to him and so was Steve. There was no way the both of them as well as Tony would let him be in the same room as the bad guy, surely?

“Hi Peter. Tony.”

“For a moment there was a really awkward silence, as everyone looked towards one another to start
the conversation. Naturally, after a minute or so, all eyes fell to their prospective leader, Fury, who immediately rejected the responsibility with a hearty laugh. “Don’t look at me, I ain’t your momma. I’m here as a formality to make sure you bunch of amateurs set this shit straight so I don’t have to come back here again.”

The eye patched man illustrated his stance by deliberately feigning great interest in hands, mock checking his nails for dirt. There was another pause when eyes then respectively fell on Tony who also shrugged as if to agree with Fury.

Finally Sam spoke up, bumping Scott’s shoulder and looking pointedly towards Peter. “Scott, I think you should be the one to-“

“Yeah okay.” Scott took a step forward, rubbing the back of his head and cringing when he realised it was down to him to explain the complexities of the situation. He immediately began rambling which made the other three men roll their eyes with varying degrees of disdain. “Right so look, a lot has happened that I didn’t tell you about. Last night when I went to talk to Wi- Sam you said something must’ve happened for me to do that, remember? Well, you were right. Something did. I know you picked up on the other guys giving me a hard time and well.”

Scott cut himself off as he tried to think of the best way to word things. Peter extended the courtesy to help the man find his words by prompting him. “How bad..?”

The question only seemed to worsen the man’s dilemma though as he opened and shut his mouth a few more times before he made eye contact with Sam again, silently begging for help. The other male didn’t offer any words but gestured using his eyes and his shoulder towards Scott’s midriff and he sighed. Reluctantly Scott lifted his shirt slightly, revealing the mass of bruises that Peter had seen earlier which had sparked that primal rage that fueled his rampage. They varied in darkness and colour, spanning the entirety of his abdomen which was now a sickening rainbow of yellows, greens and purples. The room was silent to begin with but it somehow got quieter, as though its occupants thoughts stopped. The atmosphere shifted as Peter took in the sight.

“This bad. They avoided my face so no one would notice- mainly so you wouldn’t notice really. They knew you’d beat the shit out of them and they were right.” Scott chuckled towards the end of that statement to try and break the tension but it wasn’t well received. No one reciprocated the laughter of anything it made the sudden coldness in the room feel more prominent.

“Fuck.” Peter said under his breath and for once no one reprimanded him on his choice of language, not even Steve, as it seemed everyone reflected the sentiment. “Scott...why didn’t you tell me?”

“I’ve been to prison. I’ve been Ant-Man for two years. I can take a punch. I can handle pain, that wasn’t the problem.” Scott reasoned out loud. “But it got bad. Like, really bad. It wasn’t just the beating, it was the other shit. I could handle it in the beginning but..They took my mattress. They’d fuck my bed up every day so I’d get in trouble when our bunks were inspected. They stopped me eating, they..”

Scott trailed off for a moment when he looked at Peters face, which had gone scarily pale as well as his jaw was clenched. Scott’s eyes darted towards the teens hands which were balled up in fists, white knuckled. Upon seeing that he decided to cease his description. Peter has lost his cool once that day and he didn’t much feel like causing that to happen again, the kid didn’t need all the details to understand. “They did a bunch of shit. And I got to the end of my rope. Everytime I retaliated I’d get caught but they were smart enough to antagonise me where no one could see. Every day and I took it, way before training even started. It was nothing to do with me breaking into Wilson’s office- they just didn’t like entitled smart mouths.”
“Why didn’t you tell someone?” Peter asked though he had a feeling he knew the answer, it was the same reason he hadn’t told anyone either.

“No one was going to believe a convict who had skipped training.” Scott snorted. “Come on Pete, you know how those guys are with people who get things handed to ‘em. They already think I don’t deserve to be here, imagine if I then dared to complain about this amazing opportunity I’d been given- even though I never asked for this shit to begin wi-“

Scott cut himself off when he saw Fury’s face. The man looked amused, as though he was daring Scott to question his decision to bring him there in the first place and the man had the brains to back down whilst he still had the sympathy vote. He audibly gulped before he cleared his throat and continued. “Anyway. It got worse once word got out about me breaking into Wilson’s office-like I told you. Then the day after you...well you know and I screamed at him it got even worse. But I took it, knowing it would be over in a couple weeks but after I stopped retaliating they didn’t like that. So, they started saying things to push my buttons until they finally got the reaction they wanted.“

“What kind of things?” Peter asked and Sam and Steve both looked away from him. “What?”

“You know how I said I was acting out in training to keep Wilson off your back?” Scott chuckled. Peter nodded slowly in response. “Well I wasn’t just worried about him. Miller and Jacobs specifically starting threatening you and since they were in your group-“

“You’re an idiot!” Peter cut him off suddenly yelling. “If they were threatening me you should have let them. Like they’d dare to fucking touch me when I’m the avengers pet dancing monkey!”

“I thought you were bitten by a spider-“

“Scott shut up, this is no time for your stupid jokes!” Peter snapped again and Scott abruptly shut his mouth. “I would have loved for them to have said something to me, then I could have ran and told Mr. Stark and they would have been dealt with- then once they got in trouble for that I could’ve told the higher ups what they were doing to you- god, why didn’t I just lie and say that in the first place?!“

The realisation hit Peter all too late but Scott was quick to counteract that idea. “Because it wouldn’t have meant anything without evidence. That’s why we didn’t say anything about Wilson either, remember? No one would have believed us Pete, not with people like that. You might have Tony Stark on your side and yeah that counts for a lot, but people like them, they’re smart. They know how to keep themselves out of trouble, how do you think they made it this far?”

Peter knew Scott was right, he couldn’t fault that logic. In hindsight with the knowledge they both had now they knew that maybe it would have counted for something, at the very least they could have avoided Peter getting into a fist fight if they had both been honest and forthright, but of course at the time in the midst of it all that hadn’t seemed like an option. Hindsight is twenty twenty after all. After a moment of silence for that information to wash over the teen Peter spoke again, getting back to the original point. “So, what happened for you to tell Wilson...?”

“I did what you did. I flipped out, tried fighting back. I was just so sick of it, you know? I knew no one would help me and I couldn’t risk getting you dragged into it and I just- I flipped. I knew I didn’t stand a chance against all three of ‘em but in the heat of the moment, you know? Anyway, obviously it ended badly for me. So I went to Sam’s room. Gave him a mouthful of abuse accused him of sending them after me but it turned out he had
no idea what they were doing. We talked shit out, he was only ever tough on me because of—“
looked at Tony “something that happened way back and because of Germany it was nothing to do
with the whole office thing. That and I kept being a prick to try and get the attention off of you like
I told you yesterday. But once I told him everything he was just as pissed as you were. So we came
up with a plan. Like I said they’d always get me alone in places without cameras so we timed it for
when Wilson would be on duty to catch them. But uh..you kinda caught them before he did.”

“Oh.” Was all Peter could say. How else was he meant to respond to all that?

“Yeah.” Scott said awkwardly, it seemed like he didn’t know how to respond either.

“Yeah” Tony joined in. Though his tone was a lot more mocking and sarcastic- he might as well
have said ‘I told you so.’

After a minute of letting the weird plan the pair had come up with Peter found more words. “Scott
why didn’t you just tell me?”

Scott scoffed. “Oh yeah and risk you getting beat up too? Or you popping off and beating them up-
which happened anyway—“

“Exactly! If you’d told me in the first place I could have told T- Mr. Stark and he could’ve helped.
Or at the very least you should have told me that morning and I wouldn’t have gotten in the way!”

“I don’t know if you remember kid but you were pretty upset about your team going missing- it
didn’t exactly feel like the right time!” Scott snapped back, waving his arms around wildly.

Peter conceded that the man had a point, so he couldn’t exactly argue about that but he did have
issues with one part of the narrative. “Okay so I get that you two are like- friends now or whatever
and now you know why he was being mean to you but- why were you so mean to me the whole
time?”

Peter turned his attention to Sam who up until that point had only offered supportive glances
towards Scott to aid the difficult conversation. Though he seemed ready for the attention to be
brought on to him as though he had prepared his speech much more than Scott had.

“I know it seemed that way and I’m sorry that’s how it came across.” Sam smiled sadly and
exchanged a look with Steve, affirming Peter’s suspicious that the old friends had discussed the
situation in length whilst Peter was being confronted by Tony. “I couldn’t show favouritism in
front of the rest of the group. Everyone knows who you are, who both of you are, and like Scott
said they were already going to give you a hard time for skipping all the official steps they had to
go through to get here; Which I understand was through no fault of your own and you both went
through your own tough times to get where you are today- but some of the other rookies were less
than understanding of that. Bitterness and jealousy turn to hate as Scott found out first hand. I
thought if I made it obvious that I was giving you guys an extra hard time that they’d feel as though
they didn’t have to, that you were getting enough of a punishment for it from me, that if I was on
their side- they’d give you less shit for it, you know? Maybe take pity on you a bit and let you off
easy. Also the fact that everyone knew who you guys were affiliated with, what side we were all
on during the Germany conflict. I had to play that role because of what the official report said, it
would look fishy otherwise. I admit, I went too far with it- especially with you Scott and I’m sorry.
I never meant for any of it to get so out of hand...And for you specifically Peter, I gave you a hard
time because you should never have been put in with the newbies. Your skill level is way higher
than any of theirs.”

Sam paused for a while to allow Peter to absorb the mass of information that had just been fed to
him. It was a lot. It essentially challenged every experience he had in the weeks he had been in the compound and it was so much to take in. He was now second guessing every single look and gesture and moment between him and the corporal and he had to admit, it made a lot of sense. Things were starting to click into place now that he had the background information. Except for one thing...

“But...but the whole civil war thing...I don’t get it. You’re meant to hate us right? Like actually hate us, ’cause we helped get you fired and Steve made you take the rap for him or something..?"

It was Tony who interjected, sighing dramatically and pinching the bridge of his nose. “Peter he never got in trouble for Germany. No one did. There was no animosity because of Germany, you should’ve known better than to listen to this idiot—

Tony pointed angrily at Scott but Peter was quick to jump to his defence. “He’s not an idiot he has a masters in electrical engi-“

“He didn’t know what he was talking about. He read a file that Fury wrote so none of us got into shit for the diplomacy we had to pull to stop anyone going down for the whole thing. That file was complete horseshit—

“How was I meant to know that when you never told me?!?” Peter yelled and it looked as though Tony was about to yell back but Sam stepped in to fill in all the answers to the boys questions in a lot less hostile manner.

“I stepped down because my wife had my daughter and Steve knew that I wanted to get out- for awhile at least. It just so happened to coincide with the end of all the fighting and S.H.I.E.L.D were launching their investigation so me and Steve came up with a plan and Fury helped us orchestrate it. It was the perfect opportunity to get me out without having to live like Clint does, one food in each camp. I keep a stable government job, still live with my family full time and I can go back to the Avengers when and if I want to or if I’m ever needed. I get to train new recruits, stay in the loop so to speak and go on call and patrol as the Falcon every once in a while- but still get to see my baby girl grow up. In the process I became the scapegoat but me and Steve and Fury came to that decision together. No one made me take the rap for anything. And before you blame Tony for not telling you Peter, he didn’t know. No one knew, not all of it anyway, it was the best way to keep everyone from going down for it.”

“I didn’t know that until today but this is what happens when you communicate, Peter. I could’ve just jumped to conclusions too and made up a whole conspiracy theory like that jackass.” Tony pointed angrily to Scott. “But I didn’t. It took one conversation for Fury to tell me what had happened. Hell I thought Steve hated Sam’s guts until an hour ago, did you see me running up and punching him as soon as you told me who your commanding officer was? This is why adults talk things out and ask other people before they go jumping to conclusions- but clearly Scott here isn’t an adult. He’d rather perpetuate bullshit from one report as though it’s one of the Ten Commandments- tell me Lang, are you the kind of person that reads something on Facebook and then thinks it’s real—“

“Mr. Stark you’re being—” Peter caught himself from saying anything too offensive given the company he was in. “- mean. You just heard about everything he had to go through with the other recruits can you blame him for thinking Wilson was behind all of it? I thought that too so it’s not his fault I didn’t tell you—“

Tony turned his anger back towards his son. He couldn’t believe after everything Scott had caused, Peter was still defending him. Taking Scott’s side in the whole thing instead of just admitting he should have told dad in the first place. In Tony’s exhausted state he viewed that as some sort of
betrayal- a betrayal that Peter was now displaying in front of both Steve and their boss. Well, at least he now knew where his son's loyalty lied. “You didn’t just not tell me, you lied to my face. You’ll be lucky if I ever trust you to be out of my sight for longer than a minute again. I’m really disappointed in you, Peter I thought you were more mature than this.”

Scott frowned as Peter's head fell ashamedly towards the floor. He understood Tony being upset but he didn’t think it was right to chastise the kid in front of a room full of colleagues like that and god knows Scott really doesn’t know when to keep quiet. Even Steve knew not to interject but Scott clearly did not. “Look lay off of him it’s not the kids fault-“

It seemed the very man who had, at least in Tony’s eyes, caused all this mess and turned Peter against him opening his mouth and challenging him in front of everyone was enough to push an already physically and mentally worn Tony over the edge. The man flew across the room suddenly quicker than anyone had the chance to react to and pinned Scott against the wall, one forearm pushing on the other man’s chest. All the anger and fear and hurt he’d felt that day all accumulating into one moment of pure rage- not unlike what had happened to Peter that very same morning. Unfortunately for Scott he was the target of said rage.

“Shut your mouth. You’re right it’s not his fault it’s yours.” Tony said lowly, through gritted teeth, with such a bite to his voice that Peter flinched. He hadn’t heard such ferocity come from the man in a long time and never over something so seemingly minor, at least in the grand scheme of things.

“Woah. Okay let’s everyone just cool down a little huh?” Sam said gently, moving to step in front of Peter and in between the two men but Tony wouldn’t let him. Steve got up from his seat, perched against a desk and pulled Peter backwards by his shoulders.

“You got my son involved in your shit!” Tony barked directly into Scott’s face, pushing against the man’s collar bones with each word. In the moment he didn’t even realise what he had said and once the words came out of his mouth the room fell extra silent like it had when Scott exposed his stomach.

“I never meant to I tried to keep him out of it but you know what he’s like-“ Scott blabbered before his brain caught up with his mouth and he realised what Tony has just referred to Peter as. “Did you just say-“

To everyone’s surprise Tony didn’t back down or even really react to his slip up, not outwardly at least. “You heard what I fucking said Lang! Now listen to this- stay the fuck away from him, unless you wanna go to federal afterall-“

“Dad-“

“Peter shut up, you’ve done enough! I don’t wanna hear a word out of you right now, understand?! I’ll deal with you later!”

But Peter pressed on, despite Steve squeezing his shoulder trying to get him to back down, as the blond knew Tony well enough by that point to know when not to test him. Peter however lacked that knowledge. “But it wasn’t like that! It wasn’t Scott’s fault-“

“Peter if you know what’s good for you shut the fuck up right now before I get your ass sent home and you can kiss goodbye to ever being Spider-Man again!” Tony practically screamed. He’d never yelled at Peter like that, it was a voice he only saved for people he was furious with. Through all of their arguments he’d never snapped quite so angrily but even in his livid state the way he jumped back in fear made Tony snap out of it. Even he was shocked by the harshness of his own tone, so he dialed it down a little, but not much. Just enough to stop Peter from flinching again. “You know
Despite now being suddenly paralysed in fear from Tony’s voice alone Peter managed to find the words to argue. He wasn’t about to let Scott go through even more turmoil to try and protect him. “No dad I’m not letting you blame everything on Scott it was my fault I didn’t tell you! He kept telling me to leave it and I wouldn’t! He didn’t do anything wrong!”

“He broke into an office and hacked a government computer, then proceeded to read through piles of classified information~”

“Because he didn’t know where he was or why or for how long! No one told him anything and he has a daughter! He wanted to know how long it was going to be until he could see her again- how would you feel if that was me?! And she’s his real kid!”

It was very brief, not even a millisecond but Peter saw it. He saw how Tony’s expression flickered when Peter said ‘real kid’ and the regret filled the boy’s stomach instantaneously. It was a very minor flicker of emotion but on a man like Tony, who had looked death in the face with a smile on numerous occasions, it was obvious just how much the comment had hurt him. “I didn’t mean tha-“

“I get it.” Tony said quickly and casually, not taking his eyes off of Scott, who’s chest he was still leaning on.

“No dad I didn’t-“

“Enough.” Tony said with finality. Had they been alone Peter wouldn’t have stopped apologising but in fear of hearing Tony scream at him again in front of their present company the teen bit his tongue, literally, vowing to make penance as soon as they had privacy. “Next time you want information, Scott, try asking someone- it’s a social skill I’m still trying to teach motormouth over there but you’re old enough to know better, especially since you have a real kid of your own. And don’t go spreading rumours to impressionable children. Especially not mine, understand?”

“Yes sir.” Scott nodded. He didn’t seem particularly intimidated but Peter figures he had practise keeping his face neutral during times like that given his proclivity for being threatened. That and the man’s mind was still reeling from the fact Tony had just called Peter his son.

“And tell Dr. Pym I said hi.” Tony pushed off of Scott’s chest and headed straight to the door, not sparing a glance towards anyone; though the lack of acknowledgement felt especially targeted towards the suddenly teary teenager which had caused such an abrupt end to their meeting. The genius slammed said door behind him, making everyone cringe and Peter cover his ears.

“Well that was awkward.” Fury smiled and clapped his hands after a moment of silence. “Anyway! Regarding your training- as long as shit ain’t gonna be weird between y’all now are you happy to finish out the week?”

The three men the question was directed to exchanged glances and nodded. Everyone was still in shock given the very weird end to that investigation and it had been an automatic response, especially on Peters part as he’d been awaiting an official punishment from Fury regarding the laws and codes of conduct he’d violated.

“Good! Saves me the paperwork! Now if y’all bitches ain’t gonna give me any more problems I’m going home!”

Just as Nick was also reaching the door a shell shocked Peter stopped him. “Wait! I’m- im not in
“trouble?”

“You wanna be?”

“N-no of course not I just-“

“Look. You have to deal with IronDad. That’s punishment enough kid and I’m sure Sam will come up with extra PT to make up for the three men he’s lost.” Sam smiled slightly at that and nodded, making Peter cringe. “It was one punch up, let it go, I know I have. See you around kid, Mr. Lang, Corporal, Cap.”

“So….” Scott said awkwardly, swinging back and forth on his heels, looking around at the other people in the room. Steve was half leaning on the tank again with his arms folded staring at the floor, preparing himself for his own fight with a very angry Tony. Sam has a similar stance but he looked rather relieved as opposed to upset and Peter...well Peter looked as good as could be expected.

“I’m really sorry Mr. Wilson.”

“In light of the circumstances kid, call me Sam. And I owe you an apology too, you’re right I shouldn’t have made such an effort to be tough on you. That day after you run out of class, I should’ve pulled you aside then and explained. I wanted to but I changed my mind last minute, figuring Steve and Tony made the decision to keep it under wraps for a reason.”

“Yeah I didn’t get that part!” Scott chimed in and started talking to Steve directly. “So you guys stayed friends, but you didn’t know he was here. And Tony knew he was here but didn’t know you guys were friends? Like, I thought after the whole war thing last year you’d be better at communicating-“

“Yes, thank you Scott.” Steve snapped. It was obvious that he wasn’t in the mood to be questioned about his own bad decisions either, there had been plenty of that for one day and he already had to go through that whole argument with Tony. Sam smiled at his friend, seeming to have read his mind.

Steve excused himself then to go and mentally prepare for the mammoth task of explaining to Tony why he had lied to him, after seeing how well that went for Peter he didn’t feel confident in it- and he didn’t have the added benefit of being an adorable kid so he was really in for it.

Once the remaining members of G group were alone alter addressed another elephant in the room. “So I’m allowed to keep training...? In your group?”

“Well Fury had suggested moving you both earlier but I talked him out of it. Figured you were both comfortable with the routine and the people now and it’s only another few days, so.” Sam shrugged. “If you’re happy to stick with my group I’m more than happy to have you there, now that those bastards are finally out, thank god. They were driving me nuts and that was before all of this went down.”

Peter grimaced when he was reminded of the men he’d assaulted, the very reason this meeting was being held in the first place. “What about Miller, Jacobs and Thomas.? Are they...?”

“They’ll recover. Miller has similar regenerative abilities to you and Jacobs and Thomas only have minor injuries. And Peter don’t feel guilty about hurting those guys, they’re scumbags.” Sam said darkly. “I’d never condone that kind of thing, but seriously. They deserved what they got and more.”
That comment confused Peter given what he’d been told earlier. “But Steve said they had clean records?”

“That’s because they’re clean but their hands aren’t. Trust me, I’ve heard stories. Blondy probably just told you that to get you riled up. They used Scott being disrespectful as an excuse to do what they did and it’s not the first time. They were in a focus catchment group back in February and the same shit happened but I couldn’t pin them for it- they used loopholes in the system to get around punishment so my hands were tied. But I tricked them into thinking I was on their side, specifically asked for them to be put in G group once I saw their names on the orientation list and waited to catch them doing something shady. Until last night I figured they’d packed their old tricks in but then Scott comes bursting into my room hell bent on fighting me again.” Sam and Scott laughed at the last part.

“Again?” The curly haired kid tilted his head in confusion. What else had he missed? It was obvious they weren’t referencing Germany.

“Yeah, a lot has happened, Pete.” Scott laughed and for once Peter didn’t ask to hear the story, he was too tired. “So, were all pretty dumb then huh?”

“Yup.” Both Peter and Sam agreed which made Scott chuckle, though the latter winced as he did so, the injuries on his stomach clearly paining him.

“Communication is key boys.” Pepper said from the doorway, which made the trio jump as they hadn’t seen her appear there. “Come on, sweetie, I’ll lead you back to your room.”

Now that things had been resolved, Peter finally knew what was going on, that Scott was okay and that he hadn’t killed anyone; that his family also weren’t dead and that he wasn’t going to be thrown in jail for the rest of his life, Peter felt so much better. Like a physical weight had been lifted off of him and he’d never understood that expression fully until that moment. There was one thing left to take care of now that was still causing him to feel sick with nerves, but he hoped he’d be able to make up for that like he had with everything else. God he was so lucky with how things had turned out for him.

“Have fun trying to talk to Tony, Pete..” Scott grimaced with a small wave as ways of saying goodbye.

“Yeah..” Peter’s face reflected Scott’s and he gulped slightly.

“I’ll see you tomorrow morning kid, if you’re alive by then I mean.” Sam winked at him. Just as he went to follow Pepper the man added: “Y’all know I have to keep the mean guy act up though, right? Since words already getting around about what happened it would be too suspicious if I-“

“I’ll be out extra early for ‘punishment’ corporal wilson.” Peter chuckled softly.

“No hard feelings?”

“None whatsoever.”

Pepper lead Peter back to his room as promised and he was finally able to have a decent conversation with the woman, explaining in length how everyone had managed to upset one another by not communicating and she laughed; comparing his synopsis of the events to the ‘what did we learn today’ segment on a children’s television programme. He was reluctant to stop talking to her when he got back to his bunk, mostly because he didn’t want to have to face a seething Tony but also because he found he really enjoyed the lady’s company. When they parted ways he
expressed that he hoped to get to talk to her again which he reciprocated. But Peter wasn’t sure he’d ever talk to anyone again since Tony was likely to bite his head off as soon as he entered his room.

To his surprise the man didn’t. When he came in Tony was lying on his bed, in clean clothes facing the wall, but Peter could tell by the man’s breathing (well, lack of snoring to be more precise) that he wasn’t asleep.

“Dad?” He said apprehensively as he waited for the bomb to drop.

“Hm?” Tony hummed in response, not turning over.

“You okay?”

“Mhm.” Peter shifted uncomfortably for a second, wondering if he should just leave the man be but that was when Tony rolled over. “How did it go?”

“F-Fury, uh, Fury and Corporal Wilson said I can stay on training, in the same group and everything. A-and I’m not in any big trouble, just some extra PT and stuff like Scott had to do…”

“That’s good.” Tony said shortly. Peter hadn’t been expecting a long winded response but Tony wasn’t exactly making an effort to help carry the conversation and by that point, the day had gone on so long and it had been so exhausting in a multitude of ways that Peter was done beating around the bush; Pepper was right, today’s lesson was about communication and Peter didn’t want to leave anything else unsaid. He wanted to get everything out on the table so it was done and it wouldn’t come back to bite him like things had for Peter, Scott, Sam, Steve and Tony alike. “Can’t you just tell say you’re mad at me and get it over with?”

“Okay.” It seems Tony had been waiting for the opportunity to say his piece and was feeling the same way as Peter was. He sat up, swinging his legs over the side of the bed and took a deep breath through his nose before he started on his rant; though this time, much to Peter’s relief he didn’t raise his voice. “I’m mad at you. I’m mad at you for breaking my trust and being reckless. I’m mad at you for forgetting your training and lashing out because it put you in danger. You didn’t know what those men were capable of- Christ you didn’t know what Scott was capable of. The man’s a criminal Peter you were naive to take everything his said for gospel. But most of all I’m mad because of how much it hurt me. Having to see you go through something that was completely avoidable because you were stupid and didn’t talk to me in the first place to protect someone you barely knew. You trusted someone more than you trusted me-“

“I didn’t mean it like that-“

“I know. And that’s worse. You were inconsiderate. Immature. And you made me look like an idiot to our bosses as well as yourself. You think it wasn’t hard enough to get a teenager enlisted? You just had to go and prove everyone right that a child isn’t emotionally stable enough to be an agent, like it wasn’t difficult enough to get you here in the first place. The strings I had to pull- and Fury. Don’t you understand how fragile all this is? One more slip up like that and it’s not just bye bye being an avenger it’s bye bye everything. You could be taken away Peter. Not because of a fight, those happen. We’re all animals trapped in a cage in this place that’s part of the training, put a bunch of people who are highly trained in a small volatile environment- it’s a test to see if you’ll break or not. But getting involved in some stupid conspiracy, lying to me of all people- you do that out in the real world, out in our world, you could be putting countless lives at risk. You’ve really let me down. This isn’t like last time with all the Vulture business where you’d tried to tell me and I didn’t listen- you had a chance to tell me and you didn’t. You looked me in the eyes and told me you had no idea who Sam was. And fuck it I’m gonna say that old cliche- I’m not mad at you, not
anymore because I understand why you did what you did. I mean it, I do understand- but I am very, very disappointed in you Peter.”

When Tony had finally finished, Peter sniffled, big fat baby tears running down his face. He had intended to stand there and take Tony’s words on the chin, like a man, to show that he was mature enough to take the consequences of his actions but his eyes betrayed him. He couldn’t help it, how could he not cry when the man he admired the most in the world just told him he’s disappointed in him? All Peter had ever wanted was to make Tony proud of him and he just messed it all up.

“‘There. You happy now?’ Tony said snappily and Peter nodded, still crying. ‘Finally,’ Tony thought. ‘I can stop being mad now.’

“Now come here, god dammit you’re breaking my fucking heart.” Tony patted the bed beside him and held his arm out for Peter to duck under- which the teen did without hesitation, immediately burrowing into the man’s side and sobbing with abandon. The adult sighed in relief that he didn’t have to fight for a hug too.

“I’m sorry I’m so so sorry I’m such an idiot I-I I’m so-“ Peter blubbered into the man’s chest. There was the Peter Tony knew, the unreservedly apologetic mess of curly brown hair.

“It’s okay, baby. I’m here now, I’m sorry I left. This is my fault too. But just take this as a learning curve, okay? I can forgive this now everyone makes mistakes and lies to their parents it’s a part of growing up. But if this happens again or if I find out you’ve put yourself in danger there will be hell to pay, do you understand me?” Tony made his last point known, thankful to have the conversation finally end as he held the shaking boy tight as he nodded in agreement. “Good. Now come on, stop crying. We’ve both done enough of that.”

“Y-you were crying?”

“You don’t think I got upset last night when I realised I wasn’t gonna get back in time to see you? Or watching the footage Wilson got of you losing your shit like that? I knew how bad you were gonna feel-“

“Dad I’m a monster. I-I couldn’t stop I shouldn’t be allowed to be an agent if I can’t even-“

Tony was already prepared for that. Of course Peter was going to think that after one little break in control- it was Peter. He’d never give himself the benefit of the doubt. “Shh, Sh Shh. Enough Pete. Enough. You know that’s not true but we’re both too exhausted to talk about that on top of everything else right now. I know you didn’t get much sleep last night so come on. Let’s take a nap before we have to go and face the others and fill them in.”

“I’m so tired.” Peter sobbed and rubbed furiously at his eyes.

“I know bubby. Go take a shower, you’ll feel better then we can sleep for a couple hours, yeah?”

Peter nodded and took himself off to do just that, letting the hot water wash away a multitude of sins. So many emotions in such a short amount of time had reaped absolute havoc on the boys head and he was so unbelievably tired he could have just fallen asleep right in the shower, standing upright. He started to feel better before he opened his eyes, realised where he was and his brain decided to kick in full force again.

‘Please give me a break for five minutes.’ Peter thought miserably but by the time he had walked back to their room he was already crying again. “D-do you hate me?”

Tony looked over to the doorway where Peter was leaning with his hair still soaking wet in his
pyjamas; which consisted of his ‘I survived my trip to NYC’ shirt and a pair of pants covered in a
print of Steve’s shield—both of which the teen insisted he kept because they were comfy, not
because the held any significant sentimental value.

“If I did my life would be a lot easier but no Peter. I still love you.” Tony chuckled and gestured for
Peter to join him on his bunk again for another hug before he forced the teen to go to sleep.

“I love you too.” Peter sniffed, clinging to Tony like an abandoned Koala.

“You’re not sleeping in your own bed are you?”

“No.” Peter sniffled again, making Tony laugh.

“Okay but at least let me lock the door. We don’t need to explain that to anyone on top of
everything else huh?” Peter relinquished his grip on the man’s shirt long enough for Tony to flip
the lock and immediately cling to him again the second he got back into bed. “Can I have some
room please?”

Peter sniffed slightly but not much, the pair becoming a mildly uncomfortable mass of limbs
almost instantly, but neither cared. They were both just happy to be laying down, in the same place
getting both physical and emotion comfort after the clusterfuck of a day they’d just had.

It was quiet for a moment. Too quiet apparently for Peter’s brain. Just as Tony started to drift off to
sleep Peter whispered; “Are you sure you don’t hate me?”

Christ this child was going to be the death of him. “I’m sure.”

“Prove it.”

“How would you like me to do that?”

“I-I don’t know just prove it.”

“Oh come here you big baby.”

“I’m sorry I said real dad I didn’t mean it like that.” Peter started crying again, even harder than
before. He hadn’t wanted to bring it up but it was eating at him. He couldn’t believe he had been so
careless with his words and how much that must’ve upset his dad—Peter got upset enough when
Tony had to refer to him as his intern when they were out in public, he could only imagine how
much his slip of the tongue had felt.

“I know I know, look don’t worry about it right now, okay? Just snuggle in and get some rest. It’s
been a really shitty day—“

“So bad.” Peter agreed.

“I know, Underoos. But it’s alright. I’m right here. I’m not going anywhere.”

“You’re not allowed to ever again and never when I can’t talk to you.”

“Okay. Understood.” After what had happened in the short period of time since Tony had left the
boy, he agreed.

“I hated it.”

“Well that’s just another reason to finish your training the huh? We won’t have to leave you behind
so much.” Despite his rocking and words of comfort Peter didn’t seem to be calming down any. “Come on bubby stop crying, you’re gonna make yourself sick.”

“I’m trying but it won’t s-Stop!” Peter coughed wetly, sounding as frustrated as Tony felt. “And I already d-d-did.”

“I know pepper told me, that’s why we gotta get you calmed down.”

But Peter was still busy berating himself, talking in circles. “I should’ve got in so much more trouble for what I did.”

“You’re gonna be in trouble, trust me. I ain’t letting you out of my sight for the rest of our stay here and when I can’t have eyes on you, Sam’s gonna report everything you do back to me. No electronics and you’re grounded indefinitely until I can come up with an appropriate punishment for your actions. Does that make you feel better?”

Peter stiffened for a moment before relaxing completely. “A little yeah.”

Really? The kid just wanted to be punished, that’s what it took to make him feel better? Tony supposed with Peter’s issues it made it easier for him, he didn’t have to beat himself up for stuff if he had a way to make up for what he had done...hey whatever works, Tony just wanted to sleep. “Good. Now can you close your eyes?”

“Yeah.”

‘Thank god.’ Tony sighed internally. “You want bear?”

“No. Just you.” Despite the warm fuzzy feeling that contented statement gave him, Tony knew the teen struggled to sleep for long periods of time without the childhood toy.

“You can have bear too we’re not mutually exclusive.” Tony chuckled and went to retrieved the stuffed animal anyway but Peter clung to him when he went to stand up.

“You’re not leaving again.” Woah, there was a lot of emotion behind that..

“Okay. Okay.” Tony said quickly, laying back down to avoid setting the sensitive child off again. Still, he couldn’t resist adding a sarcastic comment. “And I thought I had abandonment issues.”

“Shut up.”

“Can I get up to pee at least?”

Peter shook his head and sniffed angrily. “Hold it.”

Luckily Tony was well versed in falling asleep with a full bladder and he gave in to the exhaustion very quickly after that, as did Peter.
End Of Training

Chapter Summary

***A shitty filler chapter***
probably totally unnecessary but I wanted to tie off any loose ends and set up for the
next one- then again I could've just posted chapter 42 without this crappy filler one but
hey ho I've written it now soooo- might as well post it. Imma post the next one today
too so y'all won't have to be left with this utter drivel. Feel free to skip it, nothing
actually happens in this one.
Why are the chapter I hate always the longest? Why does it take me so long to write
such shit? Find out on the next episode of dragon ball z.

Tony woke up a few hours later, alone in his bunk, assumedly having been woken up by Peter as
he dashed out of the room to use the bathroom. He sat up and checked his phone seeing how long
they had slept and deeming it an appropriate amount of time to nap and deciding, against his
body’s protests, to get up. As much as he desperately wanted to go back to bed, he knew he
wouldn’t be able to sleep that night if he did and his sleep pattern was messed up enough as it was.
That and his own bladder was screaming at him, making him thankful that he didn’t have to try and
detangle himself from a wiggly teenager first thing after waking up, that was never fun; especially
when the teen was being extra clingy like he had been when they laid down. Slowly as he woke up
the days events came flooding back to him and he groaned; god, he hoped Peter would be in a
better mood after his naphe wasn’t sure if he’d be able to deal with another round of tears.

Fortunately when Peter reappeared he still seemed to be half asleep himself, not a tear in sight just
looking a little bit dazed; his hair was sticking up in every direction possible thanks to falling
asleep with it wet and his eyes were a lot less puffy from all the crying.

“Hi there.” Tony chuckled gesturing for Peter to sit back down which the boy did, leaning against
him.

“Mm.” Peter mumbled in ways of a response as he rubbed his eyes tiredly.

“Still sleepy?” Peter nodded and closed his eyes when Tony started messing with his hair; he was
just trying to flatten some of the pieces that were sticking straight up but Peter melted into the
touch, looking as though he was about to drift off again. Well, that information would come in
handy next time Peter was fussy and fighting sleep, or during one of their late night, post night
terror movie marathons. “I know bubs but we can’t sleep all day. You want some coffee?”
The teen seemed to perk up a bit at that. Considering he wouldn’t be going back to training until the next day Tony assumed it would be safe to allow the teen some caffeine as they wouldn’t have to worry about his overactive bladder causing problems.

“Put some people clothes on then.” Tony laughed gesturing to the cacophony of pattern and colour the teen was currently wearing and rather than retort Peter just stuck his tongue out at the man. Tony left the room to finally use the bathroom himself (thank god, his kidneys were starting to ache) but by the time he returned the mood in the room had dramatically shifted, not that he expected any less. Peter didn’t even need to say anything for Tony to realise that the kid was upset again. He had gotten himself changed back into normal clothes, as opposed to his grey uniform and he was sitting on the bottom of his own bunk, leaning his elbows on his knees and had his head down staring at the floor.

Before Tony got to ask if he was okay Peter spoke. “I don’t think I wanna be an agent anymore.”

“What?” Tony asked, genuinely shocked. He sat down opposite the boy; what had happened in less than three minutes for the boy to come to that conclusion? He knew there was a lot going on under that mass of wild brown hair but that declaration was very dramatic- even by Peter standards. “What are you talking about?”

“I-I shouldn’t be allowed to be an agent. I couldn’t control myself and I hurt people.” The teen didn’t sound on the brink of tears, or angry, nothing like he had hours before. His voice was low, and cold almost hollow sounding and to be honest it made a shiver run up Tony’s spine. He sounded so sure of himself but Tony knew that wasn’t his Peter talking, it was the mean voice in the back of his head that constantly plagued the teens waking hours, just this time it had gained control of his mouth whilst he was in a vulnerable state. Tony was somewhat prepared for that, knowing how Peter’s mind worked, but he was still emotionally drained himself and running off of only a few hours sleep.

“Peter that’s kind of part of the job-“

Peter’s eyes snapped up from the floor up to Tony’s face as he cut him off. “I’m serious, Tony, please don’t make light of this. You tell me to talk to you about how I feel and that’s what I’m doing.”

There was almost a begging edge to the teens tone and it made the older man back off a little bit. It was true and though Tony didn’t want to hear any more angst that day he knew it was better if they talked it out then and there rather than risk another build up of emotion with a possibly explosive conclusion like that happened that morning. If Peter was actually talking to him, like he had
chastised him for not doing, he ought to listen, despite how tired he was. “You’re right. I’m sorry, go ahead.”

“It was so scary. I could see what I was doing, I could feel it, but I couldn’t stop. I wanted to b-but I just couldn’t. It wasn’t like what happened with Flash, I-I...I’m dangerous.” It was obvious that there was more Peter wanted to say, but he couldn’t find the words. He often struggled to express himself in these moments; when there’s a thousand words running through his head all at once it’s hard to pick out the right ones, prioritise and make sense of them all. It was suffocating but luckily Tony knew that. He didn’t have to be a mind reader to know what Peter was thinking in that moment- it wasn’t anything he hadn’t heard before after all and the boy did tend to fall back to the same points each time something bad happened; it was always either he was a worthless piece of shit who didn’t deserve anything good happening to him, Tony was going to end up hating and or abandoning him or that he was dangerous- at this point Toy was considering writing cue cards to use any time one of those ideas came up. It was the same speech every time but he didn’t really mind; the teen needed a lot of reassurance and praise, yes it got wearing at times (especially times like that when Tony was over his emotional limit) but if that’s what he needed the man was more than happy to fulfill that role.

Tony thought for a moment before he answered, trying to think of the best way to broach the subject without sugarcoating it. “You’re supposed to be. You’re essentially a sentient weapon. That's the whole point of being an agent s-“

“I don’t want to be a weapon. And I wasn’t sentient not in that moment, my body took over and I was powerless to stop it. I wasn’t thinking at all I was just acting- I don’t want to be a weapon, you’ve seen the iron giant I don’t wanna be that- I don’t want to.” Peter shook his head as he spoke, not realising how he had repeated himself.

“The analogy seemed to have struck a chord in the boy’s head as he nodded briefly, before he continued with his original point. “I hurt people Tony. I don’t wanna do that..”

“Okay, I worded that badly.” Tony admitted and crossed the room to sit next to Peter on the other bed. He took a longer pause to consider his words before he spoke again, not wanting to say something that would trigger another bad response. “Your..your body is a tool. A suit- think of it like piloting the iron man suit, right? Or even your spidey suit. You make the decisions, you’re the one operating, but at the end of the day it’s the tech that is doing the brunt of the work. You’re telling it what to do most of the time but there’s also back up programmes for times when you’re incapacitated. Like instant kill mode- if you get knocked out, or hurt, or overwhelmed, Karen will step in and fight for you, to get you out of wherever you’re at; the suit will take over in times where you can’t. It’s the same with your training; when your mind fails you, your body is there as a backup, it falls back onto your training and reacts accordingly. That’s the whole point, otherwise we’d all be too preoccupied thinking of what we’re gonna do next consciously to be able to focus on the bigger picture. That’s all that happened. You saw something that upset you and your body reacted to the threat accordingly.”

The analogy seemed to have struck a chord in the boy’s head as he nodded briefly, before he continued with his original point. “I hurt people Tony. I don’t wanna do that..”
“You did but it wasn’t out of the blue. It wasn’t unprovoked. You saw three people attacking one person who had no chance of fighting back, hell anyone would have flipped their shit at that. You stopped when Scott pulled you back-“

“But only because he was there to stop me. I didn’t stop myself that’s what I’m saying-“

“I know, but don’t you think that still counts for something? Peter you can lift a bus without breaking a sweat do you really think Scott would have been able to pull you back that easily if part of you wasn’t still manning the controls? There’s no way he would have been able to stop you if you didn’t want to stop.”

Peter hadn’t thought about it like that, but Tony was right. If his body had taken over completely it would have been easy to throw Scott off and continue punching Miller in the face. Part of him must have wanted to stop, or at least knew when to stop, and just used Scott as an excuse to do so. “...I guess.”

“You lost your cool, it was a mistake, it happens. One little incident doesn’t make you the next Hulk, Bruce will tell you. You’re not a monster, I know that’s how you feel but every time you feel like that look at all of the good things you’ve done, alright? Would a monster have pulled his arch nemesis out from under a pile of rubble to save his life?”

“No I just threw him in jail and ruined his family's life.” Peter said coldly and his eyes lost their brightness again, falling back down towards the floor. Okay Tony, bad example; maybe don’t bring up the Vulture next time. Still a little raw.

“Uh uh, bubs stay with me, don’t switch off I know it’s been a long day but just stay with me here.” Tony wrapped an arm around the boy and shook him gently, trying to keep him present. Peter was getting that distant look in his eyes again and Tony knew he wouldn’t be able to deal with that, not after everything else that day. “A lesser man would have gone with the old style of justice and let him die but you didn’t. A lesser man would’ve instantly killed those three recruits; You were perfectly capable of going in and snapping Miller, Thomas and Jacobs necks but you didn’t. You could have hurt them, really hurt them, killed them if you wanted to; but even after you lost your shit you still didn’t take it to the nth degree. Instead you disarmed them, taught them a lesson they won’t soon forget and you stopped when Scott pulled you back; like Wilson said they needed to be taken down a peg. You did stop yourself, even if it didn’t feel like it. So please don’t torture yourself with this, alright? It’s not a big deal- and I’m not trying to belittle your feelings, really, I’m not. But trust me on this. If Fury thought you were a menace or a danger to society he would have whisked you off and put you in a metal box somewhere before anyone had the chance to say Flerken.”
Peter opened his mouth to argue further but the last word was foreign him and he tilted his head like a confused puppy. “What does that mean?”

Oops- but hey it distracted the teen long enough to get him to snap out of his self hatred- “It was from that Swedish clock show remember? Come on let’s go get some coffee. Thor is probably beside himself because he had to wait for us to wake up before he could say hi.”

Peter nodded and stood up to follow the man out of the room but he froze. There was still something he hadn’t mentioned, something he knew Tony would get mad about…but he had to tell him. “W-Wait! I-I need to tell you something…”

“Oh god, what now?” Tony chuckled at first but when he turned around and saw Peters panicked face his smile dropped. “What else haven’t you told me, Peter?”

“It..I don’t..” dang it he should have mentioned it earlier..if he told Tony about forgetting his meds now- after everything else, he’d be in trouble. God, why didn’t he just say something earlier when he was admitting to everything else he lied about? If he added that on top his dad would think he had even more secrets he was keeping..then again if he left it any longer he’d be in more trouble later down the line-

“Peter. Spit it out.” Tony said seriously snapping the boy out of his internal debate over the dilemma. He had to give the man something, he was taking too long to answer and Tony was making his angry face-

“I broke my phone.” Peter said quickly. He had neglected to tell the man earlier and he was also worried about getting in trouble for that- so at least the admission bought him some time. Maybe he could wait until they got home, tell Tony then; he’d been off of his meds too long anyway a couple more days couldn’t hurt, right? That way he’d be more likely to believe him that it was accidental. He had learned his lesson about lying but then again he also didn’t feel like getting yelled at anymore.

Tony breathed a sigh of relief. He had thought it was something serious from the look Peter had given him and he didn’t want to deal with any more drama, he’d had more than his fill for one day. “Hand it over.”

Peter fished the phone out of the pocket of his uniform he had discarded on the floor, only to see that the thing wasn’t just water damaged; the entire screen was shattered, some of the glass almost piercing the boy’s skin as he gripped it.
“Jesus, what did you do to this thing?” Tony made a face as he turned the thing over in his hand, using his thumb nail to flick open the back and fish out the SIM card.

“I don’t remember how the screen broke, probably during the fight; but I dropped it in the toilet before that.”

Tony’s expression soured and he shot the teen an exasperated look. “You couldn’t have told me that before you put it in my hand?”

“Sorry.” Peter chuckled sheepishly and went to wash his own hands again.

Tony sighed and dove into his bag, pulling out another phone, a newer upgraded version of the one Peter had destroyed. The man then plugged the chip into the new one and it came to life instantly, already having updated all of Peter’s information on to it if his screen saver was anything to go off of; a picture of him and Ned at comic-con immediately popping up on the screen. Tony rolled his eyes at the photo, part of him thought it was cute, he’d always admired the pairs little bromance but he also couldn’t help but feel the teensiest bit jealous that Peter hadn’t picked one of the many selfies the boy had forced him to take with him to be his lock screen. Since when did he care about such unimportant things? He put it down to being tired. “I always have a spare just in case. You needed an upgrade anyway.”

“I was saving up for a new one, you didn’t have to-“

“Peter this old thing still has snake on it.” He wasn’t wrong, the phone was ancient, at least by his standards. The boy had had the same phone for as long as Tony had known him and he seriously doubted it was brand new when he bought it. Not that there was anything wrong with that, Peter didn’t care much for physical possessions which Tony admired, but come on; there was no need for his intern to be walking around with a phone that got overheated and switched off if you played fruit ninja for more than two minutes. He’d offered, no insisted, on getting the kid a new one for ages- now he had the perfect opportunity to get rid of the offending piece of tech.

“I downloaded that! I like that game-“

“You needed a new one. I could fix it but why bother? It’s not worth the parts. But don’t see this as a reward for wrecking this one. I don’t want you making a habit of it.” Tony said in a mock serious tone, waggling an accusing finger in the boy’s direction. Unfortunately the joke wasn’t well received.
“It was an accident...” Peter hung his head ashamedly making Tony sigh.

He should have known better, really. Peter was bound to be overly sensitive, even more so than usual given the circumstances; but come on. Like he’d ever seriously imply that the teen had deliberately broken anything. Part of Tony wanted to voice that sentiment, but seeing Peter’s eyes turn sad again washed away any urge to call the kid out on his ridiculousness. It was a small, stupid thing to Tony but to Peter it was clearly a big deal. God he was tired. “And I was joking. Come on curly fry.”

It was obvious that Peter was still struggling with his self image, viewing himself as some kind of psychopath with murderous tendencies; but Tony figured that he just needed to stop thinking about it for a while, maybe some distraction would do him good, get him out of his own head. If they kept talking in circles they’d both go crazy and if Peter got to spend some time being himself around his family again it might help reinforce the truth- that he wasn’t some cold hearted killing machine waiting to be activated at any given moment; that and he really, really needed some coffee himself. Tony wasn’t sure he had the energy to have another long drawn out talk, not that day. It was a little selfish but he’d spent the past day just wanting to see his happy goofy little teenager, not a teary self hating one. He just wanted a couple hours of normalcy; as normal as he could get that far from home anyway. Oh and he was going to kill Steve, that was also on his list of to-do’s, he needed energy for that. He needed caffeine for that.

Tony hadn’t been wrong about Thor being over excited to see their youngest team member. As soon as the pair walked through the doorway into the common area between their bunks, the big burly blond was out of his seat and picking Peter up in a bear hug. “SPIDERLING!”

“Oh- Thor- ribs-!” Peter laughed as the air was getting squeezed out of him.

Thor abruptly put him down but he was still beaming. “Oops sorry young one! You missed a very exciting mission I must say!”

“Yeah?” Peter chuckled, all of them going to sit down other than Tony who made a beeline for the coffee machine.

“Yes indeed but more about that later. Now who are these bastards who-“

“Thor! No! We talked about this!” Steve cut the god off much to his obvious displeasure. Clearly
they had warned him not to bring up the whole fight thing but as per usual Thor wasn’t the best at biting his tongue; even after Steve and Bruce had spent the past few hours trying to convince the god not to go and visit the injured recruits in the infirmary.

It was visible on Thor’s face that he was having an internal debate about continuing to ask questions, despite the threats of great physical violence from Steve and Hulk, but it was the look on Peter’s face that finally got him to shut his mouth. “Grrruh- Fine! But I want to know who dared to upset my-“

“We get it, just not now big guy, alright? We all need a break. Just talk about something else, please.” Bruce begged weakly. He looked considerably brighter than he had that morning but it was clear he still wasn’t one hundred percent if the bags under his eyes were anything to go off of. That was when Peter remembered he’d brought the doctor a packet of sour patch kids from his personal stash, in ways of an apology for stopping the man resting sooner, and threw them to him; which he accepted gratefully with a thankful nod and immediately ripped open the bag like some kind of crazed drug addict.

“Where’s Clint and Nat?” Peter asked as he looked around the room. No one had mentioned them since they got back and their lack of presence in the room suddenly made him feel uneasy. As did the looks on his team's faces, which all dropped as their eyes turned to Tony.

“You didn’t tell him?” Steve asked accusingly to the man who was already on his third cup of watery coffee.

Tony sneered, downing the rest of his paper cup before throwing it in the trash can with more than a necessary amount of force. It seemed Steve talking to him directly was the cue he had been waiting for and his brown eyes immediately grew dark and hot with anger. “No Steven, I didn’t exactly have a chance to tell him because I was cleaning up your mess-“

“My mess?!” Steve rose from his seat.

“Yes, your mess! Why didn’t you tell me you and Sam were on good terms?! I would have told you last week when I found out he was here! I’ve been worried about him taking shit out on Peter because of yo-“

“You knew he was here for a week and you didn’t say anything- but that’s my fault?!”
“Don’t turn this round on m-“

Peter had had enough of yelling for one day and he had yet to have his question about their missing teammates answered. All the accumulating anxiety was too much for him to handle so he interjected before the situation escalated once again. “GUYS! What happened to Clint and Nat?!”

“Oh, Barton broke his back and Nat stayed behind with him.” Tony said somewhat flippantly, before turning his attention back to the soldier he was currently arguing with. “Steve this is not my fault and you know it. If I knew you weren’t gonna try and kill him I might have-“

“BROKE HIS BACK?!” Peter yelled again and that seemed to grab everyone’s attention in turn making Tony realise that maybe he should have told Peter that sooner and in a different way (yeah you think?). “That’s not the kind of thing you just skip over Tony! What the hell happened?! Is he okay?! Does his wife know- is Nat okay?!”

Tony gripped his temples with one hand and sighed. He was too tired for all this. “Bruce can you fill the kid in please while me and captain shithead sort this?”

“Certainly.” Bruce said lightly. Whilst Steve and Tony resumed their screaming match Bruce recounted the story; of how Clint had taken a dive off of a six story building, slamming the centre of his back on the railing of a fire escape on his way down and Peter sat back with his mouth agape in horror the entire time.

“It’s rather impressive that he didn’t sustain lasting damage, but that can be put down to the shock absorbency of the armour he was wearing-“

“You don’t think a broken back is lasting damage?! Is he gonna be alright?!“

“He’s gonna be fine, he didn’t even need surgery. Just some nanotech to fix the internal inflammation, patch up the torn ligaments and such; and pain management of course. With some time off and physio he’ll be fine.”

“Jesus Christ..” Peter blinked slowly. Everyone was being so casual about something that sounded so serious, though he supposed it wasn’t the worst injury they’d seen. And Peter himself had seen in parts and been told about how Tony’s tech helped rehabilitate Rhodey after his accident, so it wasn’t outside the realms of possibility that Clint would be fine. Still a broken back for Christ sakes, surely that warranted a little bit of panic... “What about Nat?”
“She’s fine she just stayed behind to keep him out of trouble.” Bruce winked. “He kept trying to get up and walk around apparently, she had to put him in a choke hold to knock him out long enough for them to put him on a stretcher.”

Whilst Tony and Steve continued their debate about who was more to blame, Bruce and Thor kept the teen occupied, relaying the events of their mission finally telling Peter what it was about; they gave him all the backstory too and by the time they were finished, Tony and Steve and resigned themselves to sitting at opposite ends of the room facing away from each other. Well, that was better than them yelling, at least for Peter’s poor ears. And it really did make everything feel more like normal.

Once the yelling had died down, Thor took the opportunity now that Steve and Tony were sulking, to talk to Peter about his own experiences over the past twenty four hours. He plopped himself down on the couch next to the boy and leaned in close to him. “Now Spiderling, Bruce and Steve informed me of your little scrap—“

But Tony wasn’t stupid, he knew what the god was up to. “Thor, I just got him to stop thinking about it can you not—“

“No no, now hold on- I have an anecdote from my childhood that may help.” Thor held his hands up defensively and all the other adults stifled their groans, giving him a chance to say his piece. They were all more than versed in Thor’s horrific tales from his youth as the god seemed to have one he found applicable for almost every situation- even though they usually had nothing to do with what was going on and were more often than not terribly violent. “As you know my brother and I have always had a tumultuous relationship, but as young children, when we were first coming into ourselves respectively, the bickering became even worse. He stopped being my little brother and started being a little pain in the ass, always going on about how he was more qualified to become the next ruler of Asgard- blah blah blah- a lot of talk!”

Thor added to his story using very dramatic hand gestures and varying tones of voice which made Peter giggle slightly; upon hearing that he ramped it up even more. “He was constantly playing practical jokes on me, which of course was to be expected given his talents, but they were no longer funny. He continuously pushed me and pushed me until one day; I believe it was the time that he tried to get one of the twins to kill the blind one...anyway, no matter! I had had enough of his trickery and took matters into my own hands.”

“What did you do?”

“I stabbed him.” All the adults groaned and stared at him.
Tony put his head in his hands and yelled across the room. “Thor, for fuck sake-“

Steve mirrored that sentiment. “Is that really the kind of message you want to-“

“No, no, no! What I’m saying is, I did the same thing the young one did! I lost my temper and ended up hurting someone when usually I wouldn’t have done such a thing!” Thor cried indignantly. He was just trying to relate to the boy!

“You wouldn’t have stabbed someone?” Tony quirked an eyebrow knowing full well that violence wasn’t out of character for the god.

“No, I much prefer blunt force than stabbing, you know that! Besides I wouldn’t have stabbed my own brother. I would have poisoned him.” Another round of groans from the elders in the room but Peter found the man’s obliviousness hysterical; maybe he was just over tired but either way it definitely cheered him up. “Stabbing was his preferred method, but I always went with something more subtle so I wouldn’t get caught by our father.”

“Jesus Christ.” Bruce shook his head but he was laughing and so was Peter.

The teen clapped a hand on the gods shoulder to show that he wasn’t nearly as disturbed by the story as his older counterparts; mostly because he didn’t want him to feel bad, he was trying to help after all, but also because he needed a good laugh. “Thanks Thor. That did help.”

Conversation flowed freely after that, the ice having been broken now that the elephant in the room had been addressed; it was clear Thor felt better having been finally allowed to talk to Peter about the fight, trying to keep his mouth shut for any extended period of time came with great difficulty for him. Though there was still tension between Tony and Steve- but that was a given at that point. It was hardly unusual for the two to be angry at each other so Peter didn’t pay much mind to it. He was starting to feel a little better, both Thor and Bruce giving examples about times they’d overreacted or gone too far, though they were considerably better than the first story Thor had told; Bruce’s especially as they weren’t all Hulk related. Just as Peter was starting to relax he was reminded that he wasn’t completely off the hook. He went to leave the room to grab his phone, making use of the time he had to use the device when he usually wouldn’t have had the chance to- but Tony stopped him before he was even fully out of his seat.

“And where do you think you’re off to?” The man asked, not even looking up from his own device.
“I was gonna check my phone-“

“Nope. Sit.” Peter frowned but did as he was told. “No electronics remember?”

“But what about homework-“

“Not an excuse. I’m logged into your email so I’ll know if Ned sends you anything-“

“You can’t do that! There might be private stuff on there!” Peter felt a blush rise to his cheeks. He couldn’t think of anything particularly incriminating on the account but it was still an invasion of privacy and Tony didn’t know that- he could have had all kinds of stuff hidden away, he was a teenage boy for crying out loud.

“Oh can’t I?” Tony said coolly, still not looking up, snickering through his phone with a blank expression. “Well you should have thought about that before you lied to me, huh?”

“B-but Tony-“

“Don’t you ‘but Tony’ me mister man. You were the one who wanted consequences for your actions and now you’re getting them.” Tony smirked.

Peter couldn’t argue with that, he knew the man was right, he had practically begged for it. But what he could do was pout so he did, very dramatically. He hadn’t believed Tony would go through with his threat to take away all of his electronics, but part of him was happy that Tony was going through with it; he needed that structure, especially when everything else around him was seeming to dissolve into chaos. As grateful as he was for the strict parenting, the teenage side of him was still grumpy about not being able to mess with his phone to pass the time; he was bored. And idle hands lead to a busy mind and the last thing Peter wanted right then was to think, he’d done plenty of that and his brain was starting to short circuit. Eventually Tony gave in and let him play Candy Crush on his phone, even though Steve shot the man a look for doing so. “What? It’s my phone not his, I didn’t break my own rule. Would you rather him start tinkering with the coffee maker?”

“Can I?!“
"No!"

The rest of the afternoon consisted of them all hanging around and talking, taking some much needed respite time. It was a fight to get Bruce out of his seat and into the canteen when it was time for dinner as the Doctor was content to spend the evening with his candy hoard, but other than that the remainder of the day went smoothly, much to Tony’s relief. No major tantrums or crying fits just a small one when Peter ran out of lives in that stupid mobile game.

When they were in the mess hall he didn’t fail to notice Peter looking back at Scott’s table, attempting to make eye contact and he tried his best not to react to it. At first. But after having to repeat something to the boy for the third time he grew impatient and manually moved the boy’s head back to face the table as opposed to looking behind him, twisting his head around which Peter reacted to with as much theatrics as he could muster.

“Ow! You almost broke my neck!”

“You’re lucky I don’t after everything you’ve put me through today. Quit trying to talk to your delinquent friend and eat your damn food.” Tony snapped irritably. Peter made a face at him which earned him another look of disdain but he stopped trying to mouth things to Scott.

“You need to say sorry to him.” Peter said simply after a moment and somehow he managed to avoid flinching when Tony slammed his fist down on the table. He kept his composure and continued to eat his meal, not looking up at the angry man, pretending to be completely unphased by Tony’s shift in attitude.

“Like hell I d-“

“Uh uh! You were mean and at the very least you have to say sorry for pushing him against the wall!”

“No! After he got you into all that he deserves-“

“Okay first off let’s get one thing straight: He didn’t get me into anything. Yeah he shouldn’t have told me about the report in the first place, that’s a given and I’m not condoning that- but he was trying to give me the heads up about Wilson because he thought he was gonna be a dick to me- and Sam was at first, he admitted it. Now I know he was just pretending to hate me, but it still sucked. And Scott deliberately lied to me about how bad things were with Miller and the others so I
wouldn’t get involved and he kept making Wilson mad to try and protect me. Besides, you saw those bruises. Don’t you think he’s been through enough?"

“Alright! I get it!” Tony relented. He had to admit once Peter set out all the good things Scott had done on the table he was left with little argument; Peter’s small rant was very persuasive. Maybe he had overreacted slightly and maybe that was part of the reason Peter hadn’t told him in the first place...ugh he hated it when Peter was right- it wasn’t like he paid the boy to think! Wait a minute...‘I’ll talk to him but I’m not saying sorry.”

“Tony-“

“Don’t push your luck, being cute can only get you so far.” The teen then had the audacity to flutter his eyelashes and smile when Tony called him cute, and Tony didn’t fail to notice the amused look T’Challa shot him across the table for using the word. Shit. “I said I’ll talk to him before we leave, alright? I don’t wanna hear another word about it, stop being a pain in the ass.”

Peter seemed content with that promise; though he would have preferred his dad just get it over with, he understood why it may take Tony Stark a few days to come to terms with the fact that he was wrong, in any way shape or form.

Once dinner was finished, Tony sent Peter straight back to the room where he joined him, highlighting the fact he was now technically grounded and he wouldn’t be allowed the courtesy of spending any alone time for the duration of their trip. That meant no more sneaking off to the blue building in the evenings, no more free time to talk to his friends and worst of all he couldn’t even go on YouTube or anything. Peter was really starting to regret pushing his dad to give him some real repercussions for his actions.

So, Peter was stuck with nothing to do all evening, resigning himself to his fate for the next few days. He tried his usual tactics of distraction, writing stories, planning out potential future essays- but for once trying to apply his usually active brain to academics wasn’t as therapeutic as it should have been. Under normal circumstances he could have spent hours doing such activities but after such a long mentally exhausting day he didn’t have the patience. He just wanted to stick on some music, or an old comfort movie, or a podcast and just zone out for a while. After rereading the same paragraph from the opening to Percy Jackson and The Battle Of The Labyrinth for the fourth time, he gave up trying to focus. God he was bored. He tried to stick within the punishment parameters, he really did, but when he heard his phone vibrate across the room on Tony’s dresser where the man had confiscated it, Peter couldn’t contain himself. He had to know who had texted him, he didn’t even care if it was junk mail he just needed some kind of visual stimulation that he didn’t have to put effort in to, some kind of premade entertainment.

Tony’s back was turned for a split second as he rummaged for something in his bag and the teen
seized his opportunity; Peter managed to shoot a web across the room, retract it and hide the evidence in the pockets of his jeans, covering the movement with a cough when Tony whipped his head around. The genius eyed him suspiciously for a second but before he got a chance to question why Peter was smiling oh so innocently at him, his own phone rang.

“Talk to me.” Tony answered the phone to some unknown associate on the other end but made a point of pointing to his eyes with his middle and forefinger, and jabbed them in Peter’s direction; a gesture that essentially said ‘I’m watching you, don’t try and pull any shit.’ To which the teen held his hands up defensively and climbed on to the top bunk, facing towards the wall and sneaking his phone out of his pocket.

He couldn’t believe what was on his screen. Finally after two days MJ has texted him back, though her reply was equally as cryptic as her behaviour had been.

MJ: can we talk?

Now she wanted to talk to him? God way to pick your moments girl; you couldn’t have done that the night before? Or even that morning when Peter needed someone to help him not go crazy? Despite his slight resentment Peter couldn’t help but feel extremely happy to finally have a response, but Peter could hardly talk to the girl when he was currently in quarantine, on a contraband phone. Shit. Well he wasn’t about to leave her on read the way she had done to him.

Peter: I don’t know if nows a good time, Tony’s kind of mad at me for something.

MJ: it’s cool. You can just say you don’t want to you don’t have to lie.

Ugh for Christ’s sakes- the one time he wasn’t lying about the trip!

Peter: I’m not lying I swear. It’s been a bad day.

After she read that message the girl took a minute longer than usual to respond, as though she was deciding whether or not she wanted to pick a fight in that particular moment. Luckily for both of them she decided against it, not yet at least.

MJ: are you okay?
Peter: give me five minutes I’ll see if I can sneak off.

The boy slipped his phone back into his pocket, the right one, his side that would be facing away from Tony as he left the room. His dad was still on a call himself so Peter figured that would be the best time to make a break for it; surely Tony wouldn’t make a big song and dance out of it when he was talking business with someone. That assumption was wrong.

“One second, Cho.” Tony muted the call and held his phone to his chest no sooner than Peter’s feet hit the ground. “Where are you going?”

“To the bathroom?” Unfortunately that statement came out as more of a question and the inflection made it painfully obvious that the teen was lying.

“With your phone?” Dang, So Tony had caught him. Why didn’t he say something earlier then? How rude of him to let Peter think he had gotten away with snatching it..well, how naive of Peter to think that he’d ever get away with anything.

“Well yeah, you don’t exactly see people taking newspapers in there anymore- hey!” As Peter was making his point Tony reached forward and snatched the device out of back pocket before the boy had a chance to react. “Come on!”

“Be back here in five minutes or I’m taking the chip backt.” Tony said flippantly as he put Peter’s phone back into his own pocket.

The teen could have screamed. Couldn’t he catch a break for once? “You’re putting a time limit on me using the bathroom now?”

“If you need any longer than that you need more fibre in your diet.”

“Ew, don’t be gross, ugh!” Peter stormed out of the room before Tony could say anything else embarrassing. Of course Tony knew what he was up to and had purely made the comment for affect but did he really have to be so crude? He had just wanted to call MJ in private for goodness sake, was that so much to ask?
The disgruntled teen took the opportunity to use the facilities anyway, then decided to just get ready for bed since his plans of reconciling with his friend had been thwarted and the energy he’d gained from his nap had all but dissipated. When Peter came back into the room he threw himself back into his bunk without saying a word, but even so Tony couldn’t resist teasing him just a little bit. Even though that was probably an awful idea considering, you know, everything they’d been through that day. But it was just *so easy* to wind the kid up.

Tony waited a moment to lull the boy into a false sense of security, also as he tried to bite his tongue, but he couldn’t. As soon as Peter had picked his book up again Tony muttered, “It’s okay Pete, you can talk to your little girlfriend on Monday-”

Peter rolled his eyes and groaned before he fully realised what Tony had said. “She’s not my girlfrien- DID YOU READ THROUGH MY MESSAGES?!”

“No I didn’t. Not on purpose anyway. It went off I couldn’t help but see it and it would have been awfully rude to leave her without a reply-“

Peter jumped down from his bunk, his eyes going wide. “What did you say to her?!”

“I said-“ Tony balanced his glasses on his nose preparing to give a dramatic reading when Peter lunged at him, but he rolled into his side, tucking the device under him before he got the chance to snatch it.

“Give me that-“

“Uh uh! Stand back- You can see the screen from there with your spidey eyes you don’t need to hold the phone. No touchy.” Tony said seriously, pointing to an invisible line that Peter had to scootch back to stand behind before he’d reveal the screen. Once Peter was behind the barrier Tony held up the phone, out of arm’s reach and further away than anyone without superhuman sight would be able to read.

Peter: Sorry MJ, Peter can’t come to the phone right now. He’s grounded so you probably won’t hear from him until Monday.

MJ: P that really is a lame excuse. Even for you.
Then Tony had sent a video. A fucking video. To prove that it wasn’t Peter trying to avoid talking to her- some might say that did him a favour, so at least the girl wouldn’t think he was being petty and ignoring her in return; though most would say he was just trying to embarrass Peter as much as possible as payback for all the emotional turmoil, with the added benefit of it being fun and ridiculous easy. Both of those assumptions were correct. “He is pretty lame. So lame in fact that he won’t be getting his phone back until Monday. So don’t be offended if you don’t hear from him, he’s busy sitting in the naughty corner.”

Then MJ had replied: Fair enough. Thanks for letting me know Mr. Stark. Enjoy the rest of your business trip.

Peter didn’t say anything for a moment. He just stood there, shaking slighting with his jaw clenched as he debated whether or not hitting Tony would be an appropriate response. He ultimately decided he’d be justified in doing so but he’d had enough violence for one day, though he did consider making one last attempt to grab the phone; again he decided against it, silently conceding to get Tony back for this. He’d make the world’s best thought out and planned revenge ever but for now he’d settle with verbalising his discontent. “I hate you.”

Tony just smiled and went back to scrolling through his own phone. “I know.”

“Why would you embarrass me like that?” Peter huffed and stomped his foot. And no, he didn’t care how babyish it made him look.

The older man tilted his head to the side as though he was in deep thought and hummed to himself. “Because it’s funny and I’m pretty sure that’s part of my job as a parent, no?”

Peter couldn’t think of another response to that, knowing that a, Tony was right it was an integral part of being a parent if Ned’s mom and dad were anything to go off of and b, he didn’t have the brain power to think of an articulate and witty response; even if he did, on his best days Tony could shoot any retorts down in flames. He decided not to give Tony the satisfaction and just threw himself silently onto the bottom bunk, rolling away from him and sighing.

“You tired?” Tony hummed again.

“Yes.” Peter said shortly and god, Tony knew he should stop. He really shouldn’t push the boy, he was asking for trouble. But it was just so easy.
“You wanna go to sleep?” Tony deliberately drew out each syllable like he was talking to a small child and popped the P at the end.

Peter whipped his head around to shoot him a dirty look and he didn’t fail to notice how pink his cheeks were. “Yes. That’s why I’m laying down.”

Once Peter settled again, drawing the blanket up over his ears (a sure sign that he was actually trying to sleep, for some reason his little weirdo couldn’t sleep without his ears being covered) Tony waited before saying anything else. One last thing and he’d leave him alone. Maybe. Depending on how angry he got.

“So I don’t get a hug goodnight or-“

“You lost your hug privileges!” Peter screamed and Tony failed to hold back a laugh. “Shut up! You don’t even like hugs!”

Tony faux frowned at the comment and held a hand over his arc as though the accusation really hurt him. “I do too like hugs, just not as much as you-“

“Well, you weren’t complaining earlier.”

“I wasn’t complaining because you finally stopped crying-“

Peter let out a frustrated noise and threw a pillow directly at Tony’s head. “Don’t make fun of me for crying!”

“I’m not! I’m not.” Okay, maybe that was a sign he’d gone a little bit too far. Reel it in Stark. “Want me to leave you alone?”

Peter didn’t say anything, so Tony guess that was his answer.

“I love you.”
“I love you too.” The teen grumbled, somewhat reluctantly but after having spent a good part of the last twenty-four hours convincing himself that Tony was dead he wasn’t about to go to sleep without reciprocating the sentiment.

“I’m sorry.”

“Shut up...and give me my hip pillow back.”

“Hip pillow? How old are you?” Tony snorted and Peter let out a small scream into the pillow residing closest to his head.

“Being this flexible comes at a price- and I’m not talking to you!”

“Goodnight bubby.” Tony chuckled as he threw the designated ‘hip pillow’ back.

“Hmph!”

Tony was still getting ‘the silent treatment’ the next morning, which from Peter meant he still communicated with him, just with short snappy comebacks and dirty looks; but was it better than the sad, forlorn looks from the night before? Definitely. Other than being grumpy with his dad the boy was in a considerably better mood.

Now that everything had been straightened out with Corporal Wilson Peter wasn’t dreading going to training and he’d actually be able to focus; rather than having a thousand thoughts running through the back of his mind about the who what when where and whys with Scott. It was nice to know where he stood for the first time since he arrived and have everything out in the open. He got up extra early and headed out to the track as he’d promised Sam the night before. Peter was surprised though, to see several other recruits out there that early- too early for there to be no discernible reason, so it seemed that he wasn’t the only one to get in trouble the day before. Peter didn’t fail to notice how everyone gave him a wide berth when he joined them on the track but he couldn’t exactly blame them. Word had traveled around quickly about what he did but for once he didn’t let it bother him; a good night’s rest, finally understanding everything that went on and talking through everything with his family had really helped to sort his head out. He wasn’t about to let a few weird looks from people he was likely never going to see again after the weekend phase him; he knew the whys and wheres about what happened and they didn’t- let ‘em judge. Like Scott said, only a few more days. Besides, if people were a little scared of him at least they’d leave him alone. Just a couple more days and he’d be home.
That got him to thinking though, he hoped he’d still get to talk to Scott once they each returned to their respective homes- Shuri too. He wasn’t sure if he would be allowed to, the way Tony had told him not to talk to anyone outside of their family group had made it seem as though there were some kind of rules around it, maybe because he wasn’t a full agent yet? He wasn’t sure. Though even if he was allowed to from a S.H.I.E.L.D perspective, he very much doubted his dad would let him talk to Scott in a casual sense ever again. That thought definitely put a damper on his mood, but there was still time. Maybe he’d be able to convince Tony otherwise, the man did say he’d talk to Scott before they left after all. Surely after talking to him he’d realise he wasn’t a bad guy. Annoying yes, bad no.

The annoying man in question came out to the track at the normal time along with the rest of the group, which Peter was surprised at. From the beating he’d taken, if the bruises were anything to go by, he surely had some kind of internal bleeding so he really shouldn’t have been working out. Then again he had been doing extra PT all week with similar if not worse injuries and managed to conceal them from everyone. It would also look extra suspicious if Wilson let up on Scott now given the rumours about the fight, it was bad enough that he and Peter were allowed to continue training and in the same group. Sam had warned how they’d both be more likely to deal with targeted attacks from other recruits but Peter wasn’t phased.

He was so unphased he forgot that he was meant to be acting upset but luckily Sam was there to remind him. “What the hell you looking so happy about, Parker? You wanna spend another night in seg?”

“No sir.”

“That’s what I thought. Get your ass running.” The man barked, though when the coast was clear he gave Peter a wink.

“Morning.” Peter said breathlessly as he jogged over to the breakfast table, Sam really had him working extra hard that morning, he was exhausted already.

“Hiya Sport.” Steve yawned, practically unintelligibly. The blonds eyes weren’t even open as he spoke, leaning his head on one elbow looking dangerously close to slipping and smacking his head.

“Uh, sorry can I have that in English?” Peter chuckled and reached over to pat the man’s shoulder. “You alright, dude?”
“Hmm?”

“Steve, you need to get some sleep, man.”

“I’m fine Peter. I’ll get some sleep tomorrow.” Steve yawned again.

“Why tomorrow?”

“After we get home.” The man’s eyes started closing again and Peter exchanged a weird look with Thor.

“Uhh, tomorrow is Saturday. We leave on Monday, remember..?”

“Mm what’s that kiddo?”

“Uh, nothin’.” Peter shot another disturbed look at Thor since he seemed to be the only one mirroring any concern and the other blond decided to be proactive.

“Come on my friend, I know you’re not a fan of the stuff but it may be time for you to try drinking one of those red bulls, Hm?” Thor clapped the sleep deprived soldier on the shoulder and beckoned for him to drag himself over to one of the vending machines; for once he didn’t protest.

Peter watched as Thor helped Steve stumble towards the machine, gnawing his lip. How had the man survived that long with so little sleep? He was ready to have a nervous breakdown after one night with less than eight hours.

“He’s fine, Pete.” Tony said flippantly seeing the concerned look on the teens face but all he received in response was a glare. “Still not talking to me?”

“No.”
“What was that, then?” Tony smirked and Peter growled at him.

“And why aren’t we talking to Tony today?” Bruce asked casually, smiling to himself. It was rather comedic how every time there was some kind of argument going on within the household, Tony was always involved, if not being the direct cause of said argument he was always somehow in the centre of it. “I have no doubt he deserves it but I’d like to stay up to date with the latest drama. Nat says I have to keep her in the loop with the gossip.”

“Kids mad that I texted his friend for him.”

“But you didn’t just text her did you Tony?!”

“I’m gonna need a little more context than that.” The doctor chuckled and Peter took that as his chance to get someone of his side about the whole affair- launching into the story of how Tony had deliberately, single handedly ruined his social life and the pair immediately started bickering back and forth; Peter getting angry and Tony finding said anger amusing.

“I think you’re exaggerating slightly-“

“No I’m not! There was no need to do that! My emails was one thing but that was just- ugh!” With that Peter slammed his tray down and stood up. “I’m going back early.”

“Sure thing kiddo, have fun.” Tony chuckled as Peter stormed off, though he stopped when he looked up to see Bruce staring at him. “What?”

“You read through all of his texts?”

“Yep.” Tony popped the P and sat back, looking impressed with himself.

Bruce sighed in frustration. It was obvious Tony felt justified for doing what he did and he could see both points of view, but he definitely leant towards Peter’s side. “Don’t you think that’s a little invasive?”

“Oh it’s a lot invasive. But he’s proven this last week that I can’t trust him to tell me when
something's going on with him. I'd rather be controlling that let another situation like that happen. Needs must.” Tony shrugged. As confident as he felt he was glad that Steve was half comatose, head down on the table, barely conscious as he knew the blond would have plenty to say on the subject. At least with Bruce it wouldn’t end in an argument, though the disappointed look the doctor was giving him made him feel uneasy.

“Tony if you don’t trust him you’re just gonna end up pushing him-“

“Thank you Doc, I know. I don’t care but thank you for the advice.”

“T come on-“

“Bruce. You’re not gonna win this one, best you quit now while you’re ahead buddy.” Tony winked patronisingly and rose from his seat, clapping a hand on his friend's shoulder who sighed. Of course he knew he went overboard but Peter would forgive him. He felt comfortable in that and a little teenage angst never hurt anyone.

Peter did end up forgiving him, breaking the ‘not so silent, silent treatment’ thing by lunchtime when he got over excited about the S.W.A.T team drill they got to do with pepper spray and everything. Did Tony apologise? No. Did Peter expect him to? Also no. But if he had learnt anything in the past couple days it was he didn’t have the energy for drama and he certainly didn’t want there to be any animosity between him and his dad. He just hoped that MJ wouldn’t use that little video as blackmail material at every given opportunity but he seriously doubted she’d pass up such an embarrassing gem. It was hard to be angry too when Steve was being so...weird.

Like, the soldier was bouncing, practically vibrating the entire bench, talking a mile a minute; acting like Peter after one cup of coffee. The boy had never seen him so animated.

Tony leaned in and whispered to him. “He’s had two cans of red bull, you’d think we’d given him speed. He can’t handle his caffeine.”

The comment made Peter laugh and Tony smirked. “You know when you laugh that means I win, right?”

The next two days came and went very smoothly- almost too smoothly, to the point that everyone was waiting for something to happen. Peter found himself actually enjoying training again, like he had before everything became so utterly complicated. It went back to being fun; pushing his limits,
learning new techniques and getting to put them into practise. With the added benefit of people not wanting to mess with him or Scott, there was also a few people in Peter’s subgroup of superhumans who either wanted revenge or to prove themselves by beating the crap out of him, so there was no holding back during sparring sessions and he loved it. There were a few times where Sam looked like he wanted to step in and stop them but Peter could handle himself.

He still wasn’t allowed his phone, but in all honesty he was happy with that. It meant he had more time to emotionally prepare for the teasing that would come along with talking to his friends again as he had no doubt that MJ showed Ned the video of Tony embarrassing him. The only thing he struggled with was falling asleep without background noise but Tony was nice enough to play some kind of music or video-

“Just none of that ASMR shit, I can’t stand those videos.”

“It’s sensory! It helps my anxiety, don’t judge me.”

“How is hearing people chew sensory?”

“I don’t like those ones! I like the slime and soap cutting ones- just not to watch, ‘cause the knife freaks me out. It always looks like they’re gonna slice their hand.”

“Peter. Go to sleep.”

Finally it was their last day and everyone, bar Peter, couldn’t be happier about it. The teen, of course, was excited to go home but he was going miss the odd amount of freedom he felt; yeah, he was told when and where and what to do constantly, but at the same time he treated like an adult and he was respected. No one there babied him like his team did if anything they did the opposite, he just hoped given recent developments that his housemates would see that and give him a longer leash once they returned home. But going home also meant, hopefully, that he’d be able to avoid his father some. The man was like a shadow, other than when he had to leave his side for training the man was constantly present and it was suffocating. He loved his dad but he couldn’t wait to gain some independence back and some alone time. And possibly if he was lucky; some agent duties.

It was still up in the air at that point what level within the agency Peter would actually be going home with; it had been a debate amongst the team whether or not he’d be allowed to patrol officially now that he had enrolled. Steve seemed to think they’d have to wait until he’d done several more training courses, whether or not they were done at another facility like the one they
were in or in house, but Tony seemed to think they’d be able to bend the rules a little given the circumstances. Peter had already been allowed on official business on more than one occasion, so he was going to see if they could start Peter on patrol on a trial basis, passing it off as part of his training- like work experience.

It was obvious neither of the adults wanted Peter to start patrolling or going on missions, they both thought he was too young, but he’d proved to them and the higher ups that he was more than capable and physically ready to do so, though given the fight there may be some doubts- but Fury had said that he’d keep the whole thing private, since it had worked out in everyone’s favour. The boy had been training with the Avengers for well over a year and Peter had his fair share of experience before that, fighting the Vulture on his own and all; besides, it was getting to the point where Tony was worried about him sneaking out and fighting crime vigilante style like he used to before the genius caught him in the act, and he’d much prefer sending the boy out on his terms. If Peter was going to go out, he wanted to be in control, knowing where he was and who he’d be fighting. It was the safer option, lesser of two evils and if at the same time he managed to convince Peter that he had more freedom than he actually did that was a bonus. He’d let his son take the easy jobs, the safer ones where he’d be able to keep track of him and be within range to help him should anything go wrong; but at the same time letting him feel as though he was running with the big dogs. It was a win win situation. If he could convince Fury that is.

Peter had been nagging him all day to ask someone about his training and the man was starting to get a headache. “Did you ask yet?”

“No, kid. Not yet.”

“But we’re going home in less than fourteen hours!” The boy was right, they planned to leave fairly early the next day. That’s why he’d already taken the time to say his goodbyes to everyone he deemed important, having gotten a big hug from Shuri when she and her brother left that morning. She’d even slipped her phone number on a piece of paper into his pocket, confirming the idea that they weren’t meant to have contact but also confirming that she wanted to talk to him just as much as he wanted to talk to her. Same thing with Scott, though their goodbye had been a little more emotional. 

“I know. I’ll let you know as soon as I do, we’ve got a lot of other things we need to get sorted before then. Just sit tight-“

“I have been! You said you’d ask Fury yesterday!”

“I’ve-“ Tony was about to justify why he hadn't talked to his boss yet about the boy’s standing within the company, but then he realised he didn’t have to. He was the adult he didn’t have to reason with a teenager. “Look. I said I’ll talk to him and I will.”
“You said that about Scott too and you haven’t-“

“Can it.” Tony said warningly. “And how do you know I haven’t spoken to him, huh?”

“Well he hasn’t told me-“

“Did it ever occur to you that I asked him to keep his big mouth shut for once and he listened-again for once?”

“...no- but you haven’t left me alone for like three days so when did you-“

“You’re not as light of a sleeper as you think you are. Now zip it.”

Peter frowned at that. He was too a light sleeper, even if he did sometimes sleep through his alarm-“But Tony-“

“Look.” Tony sighed, growing increasingly frustrated. “I know you’re excited about possibly getting back out into the field, but even if I got the ok from Fury right this very second, you wouldn’t be able to start the minute we got home anyway. There’s paperwork and legislation and-“

“That’s why I wanna get it out of the way now! The sooner we get past all the boring stuff the sooner I can-“

“You won’t be able to do anything if you don’t shut up. Did you forget you’re still grounded? You’re lucky if you get lab time when we get home let alone Spider stuff. If it wasn’t for all the work we had to catch up on you’d be banned for another two weeks.” Tony gave Peter a pointed look that made him shut his mouth and pout. “Eat.”

Reluctantly Peter did, though he was still itching to push his dad more. He just wanted definitive answers- time frames, was that so much to ask?

He was about to pester Tony some more when he noticed someone approaching their table, it was
agent Johnson. Oh crap, what had he done now?

But she didn’t look upset or in any particular mood at all, she didn’t even look at Peter. She made her way across the dining hall and headed straight up to Tony, who turned around just as she stuck her hand out to greet him. “Sorry to interrupt. Mr. Stark, I haven’t had the pleasure of meeting you yet-”

Tony stared at her hand for a moment before looking back up, making eye contact. “Oh no, but I know you Miss Johnson. It was you who attempted to hack my security system back in two thousand and twelve, wasn’t it?”

The woman smiled awkwardly and dropped her hand. Despite the accusation she kept her tone friendly. “Yes sir, it was.”

Tony took a sharp inhale through his nose and stood up. The two adults stared at each other for a tense moment before Tony held out his own hand. “That was some pretty impressive stuff. I understand some of the genetic testing they’ve run on you has helped in aiding some of Dr. Banner’s work.”

“I believe so. Yes.” Daisy spoke unsurely and raised an eyebrow but shook Tony’s hand anyway, eyeing the man suspiciously clearly wondering where his line of questioning was going.

“This lady helped in developing your super strength drugs, kid.” Tony turned around to look over his shoulder at Peter, gesturing to the agent in front of him. Peter froze at the sudden attention being drawn to him, not expecting it. Had he been he would’ve slurped the noodles off of his chin beforehand. He did so quickly (and messily), offering the woman he was now being formally introduced to a weak smile and small wave. It’s not like he’d just spent two weeks in her class or anything. Tony smirked at his sons awkwardness and turned back towards Skye. “What can I do you for?”

“Fury called. Wanted me to have a word with you regarding a certain project.”

Tony took another sharp inhale through his nose and nodded. His face changed, Peter couldn’t put his finger on the expression, but it was odd. Clearly Tony knew what project she was referring to as he didn’t ask any follow up questions. He simply nodded curtly to the woman, indicating that he’d follow her but before he did he turned back to Peter.
“Can I trust you alone?”

The teen pouted and opened his mouth to verbally protest Tony suggesting that he couldn’t be trusted alone for five minutes- he’d been good for the past few days dangit! He hadn’t even tried to swipe his phone back! But before Peter could dig himself into a hole in front of their present company Bucky chimed in, much to the pairs surprise as they hadn’t noticed him appear. The canteen was considerably less crowded as a majority of its usual occupants (at least at their end of the room) had all but left, so Bucky looked a little more at ease in their surroundings.

“I’ll watch him, been a while since me and the little guy had a proper catch up anyway.”

“Thanks Bucky.” Tony’s eye twitched as he spoke but it was obvious he didn’t have much of a choice. He simply nodded to Bucky and gave Peter a meaningful glare as he turned to follow Johnson out of the room.

Peter sighed in embarrassment but he supposed given the circumstances it could’ve been worse. He knew what he had signed up for when Tony grounded him and it was worth it if it meant he could have just a little while away from the man. Of course Bucky would report back but he was still more lenient than his dad and Peter didn’t plan on getting into trouble anyway. Everyone else was off doing- well whatever, so he just sat around with Bucky waiting for the man to come back. He always enjoyed listening to the soldiers old war stories and he was so engrossed in them that he didn’t notice that Tony was gone for two whole hours. Bucky had even lead him back to Bruce’s room, where they all seemed to congregate, to continue his story telling where the rest of the Avengers joined them. Tony didn’t return until gone eight and when he did he had a weird, unreadable look on his face that for some reason made Peter feel very uneasy. He’d never seen Tony look so- blank? But stressed at the same time. Had something gone wrong during the meeting?

Of course when he asked he received a vague, open ended response that was designed to tell him to stop asking questions. So Peter did, albeit reluctantly, though he didn’t fail to notice that his father seemed a lot more withdrawn and distracted for the remainder of the evening; he barely contributed to any conversation, even when Steve fell asleep and Thor was trying to convince Peter to help him draw obscene things on his face with a sharpie.

“Uhm, hello, Iron Man? You okay with this?” Bruce finally asked after confiscating the pens and spending ten minutes trying to stop Thor putting the man’s hand in warm water.

“Hm?”
The doctor sighed and put his hands on his hips jokingly. “Can you help me control the kids?”

The word kids made Tony look up from his phone for the first time in an hour, his eyes falling directly on Peter. “What did you do now?”

“Hey! It wasn’t me!” Peter cried indignantly but started snickering when behind where Bruce was gesturing Bucky was nodding his head at Thor and giving him the thumbs up, encouraging him to submerge Steve hand in the Lukewarm tap water.

“Tony do something.” Bruce yawned, having had enough of trying to contain the hyper gods mischief alone for an entire evening.

Tony looked around boredly for a moment, surveying the chaos and shrugged. “Go ahead Thor. That old trick has been debunked anyway, it doesn’t work”

“It so does work.” Peter chuckled but stopped abruptly when everyone looked at him. “What?”

“Kid I know you love Mythbusters. They’ve tested it. It doesn’t work.”

“Yeah and as the resident physician here, I can confirm the science doesn’t back it up.” Bruce shrugged and gave Peter an odd, amused look.

“Then how come I- nevermind.” Peter closed his mouth, his face turning a nice shade of pink as his eyes darted around the room looking for an excuse to change the conversation.

“No no, Pete. Finish your story.” Tony smirked.

Peter shook his head adamantly. “I said nevermind- Thor maybe you should leave Steve alone.”

“That’s what I thought.” Tony winked to Bruce and returned his focus back to whatever it was he was doing on his phone that was so important.

“But it’s for science!” Thor whined as Bruce snatched the bowl away.
“It’s mean.” Bruce sighed.

“Well we won’t know it’s mean if we don’t test it to see if it works or not!”

Tony couldn’t resist butting in. “Well apparently Peter has more experience with-“

“Shut up!”

That was when a very drowsy Steve lifted his head up and pointed accusingly at Peter. Then slurried as he yelled; “Hey! Language!”

“Okay I think it’s time we all go to bed. It’s a long drive tomorrow.” Bruce said, forever trying to be the peacekeeper.

Tony nodded in agreement which prompted Bucky and Thor to go over and help Steve up, preparing to drag him to his room but the blond woke up fully, looking startled. He brushed them off insisting he was okay and to go ahead without him. Instead Thor took the liberty of picking Peter up under one arm despite the boy’s shrieks of protest and took him out at the same time, sensing that Steve was hanging back for a reason; probably as he wanted to talk to Tony and Bruce in private. “Come on Spiderling time to go to bed!”

“Quit manhandling me! AH- That tickles!” Peter screamed as he was hoisted over Thor’s shoulder upside down.

“So what’s the car situation for tomorrow? Just so I can emotionally prepare.” Bruce asked once everyone else was out of earshot.

“Me and kiddo in one car. You guys in the other.” Tony stated simply as though it had already been established multiple times. It was the only set up that made remote sense to him.

But Steve instantly started shaking his head. “Uh uh, no way. I’m not having Thor in the car with me and Buck, that’s asking for trouble.”
“I don’t mind having Thor in with me. I know he’s a handful but it’s only fair after last time.” Bruce interjected quickly, trying to find a fair middle ground but of course it wouldn’t be that easy when he was trying to mediate Tony and Steve in decision making.

“Well I ain’t having him in my car. And I’m driving so, that’s that.”

Bruce tried again sensing that Steve was getting irritated. “How about I drive you and Peter, and Steve and Bucky can-“

“No. My car, I drive and that would still leave Spangles and Goldilocks in the same vehicle together- along with the Silver Surfer. You four in one. Me and Peter in the other.”

“Tony, for once can you not make things difficult.” Steve snapped. Steve was rebound for having the patience to counteract Tony’s stubborn nature, in fact at times he was the only one who could deal with the genius when he was in one of his moods, but in his tired state his temper was considerably shorter than usual.

Bruce stepped in yet again, desperately Trying to find a solution everyone would be happy with, but he knew before he said it that it wouldn’t be well received from overprotective IronDad. “I don’t mind having Pete in with me and Thor but I know you won’t-“

“No. Kid stays with me.” There was no way he’d let Peter out of his site, on the road for that long; even before the whole MV incident. Let alone the whole kidnap, superhero danger stuff he knew Peter wouldn’t speak up if he needed to stop somewhere and he wanted to avoid that stress for everyone. “Steve you and Bucky are going in with Bruce and Thor or you can find another way home.”

With that Tony went to walk out of the room, staring at his phone as to not make eye contact, but Steve stuck his arm out across the doorway to stop him. “What is your problem? You said you were-“

“I am. I’m over it.” Tony cut him off knowing full well where Steve was going. They’d had the same conversation at least a hundred times. “I know he’s not dangerous when he’s awake, I’m over the whole he killed my parents thing. We’ve discussed that. But having him around in an open area when he’s awake and lucid is one thing, having him in my car, a confined space where it’s possible he might fall asleep and go all batshit crazy is another thing.”
“I’ll keep him awake-“

“You can barely keep yourself awake. I’m not risking it. Not with Pete in the car.”

“He’d never hurt him.”

“No. Bucky wouldn’t hurt him- this is nothing against him Steve don’t make me out to be an asshole here. It wouldn’t be his fault if something did happen, I know that. But I’m not putting my boy in danger just so no one's feelings get hurt.”

“You’re being unreasonable.”

“Yeah dad, you kinda are.” Peter said hanging from the doorframe, making everyone jump. Crap, how much had the teen heard? He didn’t seem shocked, so hopefully he hadn’t overheard about Bucky having murdered Tony’s parents...though with his super hearing it would be a miracle if he hadn’t. “It’s just a couple hours in the- OW!”

Tony grabbed the boy by his ear and dragged him down to the floor. “Go to bed.”

“I was just gonna ask for my phone so I could-“

“No. Bed. Now.” Tony cut him off with gritted teeth and shoved him back towards the hallway.

“Okay okay I’m going- everyone’s so handsy tonight damn!”

“Language!” Steve and Tony yelled in unison- so did Bruce, though he did it with a smile as he was just happy to join in.

“Kid seems fine with it.” Steve shrugged smugly and Tony growled at him in response.

“If you both get some decent sleep tonight I’ll consider it- but either of you so much as yawn you’re hitchhiking, got it?”
Finally after a lot of coercing, they were ready to go on the road. Steve, Bucky, Peter and Tony in one car and Thor and Bruce in the other. It was clear that Tony was still not happy about the seating situation as he forced Peter to sit in the front seat no matter how much he protested.

“But I don’t mind sitting in the back-“

“I want you up front with me Pete this isn’t up for negotiation.”

“But why?”

“Because I said so.”

“I get that but-“

Tony sighed, wanting to snap and bite the kids head off but for once he decided against it. “If you say ‘but’ one more time I won’t tell you the news I got this morning.”

“What news?!”

Tony smiled slyly and turned away from Peter, sighing. “Well, I was gonna save it for when we got home-“

The teen pulled on his arm to make him turn back around and jumped up and down a few times for effect. “No come on, please?! Is it about my training?! You can’t leave me hanging like that I’ll explode-“

Tony couldn’t help but smile for real then. it was so infectious when the teen got excited like that. “Okay okay. Hold out your hand.”

A confused look flashed across the boy’s face but he did as he was told without question and Tony
reached into his pocket before pulling out a bundle of metal; he deposited the silver chain in
Peter’s outstretched hand, which the teen immediately pulled closer to his face to analyse. “Oh my
god! Are these-“

“Yep. It’s official now, kid. Didn’t think you’d be processed so soon but I guess Fury pulled a
couple strings. He seems to like you.”

The teens eyes were the size of saucers as he stared at the dog tags in his hands. One had his birth
name and the other his alias. Somehow, despite everything, seeing the two medallions next to each
other made it feel real all over again, like the first time he got to visit the tower. He was
gobsmacked to say the least. “So I’m..I’m actually- I’m-“

“Welcome to the Avengers, kid.” Tony beamed proudly. “Will that Shut you up for five-“

The words were knocked out of him when Peter suddenly hugged him, almost sending them both
to the ground. Despite the initial shock Tony hugged him back.

“Thank you.” The teen said quietly as he broke away from the hug. “For like everything. Not just
the agent stuff, I know I don’t say thank you enough-“

“Peter you say thank you and I’m sorry about fifty times a day.” Tony chuckled before turning his
tone serious. “You earned it, bubby. I’m proud of you.”

Peter smiled from ear to ear as he slipped the dogtags over his head. “Okay but we gotta stop the
mushy stuff before I start crying.”

“Deal.” Tony ruffled his hair.

“So does this mean I’ll be able to go on all the missions now?”

“Some of them. Not all. You’ve still got a few more ranks before you’re on par with us.”

“How many?”
“Hmm, about fifty.”

“FIFTY?!”

The drive was fairly uneventful. There was some tension in the air but Peter was able to drown it out completely with music and the fact that he was ecstatic at the prospect of finally being an official agent– even if he was still technically in training. He’d donated his laptop to Thor in hopes that the movies on there would stop him annoying Bruce to death; so he entertained himself by listening to music, staring out of the window and pretending he was in some dramatic music video. What he didn’t realise was he was singing under his breath. A habit he was infamous for, constantly driving Tony crazy by humming or singing in the lab.

Tony turned the music down on purpose so the whole car was then listening to the boy singing away to himself. He was stuck in his own little world, his headphones being completely sound cancelling so he hadn’t noticed when all attention was on him. Unfortunately Tony had picked the wrong time to try and embarrass his son as the song Peter was listening to was less than parent friendly and the oblivious boy continued to sing along.

“-the blunt
I wouldn't give one if I could find a fuck, ha, ha, ha
In the cut and I put that on my momma
And my bitch called talkin’ 'bout some drama
I swear there ain't no time for women on the come up
It's either the pussy or the- OW!”

Steve leant forward between the seats and ripped the headphones out of his ears as Tony cackled wildly in the driver's seat. “Oh my god!”

Peter whipped his head around clutching his ears, looking incredulously at the furious blond in the backseat. “What was that for-“

“You watch your damn language! I thought I said no explicit music Peter?!” Steve yelled.
Peter was genuinely bewildered. He’d been sitting there quietly...hadn’t he? “B-but I- I didn’t-“

“You just said the f word, the b word and the p word!”

“The- the P word?” He wasn’t being deliberately facetious, he really didn’t know what word the man was referring to; in all honestly peter couldn’t even remember what song he had been listening to, he was too distracted by the pain in his ears.

“Pussy.” Tony chimed in, earning himself a smack in the arm from the red faced blond through the gap between his seat and the window. “Hey! Don’t hit the driver!”

“You know how much I hate that word Anthony!” Steve looked angrier than Peter had seen him in ages, to the point even Tony held his hands up in apology. Steve turned his blazing blue eyes back to Peter and help out his hand “Give me your phone now.”

“But- I- it- Tony!” The teen looked desperately to the driver.

“Don’t look at me, kiddo. What the hell were you even listening to?” Tony said still laughing maniacally. He hadn’t expected to hear the kid swear so causally like that, only ever having heard Peter curse in anger; had he known the teen would sing such explicit lyrics, he wouldn't have deliberately gotten him in trouble with Steve. Though given the boy’s recent actions maybe he would have, that was one way to spice up the road trip. Then again Steve did look really angry.

“Post Malone.” Peter cringed sheepishly and Tony laughed again.

“Of course.” Tony scoffed.

“I don’t even know what that is!” Steve growled.

“He’s a rapp- Steve please! I thought it was the clean version!”

“Uh huh, and that’s why you sang those disgusting lyrics? Phone. Now.”
“But-“

“Don’t make me come up there to get it Peter unless you want Tony to stop the car so I can pour this hand sanitiser in your mouth. NOW.”

“Come on Steve.” Tony interjected despite telling Peter he wouldn’t, after all the boy was his son and he didn’t much appreciate the threat that was being dealt out. Usually he would have assumed Steve had only said it for affect but the already exhausted soldier really did look to be at the end of the rope. He gave Tony such a menacing glare that even he was slightly concerned about having soap shoved down his throat. “Okay okay. Pete hand it over”

“Ugh fine!” Peter said stroppily as he shoved the offending phone into Steve’s hand; then sunk down in his seat, crossing his arms over his chest and pouted. The car was silent bar from Tony snickering and Steve making noises of disgust as he scrolled through Peter’s Spotify. The teen tried to entertain himself quietly but it wasn’t long before he was whining. “Now I’m boooooored-“

Steve let out another frustrated noise. Man his patience really was worn thin, next make sure Steve gets some decent sleep before you lock him in a car. “Take a nap then!”

“But I’m not tireeeeed-“

“Yes you are that’s why you’re being whiny. Sit back and close your eyes for a while, before you make Captain Wholesome commit a homicide.” Tony chuckled.

“I’m being whiny cause that killjoy took my only means of entertainment! M’not tired!”

“I was going to suggest we play I spy.” Bucky chimed in, joining in the conversation for one of the first times since they’d gotten into the car.

That seemed to spark the teenagers interest, despite the sarcasm in his tone. “Hey that’s not a bad idea-“

“Yes it is.” Tony and Steve said at the same time. At least they were agreeing on something for a change.
“Nap, Pete.” Tony said gently.

“I’ll wake you up if I spy anything interesting.” Bucky winked to him in the wing mirror.

Reluctantly Peter rolled over to lean against the window, curling in on himself and pulling his hood up. “Hmph. Fine.”

No sooner than Peter’s breathing evened out, showing that he was asleep, Steve launched into a rant, yell-whispering. “I can’t believe you let him listen to such filth, Tony.”

“How was I supposed to know?! Trust me I’m as shocked as you are!” The driver said defensively thought he was still struggling not to laugh at the absurdity of the situation.

“Oh that’s garbage.”

“I’m serious. I’ve never heard him curse like that I’m not happy either-“

“Then why didn’t you say something?!”

“I didn’t get the chance you jumped on him before I could get a word out. Chill out, I’ll talk to him.”

“I’m really not happy Tony. Really not happy. I’d never usually be so extreme but if I ever hear the P word come out of his mouth again I will wash his mouth out I’m not kidding-“

Tony rolled his eyes at the threat despite how serious Steve sounded. “You won’t because that’s child abuse-“

“And a child shouldn’t be listening to that kind of music!”

“I said I will talk to him, you’re not laying a hand on my kid Steve.”
“I don’t want to, you know I wouldn’t- Ugh, don’t make me out to be some kind of-“

“I’m not, I’m not I’m just making a point. It’s obligatory I know you’đ never do it but I’ve got to make the dad speech.”

Steve sat back, relaxing slightly though he was still shaking his head. “I just can’t believe he said that. He never cursed before you-“

“Oh hell no, don’t start blaming me again. I didn't write the song-“

“No but you let him listen to it!”

“I don’t have control over what kind of music he listens to-“

“No just his text messages right?”

That comment got under the man’s skin. Clearly Bruce had been criticising his parenting behind his back. “Okay now that’s different-“

“No it’s not. You wanna keep him safe, well listening to that kind of stuff can be damaging-“

“Mom. Please, spare me the speech. You’re giving me a migraine. I see your point, I agree with you and I said I will talk to him. That’s the end of it, now leave it.”

“Fine. But I wanna hear a change in his language. I know he’s been doing better since we made those rules but I’ve still heard a few F- bombs here and there-“

“That’s not leaving it is it Steven?! My son, I will handle it, shut your mouth.”

“Maybe you should take a nap, Steve.” Bucky muttered under his breath.
Tony Gets Sick

Chapter Summary

*Emetophobia warning*
I don't know why I keep doing this to myself, I hate puking so much, but this idea kept coming back to me- anyway!
Tony gets himself sick because he overworks himself and it's down to SpideySon to take care of him :p

Peter was bored, more bored than he had been in months. Not much had changed for him, school was still in full swing and full on, and he was still full on swinging around New York at night three times a week when he was allowed to patrol. It wasn’t as though his life had become any less tumultuous in that regard, his days were still busy but it was lacking in one area. He hadn’t had any lab projects in what felt like forever.

Since they’d gotten back from their training in Ohio and Tony had that big secret meeting with Fury, he was barely allowed in the lab. Well, that wasn’t quite true he was allowed in there- but he didn’t exactly feel welcome. Tony had been working night and day, running himself ragged and ignoring his other business responsibilities, working on some secret S.H.I.E.L.D something- from what Peter could gather it was the project agent Johnson had pulled him aside to talk about, since that was when Tony started acting odd. Every time Peter got too near to Tony’s work space, or asked too many questions the man made it very, painfully clear that he wanted him out of the way.

They had been a little...rocky since the incident at the compound where Peter had lied to Tony then accidentally implied that he didn’t view him as his real dad. They had talked things out of course, in great length, but it was all still a little fresh and that had caused some awkwardness between the pair to begin with. Not painfully so, Peter didn’t feel scared to be around his dad or anything like that, but there was some increased tension; they were more snappy with each other, there was less casual conversation, things were often misinterpreted- though all of that could also be attributed to both of their workloads increasing and the stress that came along with that.

It was obvious even though the man had insisted he wasn’t upset by the comment, that he still was. Who wouldn’t be? So, Tony pushing Peter away had been expected, the teen didn’t blame him for being upset about the whole affair and trying to establish some distance. Tony, like Peter, would often push people away when he had his feelings hurt so the teen understood. It was clear that their codependency had become a bit too much to handle for both parties anyway, given that they both panicked about having to spend a singular night apart- so some alone time did them both some good, at least in the beginning. Peter had been allowed to go back out on patrol for the first time in ages so he was enjoying that and it kept him occupied, but the times where he’d wanted to spend some lab time with his dad had become few and far between in the weeks that followed their return home and the boy was starting to feel the emotional strain.

At first it had hurt his feelings when Tony had shut him out like that, but after three weeks of it he was more than over that by now, now he was just itching to have something interesting to work on. Sure Tony had given him bits and pieces to do when his workload was getting on top of him, but it was nothing that Peter could really sink his teeth into.
Without his Dad to bounce ideas off of, he was struggling to come up with anything that sparked any real inspiration. It was frustrating as he hadn’t had inventors block for a long time and that mental block was starting to bleed into other areas as well. He hadn’t been keeping up with his story writing as much as he used to as well as his other hobbies. He was so used to having a million ideas running through his head all at once and that feeling of trying to get them all out before the fleeting thoughts went again- but lately he had nothing. No ideas for projects, or stories or even plot lines for his sims (he’d recently been playing that again, having downloaded custom content to make the spider suit). He’d lost all creative drive and he missed it. He missed spending time with his Dad too, more than he cared to admit.

Steve was the one who had a sit down talk with Peter one day about how he was feeling as the blond had noticed the shift in dynamic as well as the slow decline in Peter’s mood. He’d gone from being over excited and hyper where he’d finally been allowed to patrol again, to slowly becoming more withdrawn. Steve really didn’t want to see a repeat of what happened after the MV incident so he wanted to catch the boy before he fell back into that depression. To both of their surprises, Peter actually admitted to the soldier that he was starting to feel more than just a little pushed out rather than trying to hide it, which Steve saw as a very good sign.

Both the lack of attention and mental stimulation was putting a real downer on his mood but he didn’t know how to broach the subject with his Dad without making him mad or the situation worse. Steve had tried his best to give him advice, he really had and Peter appreciated the effort. He appreciated the man even taking the time to sit and chat with him, something Tony hadn’t really done in a while at that point, but the advice he gave him was essentially to just sit tight and be patient.

He tried. For a few weeks, but it was difficult. He hated sitting in a room with someone when he felt like he was just getting in the way, it made him feel useless. Some part of it triggered the feeling in his brain he got when he saw his aunt and he couldn’t do anything to help her get better and he couldn’t stand being in that environment. Eventually he just stopped going down to the lab all together and at first it seemed Tony hadn’t even noticed.

But of course the man had. At dinner one night he attempted to talk to his son but by then Peter had grown bitter about the entire situation and wasn’t particularly interested in hearing the man’s concerns.

“So I haven’t seen you downstairs in a couple days, bud. Is everything alright?” Tony had asked him gently.

Across the table Steve gave Peter a look that said ‘now is your chance, talk to him!’ But of course the stubborn teenager didn’t.

“Yeah. I just got bored.” Peter shrugged nonchalantly as though the whole thing evoked zero emotion from him which couldn’t be further from the truth.

Tony frowned at this. In all the time he’d known him Peter had never once gotten bored in his lab. He was always his little idea machine, having his hands in about ten projects all at once. He’d noticed that had dwindled lately, slowly tapering off until Peter had sat there on his phone the entire night. He did notice he just didn’t have the time to address it. And when he did have the time he was usually too exhausted to have much of a conversation with anyone, usually retiring to his room or silently cuddling with the boy on the couch over a movie. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to talk to him about it, he just didn’t have the energy. He didn’t want Peter to think he was ignoring him, even though he had been, he didn’t want him to feel that way. He knew how it felt to be neglected by a busy father. Tony was mad at himself for not having done something more.
proactive sooner, he just thought if he got the project done and over with he could fix it after, but the way things were going it might be too late by then. He didn’t want Peter to get hurt in the process all so he could get work done a little sooner, it wasn’t worth it and he knew that, it was just finding the time.

He was apprehensive about talking out the teens emotions. He was exhausted and he could already feel the hostile vibes coming off of him, he didn’t think he’d be able to have a deep conversation with the kid without blowing his stack or making the situation worse; especially considering they had an audience. So, he decided to take a neutral approach for once rather than feed into all the emotions. “Fair enough. Come down after school tomorrow I’ll find something interesting for you to work on, okay?”

He could see a spark in Peter’s eye when he said that, but of course the teen was too stubborn to let that on. Peter remained casual and shrugged coolly, but allowed himself a small smile. “Okay, sure.”

The next day Peter was secretly buzzing to get off of school and even had Happy drive him home for once just so he could get down to the lab quicker. He raced down there, almost forgetting to even use the bathroom on the way, ready for whatever his Dad was about to throw at him.

Unfortunately he was rather disappointed with the ‘something interesting’ Tony came up with. He should have known that the man would forget about him, he kicked himself for getting his hopes up in the first place.

“Another arm panel?” He sighed when he looked down at his desk, that had the partially assembled skeleton of one of Tony’s patented Iron Man suits. Something he’d worked on at least ten times, it’s certainly wasn’t new or exciting.

“Aw come on, this one needs a miniature holotable installing you haven’t done that before.” Tony said absentmindedly as he immediately strolled to the other side of the room, back to his own work space.

“Yes I have, I’ve done it twice on your mark XLIII’s, remember?”

“Uh huh.” Tony said automatically, though it was clear he hadn’t absorbed what Peter said because he didn’t address it.

Peter sighed in frustration again but solemnly started to work on the bare limb. After about an hour Tony started talking to him again, as though the conversation had never died down in the first place like no time had passed.

“So, how was school?”

“Eh, the usual stuff. My teacher showed really graphic pornography and the principal encouraged us all to get involved with very hard drugs.” Peter said, testing how much Tony was really listening to him.

“Oh, yeah? That’s cool, anything else happen?” Peter couldn’t believe it. He’d suspected the man was only half listening but Tony showed zero reaction to what he had just said and it wasn’t just the man’s dry sense of humour. Had Peter said that when Tony was playing full attention he would have gotten yelled at or threatened with a dial soap mouthwash for saying something so crude. But he didn’t even look up from what he was working on and his tone didn’t change at all.

“Then me and Ned bunked off fifth period and went and got tattoos. Mine says ‘Captain America
is my favourite Avenger’. Then uhh-“ he was running out of outrageous things to say, nothing came springing to his mind. “Then a few of the other kids decided it would be fun to nail me to a post outside the school as a kind of makeshift crucifixion you know? That was pretty fun. Oh that and I’m pregnant and I don’t know who the dad is.”

“Sounds like you had a busy day du-“ Tony cut himself up and looked behind him. His tone switched to a serious one. “Wait a minute, did you just say tattoo?”

“Really?! That’s what you got out of all that?! Not the sacrificial ritual or the cisgender male pregnancy?” Peter laughed.

Tony stared at him for a few seconds, blinking slowly. “I have no idea what the hell you are talking about right now-“

“Of course you don’t ‘cause you weren’t listening to me!”

“Who’s pregnant?” Tony asked still bewildered as to what he’d just missed.

“Does that matter?!”

“Well yeah, kinda- depending on who it is, because that sounds like a medical emergency or something-“

Peter let out a frustrated noise. “Uh uh! You don’t get to make jokes- I was making the jokes! But you missed them cause you were to busy playing with your stupid ‘top secret special proj-ject for Mr scary eye patch man’ whilst PRETENDING to be interested in how my day was!”

“I wasn’t pretending!” Tony barked indignantly.

“Bologna!” Peter managed to stop himself saying bullshit but his replacement curse word made Tony fail to hold back a snicker, which in turn made Peter even more angry. “It’s not funny Mr. Stark!”

Tony’s smile dropped completely. “Hey, don’t call me that-“

“Why not- that’s how you-you’ve been acting with me!”

“What’s that supposed to mean?!” Tony was getting angry in return now. How dare Peter use his old term of address like that, that wasn’t right. It was an unspoken agreement that ‘Mr. Stark’ was reserved for public settings only. “Peter what is with you lately?”

Tony turned, finally giving the teen his undivided attention.

“What’s with me?! What’s with you?!” Peter asked incredulously.

“You’ve been on edge all the time, you’re stressing me out!” It was true, that was another reason why Tony had become increasingly frustrated with Peter’s presence in the lab; the boy was so jittery, constantly moving around, jiggling his legs or humming. A lot of old nervous ticks and habits rearing their head for the first time in months. Of course Tony had noticed, he just didn’t have the time or patience to address it and it was distracting. He couldn’t focus when there was that much nervous energy in the room and he had enough stress as it was, as guilty as it made him feel to think that way. “Is this because you’re still mad about the whole compound thing?”

Peter had stayed in contact with Scott once they left the compound and Tony made it clear he wasn’t keen, that was another source of contention between the pair, but they hadn’t spoken about
“What?! No!”

“Then what else has changed? Is all the work stuff too much? Patrol and everything?”

Peter sighed and rolled his eyes, mirroring the behaviours Tony had been displaying every time he spoke lately, giving the man a taste of his own proverbial medicine. “Don’t act like you suddenly care now you’ve barely noticed me since we got back!”

“That’s not true.”

“Is too.”

“You didn’t answer my question—“

“Why should I?” Peter snapped but Tony didn’t react so he continued, actually answering him. “But no, it’s not too much- at least it wouldn’t be if I was able to talk to you.”

“You can always talk to me.” Tony said earnestly. That comment stung a little, more than he cared to admit. As much as he wanted to brush off the conversation as Peter just being a brat he couldn’t upon hearing that.

“Yeah but I meant t-t-talk to you. Like get a response rather than talking to a brick w-w-w- ugh!”

In frustration Peter slammed his fist on the metal work bench, causing the surface to bend under the pressure, leaving a large indentation.

“Hey!” Tony yelled, but not so much out of anger more out of shock. It wasn’t like Peter to lash out physically like that and the sight was rather disturbing. It made him take a step back for a moment, lowering his own frustration levels in order to try and get to the bottom of what was really going on inside the kid’s head. Surely it

“Sorry.” Peter said quietly, leaning his arm to the underside of the bench, popping the dent back out with a resounding ping. “I-I didn’t mean to do that, I’m s-Sorry.”

“It’s fine.” Tony said in an equally quiet voice. There was an awkward silence for a moment as Tony considered what to say next. “Your stutters been bad again.”

“Nice of you to notice.” Peter huffed under his breath, running his hand along the bench distractedly, pretending to check the smoothness of the surface though it was perfectly flat. He was just trying to avoid eye contact and feign disinterest in the conversation he’d started.

“Peter come on, you got my attention. I don’t have time for all this.”

“Me you mean.”

Tony sighed again. He wasn’t in the mood to have his words twisted against him, it was exhausting enough at the best of times, to have to think about the words he used with the kid. It was a constant battle not to misphrase something that Peter could possibly misconstrue, he was so sensitive at times. I and right then Tony didn’t have the energy. He just wanted the conversation to be over with so he could go back to work- he was trying to have a constructive conversation with him but now the kid had his full attention he didn’t want it? Ugh. “No. I don’t mean that. I’ve noticed it getting bad for weeks now.”

“How could you have noticed w-w-when you’ve barely said two words to me?”

“Well Steve said—“
“Exactly because Steve’s been Talking to me more than you have! Oh but you made the time to sit and talk about me behind my back right?”

“Stop it. It’s not like that you’re blowing everything out of proportion—“

“I’ve been told I’m great at that.”

“Stop interrupting me.” Tony snapped, the little patience he had wearing thin. “What’s with the stutter? Are you lying to me about something?”

“N-no I’m not.”

“Then what is it? It hasn’t been this bad since before you moved in.”

“I know it’s just been getting worse since I stopped—” Peter cut himself off, his face going impossibly red and the expression on his face made Tony’s mouth go dry. Shit, it was something serious.

“Stopped what?”

“N-nothing.”

“Peter.” Tony said warningly.

“I..i-it was an accident…”

“What was…”

Peter closed his eyes and took a deep breath like he was preparing for the screaming that was about to ensue. “I stopped taking my meds.”

“You what?!”

“I forgot to bring them to the compound with me and by the time I realised we only had a couple days left, but I managed to cope with everything that happened just fine so I figured I’d be okay to just—“

“You took yourself off of your medication?! Are you a licensed psychiatrist now?!”

“No-“

“No you’re not, you have zero understanding about the effects of psychiatric medication! You have no idea how messing with them could affect you, that’s why you see a psychiatrist and a counsellor. For fuck sake, for such a smart kid you really do some stupid things- you want me to trust you to be Spider-Man but you can’t even remember to take a couple pills?! How could you be so irresponsible?!”

Peter shuffled uncomfortably; he’d known for weeks that he should’ve told someone, he wasn’t completely clueless; he’d done research into his medicine, he understood that he was going throw withdrawal symptoms but he felt like he was coping well all things considered. He never liked the meds to begin with but that didn’t mean he’d done it on purpose. It really had been an accident, he knew Tony would blow up at him that’s why he hadn’t said anything...“I thought I would be okay! I’ve been functioning without them!”

“Yeah, completely fine- that’s why you’ve been stuttering and wetting the bed again.”
Peter’s face fell and immediately turned bright pink. He hadn’t told anybody about that. He had been having nightmares again - not the bad ones about past traumatic events or anything like that, just a lot of very anxiety provoking ones; like the kind where you’re in school but you’ve forgotten to wear pants or when you have to pee really bad and you can’t find a bathroom - that last one being specific to the accidents he’d been experiencing. He hadn’t made the connection between the accidents and his meds before but maybe that did make sense... still it wasn’t like it was happening a lot. A little more than usual, maybe once every fortnight instead of once a month - but he hadn’t mentioned it to anyone. Not even Ned and he’d bribed JARVIS not to say anything. “How did you know about that..?”

“Because I know you. You always act shady the next morning, it’s not hard to figure out.” It was Tony’s turn to feel awkward. It was a bit strange to admit that he was able to pick up on such private matters so easily. Again, he had intended to ask Peter about it sooner but time got away from him. It never felt like the appropriate time to mention it. He felt guilty for throwing it out there like that too, wishing he had let on to the fact he knew about the increase in accidents a little more gently. He really didn’t want Peter to think he was making fun of him for them because that way the boy would never come to him again.

“W-why didn’t you say anything?”

“I’ve been waiting for you to come and talk to me about it.”

“I tried to talk to you but you were too busy-“

“Then why didn’t you tell Bruce or your councillor?”

“I-I...I didn’t wanna talk to them. I wanted to talk to you.” The teen admitted, his face burning ashamedly as he knew how childish he sounded.

Tony sighed. The admission tugged at his heart strings, of course it did. It made him happy that Peter wanted him in his hour of need but it just- wasn’t practical. The teen had to learn to be reliant on other people, not just him, especially at times like that where he didn’t have the time to hear him out. He was trying his best to be compassionate, but he just wasn’t in the state of mind to do so, so he ended up just sounding frustrated. “Peter I can’t do twenty seven things at once, something’s got to give somewhere. You had other options, other people to talk to you didn’t need me-“

“Yes I did!” Peter snapped angrily. If it was as easy as going to someone else he would have, could Tony not understand that? He called him Dad for a reason after all. “But I guess I’m where it has to give, huh? Well fine. If you don’t need me either I’ll just leave you alone.”

“I don’t want that.”

“Then what do you want?!” The teen screamed suddenly. He was sick of feeling like an inconvenience.

“A kid that can go an hour without having a tantrum over nothing!” Tony yelled back. He knew it was harsh and he didn’t mean it but he had tried to stay calm; how was he supposed to do that with a teenager screaming in his face?

Nothing? Peter just poured his heart out and Tony told him it was nothing? “Ugh! You’re impossible you know that?! Have fun being lonely, I’m gonna go hang out with people who actually wanna spend time with me-“ Peter got ready to storm out of the room but Tony called after him.
“Don’t you dare walk away from me young man, come here right now.” The man growled lowly, pointing to the ground like he was telling a dog to sit and Peter really didn’t take kindly to that.

“Or what?” The teen huffed a sarcastic laugh.

“Or you’re grounded.”

“So? The only thing that would change is me not being allowed down here and I don’t wanna be with you anyway.” Peter laughedcoldly again and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Stop acting like a four year old- just because you’re not getting enough attention. I didn’t realise I had to babysit you-“

“What, cause I got emotions I’m a baby again now? You know if you wanted a kid without emotions maybe you shoulda made one. Oh wait! You did! How did Ultron work out, again?”

“Oh, you’re proud of that little analogy aren’t you? Do you think that’s a fucking joke, Peter? People died!” Tony shouted, making Peter jump a little. “Why are you acting like such a brat? I’m sorry that I have to work, pal, I thought you were mature enough to understand that. I thought I was raising a teenager not a toddler.”

“Nope. Not doing this. Uh uh.” Peter turned and started making his way back towards the elevator. He wasn’t about to stand there while his Dad got nasty again, saying all the things he knew Peter’s brain told him enough already. It was obvious Tony was at his limit and he wasn’t about so have the heart to heart that Peter needed. Best to just walk away before they both said something they’d regret.

“So you can dish it out but not take it? You gonna put your fingers in your ears too and-“

“LALALALALALA!” Peter did exactly that. If Tony was going to call him a brat then a brat he shall get. He got inside the elevator and turned back towards his dad, fingers still in his ears.

“Peter Benjamin Parker you get back here right now!” Tony was positively livid but Peter couldn’t care less.

“Sorry I can’t hear you! Connections bad on my end- it’s a satellite problem I think- I don’t- you’re breaking up-“ Peter yelled, dramatically annunciating each word as though he was trying to mouth it. He made sarcastic gestures with an invisible phone right up until the metal doors shut.

Since that night the two hadn’t spoken. Not a single word. In three days. It was pretty easy to pull off on both sides as they were separate from each other for the entire day other than at meal times, which Tony had been skipping more often than not since he’d become engrossed with that stupid secret project. The man had even stopped coming upstairs late in the evening, as he usually would for at least half an hour before Peter went to bed prior to their argument. He had done so since the teen would be sleepy and less likely to ask questions, happy enough to snuggle silently with the man on the couch before he was ushered off to his own room- but that had all but stopped. Once again Steve had attempted to reconcile the pair but the two were both too stubborn to be the first to back down.

Finally the tension became too much and it was Steve who bit the bullet and brought it up, over the dinner table no less. “Come on you guys, can’t you at least say hello to each other?”

The pair looked at each other with a sneer then back at Steve with a similar look of disdain before turning back to their plates. Had it not been such an uncomfortable situation Steve would have smiled at the synchronicity of their movements, like a mirror image on one another right down to
“It is pretty awkward.” Bruce chimed in, trying to be helpful by backing Steve and breaking the ice but unfortunately it got the opposite reaction.

“Well I’m sorry for making things awkward.” Peter sighed and got up, taking his half finished meal over to the sink. Steve opened his mouth to comment on how little he’d eaten but he was cut off. “I should go get ready anyway.”

That got Tony’s attention and the man spoke for the first time that day. “Where are you going?”

“What do you care-“

“He’s on patrol tonight.” Clint said loudly to avoid Peter digging himself a deeper hole. “Covering Rhodey’s turf, he got pulled onto the Osaka case last minute. Pete said he’d cover.”

“I didn’t sign off on that.” Tony said lowly.

“I asked Steve.” Peter shrugged and turned his head back towards the sink smirking slightly. He knew that would get under Tony’s skin.

And he was right, the genius turned his steely gaze to Steve and spoke in the same cold angry tone. “Well Steve isn’t your dad or your boss.”

“Could have fooled me.” Peter shrugged again as he dried his hands. He then walked back out of the kitchen towards his own room, where he heard the smashing of plates and raised voices behind him. He felt a stab of guilt in his chest for a moment when he realised how deeply the words must have hurt the man, but it faded quickly when he remembered how mean Tony had been to him. The initial argument had been so stupid, he wanted to back down and say sorry but he was making a point now. It was always him who apologised first and this time he didn’t want to. It was time for Tony to be the adult in the situation.

“Now you know how we felt when you and Tony were having your little bitching contest last year.” Nat has quipped when Steve expressed his exasperation with the father and son after the former stormed back down to his laboratory. He eventually conceded that it would be best not to meddle further. Tony was insinuating that his project was almost finished, so Steve figured it would be best to wait until the man would put his full time and effort into making it up to Peter.

Tony wanted to reconcile with his son, to go up to his room and talk to him, but he was just too tired and too angry. He was physically and mentally drained, the commission was taking everything out of him. By the time he allowed himself to come upstairs for some food or to sleep in a bed rather than the lab floor, Peter was already asleep. He kept telling himself, and Steve, that he would get around to it. He’d go and talk to Peter as soon as he was done, they both needed time to cool off anyway. He would, he’d go and talk to him, just not tonight. He had a thumping headache that wouldn’t quit. He just wanted to lie down...

They were still in the midst of their stalemate two days later, when the weekend rolled around and Peter was feeling the effects badly. He’d felt ignored before but he at least got to have some physical contact and affection with the man in the evening; but now due to his own stubbornness and pride he couldn’t bring himself to ask for some. He had made do with Steve hugs and Thor’s big, brotherly bear hugs but that wasn’t enough to sustain him. Peter was a creature that needed snuggles to survive, it was one of his main food groups. Okay maybe not literally- but emotionally? Definitely. He was getting to the point where he was considering going down stairs and apologising, especially when Tony didn’t come up for breakfast or lunch. Usually Peter would
have apologised the very first day but something about Tony’s attitude always seemed to bring out the worst in him; he’d never have been so petty or mean to anyone else but sometimes Tony was so smug and arrogant Peter could just punch him. And for once he didn’t want to be the first one to say sorry. He was always the one who apologised to Tony, always but this time he was too hurt. He wanted the man to see what he’d done wrong and feel bad for it. He wanted Tony to man up and he the adult in the situation instead of him having to be the mature one. Peter was always more than understanding and apologetic. It was about time the same courtesy was extended to him. It was only fair.

That’s how he felt for the first three days anyway, but their ignoring each other was coming up to a week now and his resolve was weakening. He just really wanted his dad.

When he’d heard Steve whispering to Bruce one afternoon, it only deepened Peter’s concerns but on a whole other level.

“Can you go down and talk to him please, he won’t listen to me. He’s running himself into the ground again, Bruce. He didn’t eat last night and I know he skipped breakfast this morning. I’m getting worried.” The blond furrowed his brows pleading desperately. “He’s getting obsessive again, JARVIS said he hasn’t even slept in two days.”

“I’ll try, but you know what he’s like when he gets like this. He keeps pushing himself to this deadline he’s made up, even Fury said he can lay off for a couple months but he just won’t. He keeps talking about factoring in time for testing but-“ it was then the pair noticed Peter eavesdropping.

“Can we help you?” Steve quirked an eyebrow, not being a fan of that particular habit of Peter’s.

“It’s not me who needs help by the sounds of it.” The teenager frowned causing the older two men to sigh.

Steve put his hands on his hips and scowled, this time in Peter’s direction. “Where are your ear plugs? We’ve talked about this, just because you have advanced hearing doesn’t mean you get to-“

“Okay okay I get it I’m sorry! Jus- just tell him I’ve been acting funny or something. That’ll make him come upstairs.” He knew it was a dirty move and that it wasn’t fair to play with Tony’s emotions like that, but if he wasn’t eating or sleeping anything was fair game. Besides, it wasn’t a total lie, Peter had been struggling too and he knew his Dad knew that. He also knew Tony was probably feeling the same way but wouldn’t admit it to himself, so if he had Peter to use as an excuse to break the cycle the man would probably take the out at this point.

Bruce sighed, seeming to come to the same conclusion as Peter albeit if he wasn’t thrilled by the idea. “Okay, I’ll talk to him.”

It was then that Thor came in with blood dripping down his face, causing Steve to cover Peter’s eyes with his hand. “Banner! A little assistance please!”

“Oh god what have you done now.” Bruce said calmly though he stood up from the table very quickly and ushered the god over to the sink where he’d be making less of a mess.

“Stark threw a bloody wrench at my head and he’s split my eyebrow open!” Thor growled angrily and Peter could head the gentle crackling of static electricity emanating from the man’s hands.

“What did you do?” Steve asked.

“I didn’t do anything! I simply went down there to ask when he was going to stop being a whiny
git and crawl out of the pity cave he’s in—“

“Oh but you didn’t do anything?” Now Steve was angry. “Don’t you know anything about how to deal with him when he’s like this?!”

“Well obviously not but clearly no one else does. Your gentle mothering and coddling isn’t helping either Rogers! You’re enabling his self destruction by bringing his meals down for him like a slave!”

“If I don’t then he doesn’t eat! Would you rather he starve to death down there or just pass out from low blood sugar?!” Peter hadn’t seen Steve that angry in a long time, the veins on his neck were starting to stand out as his face turned pink. Considering it was usually Tony and Steve at odds all the time it was almost surprising to see the blond so defensive over him, then again it also wasn’t; despite their differences and their disagreements the two had always been very close and Steve always seemed to be the most intune with Tony. He was always the most understanding about the man’s outbursts and visa versa, when it came down to it they always found a way to balance each other out.

That being said, Tony wasn’t there to balance Steve out, he hadn’t been for a while now and it looked as though the soldier was close to snapping himself; Thor being his direct target in that moment.

Bruce was the one to interject as he could see the boy’s wide eyed look from across the room. “Not an appropriate discussion to have in front of Peter! So stop now both of you, Thor I already said I’m gonna go talk to him alright? Can we stop this now please?”

“You’re right Banner. I apologise youngling.” Thor lowered his voice considerably when he saw the startled look on the boy’s face too. Even he knew when to back down, especially given that the teen was there to bare witness to the chaos. “He respects you more than he does us, Bruce I pray he’ll listen to you.”

“Sorry Pete.” Steve came up behind where Peter was sitting and put his hands on the boy’s shoulders comfortingly. “Don’t worry about your dad okay, sport? This isn’t something you need to deal with, it’s for us to sort out.”

“It’s my fault he stopped coming upstairs.” Peter said miserably and suddenly he felt as though he was going to cry. “If I hadn’t been such a brat he wouldn’t be trying so hard to avoid me.”

“Oh Peter, no. No, buddy that’s not it.” Steve was quick to whip Peter’s stool around and crouch down to his eye level. “Tony...Tony gets like this every once in a while. He gets in this mindset, and he hyper fixates. He gets that one specific project- it could be anything, big or small, and he just won’t put it down until it’s done. He won’t eat or sleep- it’s all he can think about. He obsesses over it. It used to happen...a lot more but not since you’ve been here which I think is down to you keeping him grounded. If anything you’ve been really helping him, P.”

“Well if I wasn’t s-so mean to him I coulda helped more b-but I didn’t. I was selfish and now he’s not takin’ care of himself and he’s assaulting people and-“ Peter cut himself off, finding it difficult to talk around the sudden lump that had formed in his throat. He was glad Steve had swivelled him around to face away from the other two men in the room because despite himself, he could feel tears prickling in his eyes. He knew what Steve was hinting at when he said it used to happen a lot more often. Tony had talked to him a lot about his addiction issues and how he had thrown himself into his work in attempts to get sober before he ultimately failed because of the stress he put himself under. He couldn’t live with the idea of Tony relapsing because he’s been such a baby about not getting attention.
“Hey, no. Pete- oh come here.” Steve stood up and pulled Peter into a hug and that was when he couldn’t fight back the tears anymore. As much as he appreciated the man’s comfort, he didn’t want him. He wanted his Dad. They had never had an argument that had lasted that long and Peter knew it was his fault- Tony didn’t have time to go chasing after him when he was so busy, it wasn’t fair. He had just added to the man’s stress instead of helping by doing menial tasks and lightening his work load. That was what he was hired for in the first place but he’d been so spoilt on being the man’s centre of attention he couldn’t even do that for him? For a couple weeks? It had been such a difficult week without him and now he felt such an overwhelming sense of guilt.

Steve rubbed his back as he hugged him. “He’s gonna be okay Peter, I promise. And so are you. It’s just a rough patch, alright? You’re both too similar that’s all.”

At the other end of the room Bruce has finished steri-stripping Thor’s eyebrow back together. “I’m gonna run down and talk to him, okay? See if I can convince him to take some time off.”

With that he slipped quietly out of the room and Thor stood there sadly for a moment. He hated seeing Peter so upset, so he did the only thing he knew how to do. “Oh spiderling- that’s it, group hug!”

“Thor, no!” Steve shrieked as the man started towards them with open arms but it didn’t deter him. “You’re covered in blood you big- AGH! EW!”

As gross as it was for Steve (who was the only one who made contact with the blood stains) it did the trick in cheering Peter up, who started laughing hysterically.

The two blonds spent the rest of the day keeping Peter distracted and stopping him from going downstairs in fears it would only end in more tears. Dinner time rolled around and Nat and Bruce appeared from...whatever they were up to. But no Tony. There was tension in the air for the first fifteen or so minutes of their meal until finally, they heard the sliding doors down the hallway open.

“Well, well! Look who decided to- OW!” Thor was greeting Tony warmly but his choice of words earned him a sharp, hard elbow in the ribs from Nat.

Everyone held their breath for a moment as the man turned the corner. Peter was so glad to see him but- but something wasn’t quite right. Tony looked different, but Peter couldn’t put his finger on why. He’d let his facial hair grow out a little bit, but it wasn’t dramatic and it wasn’t like Peter hadn’t seen him in five days, he just hadn’t spoken to him, the man shouldn’t look so off. Whatever it was he didn’t care, he immediately jumped up from his seat and almost knocked the man over by hugging him.

Tony was taken aback a bit by the warm welcome he was receiving and chuckled for a second before reciprocating the hug. “Well, hi there--“

“I’m sorry.” Peter cut him off in a muffled broken voice.

Tony rubbed his back and kissed the top of his head. “Yeah, me too, Underoos.”

“It doesn’t count if you don’t say it back.“

“Nat hush!” Steve hissed at her.

The pair both chuckled, and Peter wiped his face on Tony’s shirt as they broke apart. Tony whispered to him quietly and ran a hand through the boy’s hair. “Talk later, yeah?”
To which Peter nodded. There was a lot left to talk about but for now he was just happy to have his Dad back and on talking terms with him. They weren’t particularly phased by the rest of their family witnessing the tender moment either, it helped make things feel like they were back to normal. Tony ruffled his hair as they went to take their seats and Peter heard the man’s stomach growl angrily.

“You hungry?” He joked and Tony smiled, but again something just seemed off. It was as though the smile was paining him, his face looked unnaturally stretched.

Tony swallowed before answering. “Yeah, I forgot to eat lunch again.”

Peter brushed the weird feeling he was getting off, passing it off on his anxiety about making up after their fight. They managed to eat dinner together without any major arguments, even if Tony did threaten to split Thor's other eyebrow if he didn’t stop badgering him.

“I know, I know, I’m doing the thing again. I know.” Tony sighed dramatically around a mouthful of food, a habit he often chastised his son for and Peter had never seen Tony do himself. He seemed to realise this as well and forced himself to swallow with a grimace.

“Yes, well you seem to know everything, other than how to help yourself.” Nat quipped.

Again Tony groaned like a teenager who was being nagged by their parents. “Look, just bare with me, okay? I’m getting there I’ve just, I’ve just got a couple things to get done. Alright. So y’all can quit your bitchin’.”

“Tony.” Steve warned. “Be nice. We’re just-“

Tony waved his hand in a circle in front of his face, like he was telling Steve to hurry up and get his lecture over with. “Worried about me, yes I know.”

“Hmm, who does that sound like? You sound suspiciously like a young curly headed little boy I know-“ Nat smirked at Peter who frowned indignantly.

“Hey! Less of the little boy and more of the picking on him, this intervention ain’t about me.” Peter scowled and Nat poked his tongue out at him, so he did it back.

Steve our his head in his hands. “Does no one have table manners anymore?”

“I do!” Thor said loudly before he belched, causing Nat and Peter to start giggling.

“I do.” Bruce grumbled thinking he had been overlooked.

“Oh, I’m sorry, aren’t you the man that knocked over a child to get to the ice cream machine at a buffet that one time?” Tony chuckled watching the doctors face turn beet red.

“Excuse me, what?!?” Peter almost spat out his drink in shock.

“You make it sound like it was on purpose!” Bruce yelled.

Nat chuckled before joining in. “I don’t know, hon. You were pretty determined to get there before they ran out of those sprinkles you like-“

“IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!”

Everyone was laughing and continuing to throw digs at each other, as much as Steve was trying to moderate. Tony seemed to slip back into his usual self too but at one point Peter looked over to see
the man’s face had fallen blank and he looked pale. He stared at his plate for a second before he abruptly stood up and pulled out his phone. From the angle he was at Peter couldn’t see what had popped up on the screen but with his sensitive hearing he knew that it hadn’t vibrated so he doubted it had gone off at all. That and the fact that Tony’s face changed before he even looked at the screen set off red flags in the back of the boy’s mind.

“Gotta go guys, work emergency. Don’t have too much fun without me.” Tony said hurriedly through gritted teeth and rushed out of the room.

“Are you coming back?” Steve called after him, seeing Peter’s look of concern. The man had promised to have a talk with him, so he could understand the boy’s worries. But he received no answer and the man was gone. He looked back to Peter who was pouting and looking at the spot Tony had just been in. “It’s alright, sport. He said you guys will talk so you guys will talk, at least you made up right?”

Peter nodded, though he still looked pretty sad. He had a feeling in the pit of his stomach that something wasn’t right. Maybe his Dad wasn’t comfortable being around him after the things he’d said, they no doubt had made a really negative impact on the man’s mental health given how much he seemed to be struggling anyway.

For the rest of the evening Peter sat close to Steve as they all settled in for a Tony-less movie night once again, in hopes of making him feel a little better. But when ten o’clock rolled around Steve insisted that Peter go to bed.

“Come on, you know the rules, sport. It’s a school night.”

“I know, but can’t I just go down and say goodnight? I’ll be five minutes-“

“Peter, no means no.” Steve said firmly. “I texted Tony and he said it’s not safe down there right now there was an incident with his project.”

Peter’s eyes grew wide. “An incident? What kind of incident? Is he okay? I can go and help-“

Steve put a hand up to stop him before he began extrapolating and worked himself up into a panic. “He’s got it under control, it’s nothing serious. Just a lot of clean up to do. Come on pal, you’ll see him in the morning, okay?”

“Okay…” Peter said unsurley. He wanted to argue further but he knew Steve wasn’t going to budge. So, he said his goodnights and took himself off to bed, resisting the urge to take a detour down to the lab. It was too risky, Steve was bound to see him, or he’d probably have JARVIS check he was actually in his room. He changed for sleep quickly and laid himself down, but that funny feeling wouldn’t go away. It was almost like his spidey-senses, but different. He couldn’t place the feeling, he couldn’t even put a name to it- unease? No, that was too nice sounding for how uncomfortable he felt. Whatever it was, it stopped him from sleeping, causing him to toss and turn for a few hours. Since his and Tony’s fight that wasn’t uncommon, he’d been struggling to sleep ever since and had to fight the urge to go to the man’s room for comfort. But him and Tony were cool now right? So, why was the urge to go to his room stronger than ever?

It was then Peter realised that’s what the feeling was. There was an unknown force in his gut pulling him towards Tony’s room, but he had no idea why. Once he’d made that realisation he couldn’t get the thought out of his head. He didn’t understand, he didn’t feel scared or panicky, not like how he usually felt when he needed his dad in the middle of the night. But maybe...maybe it wasn’t Peter who needed Tony. Maybe it was the other way around.
He didn’t know where all of this was coming from, but something in him just kept repeating the idea over and over until he found himself getting out of bed and making his way to his Dad’s room. He told himself that he was going just to prove the feeling wrong, to show his brain that everything was fine and it was just his anxiety getting to him, making a mental note to talk to his counsellor about intrusive thoughts. As much as he tried to self soothe the feeling kept butting in, getting louder and louder inside of him. He could feel his heart start to race as though adrenaline was starting to course through him. He had to get to his Dad now. Where was this coming from? It was like that night where he’d convinced himself he was being chased by a demon but this time he wasn’t running from something, but towards something. Someone. And he had to get there fast, even though nothing was happening- and he knew that- he was running out of time. What was wrong with him?

The walk (that turned into more of a jog towards the end) to his father's room seemed to take much longer than usual, but when he finally got there he breathed a small sigh of relief. He was one door away from seeing everything was fine and hopefully having that talk his Dad has promised him. But when he typed in the access code to get into the man’s room, an error message popped up. What? Had...had Tony changed the code whilst he was mad at him so he couldn’t get in and bother him? No, no Tony wouldn’t do that. He knew his Dad wouldn’t do that, not after everything, then what was going on?

“JARVIS? Why can’t I open the door?”

“Master Tony has requested not to be disturbed, Master Peter.” The AI chimed.

“I don’t wanna disturb him I just wanna see him. Let me in.” Peter said adamantly.

“I’m under instruction not to let anyone-“

“Well I’m not anyone.” Peter snapped, the longer he stood there the tighter the knots in his stomach wound. He didn’t have time for this. “I’m his son. I wanna see my Dad. Let me in his room, now.”

“Where, sir?”

“What?” Peter asked confusedly. Was the computer going senile or was he being deliberately ignorant?

“Where is it you would like the enter, Master Peter?”

“Into Tony’s bedroom?”

After he said those words he heard the door panel sound and the door itself slid into the all. “Right away sir.”

“Oh...Kay?” What was that all about? It didn’t matter, now Peter could go and see that everything was fine. Everything would be fine so long as he could see his Dad. But...where was he?

That was when he heard a strained voice come from the bathroom, of which door was shut. “Jar I told you not to send for Bruce I’m fi-“

“Dad it’s me. What’s wrong?” Why did Tony automatically assume it was Bruce? He flew across the room until he was right outside the door.

“Aw shit.” He heard Tony fumbling around, like he was searching for something or grabbing at something. Before he answered again it was clear that he was trying too hard to make himself
sound normal. “Nothing Petey, I’m alright. What’s u-“

Before Tony could finish his sentence, Peter heard a gut wrenching, strangled groan that was soon followed by a splashing sound. It was disturbingly familiar.

Peter pressed his ear against the door, as though he didn’t have super hearing. He just wanted to be sure he really heard what he thought he did. “Are you throwing up?”

Tony answered back, a little too quickly as he was still breathless. “No- Pete look, just go back to be-Ed-“

Tony was cut off once again by a series of guttural choking sounds that were accompanied by the sound of splashing water. Peter had heard enough. “JARVIS open the door.”

“Jar don’t you da-“ Tony croaked desperately, still letting out wet coughs in between quiet heaves.

“Master Peter I do not have permission to do so unless it is an emergency-“

Peter was determined, he wasn’t about to let the AI stop him from getting through that door. He’d use his super strength to rip it out of the wall if he had to. “I’m calling it an emergency. Either you open the door or I go wake up Dr. Banner, which do you think Tony would prefer?”

“As you wish, sir.” It was clear that the AI was aware it was disobeying a direct order but it was making the executive decision to do it anyway, for the sake of its creators health. It made sense to Peter now why JARVIS had prompted him to specify the word ‘bedroom’ when allowing him access before as Tony must have said don’t let anybody into the bathroom.

Tony cried out against what his AI has done desperately begging his son in one last ditch attempt to keep him from entering. “Peter don’t come in, please-“

“Oh Jesus, Dad.” As the door opened Peter was horrified at the seen. There was vomit everywhere, in the tub, the sink, on the floor, up the shower curtains and Tony himself was absolutely covered in it. There were piles of tissue everywhere, some on which had concerning amounts of blood on them, as though Tony had tried to clean it up himself in the midst of his attack. He immediately crouched down next to him, pulling him more upright from his slumped position between the tub and the toilet. “Christ, I knew you were sick.”

Tony wailed pitifully and it was now clear to Peter without the sound proofing effect of the door that the man’s nose was clogged up; and the breaths he was taking through his mouth were raspy and uneven. “I’m not-“

“Uh huh sure, you keep telling yourself that. I take it JARVIS ran obvs.” That was the computers cue to chime in.

“I did, sir. Master Tony has an elevated temperature of one hundred and three point six degrees fahrenheit and his hydration levels have fallen below fifty nine percent.”

“And you still don’t call Bruce? I thought you were meant to be artificial intelligence.” Peter stressed the last word. Even JARVIS could tell that statement was rhetorical but he answered anyway.

“I trust in my Masters decisions, unlike some people.”

“Is your computer tryna throw down with me? Right now? JARVIS mute.” There was no way he was about to fight with the stupid old calculator, not while his dad was in such a state. To his slight
surprise, even though it was Tony, the man he relied on for everything nowadays, he didn’t panic. He slipped automatically into calm, level headed nurse mode. “Okay, first things first let’s get that temperature down-“

“Peter I am fine please go back to bed. What are you doin up anyway?” The man slurred drowsily, his head lolling limply on the toilet seat and his eyes were now closed. He burped wetly and he made little attempt to close his mouth as the bile dribbled out and down the side of his face into the toilet. Peter found it sweet how even whilst Tony was half dead he was still concerned about his son not getting his eight hours. Peter could have found it more sweet however, if he didn’t realise in that moment that the socks he had worn to bed were now saturated in cold vomit.

“Christ you sound like you’re drunk- you aren’t are you?” He pulled Tony’s he’s to face him, pulling at his cheeks slightly to get him to open his eyes. Which he did, with a very angry look on his face at the accusation.

“No I am not. You think I still get sick when I drink? Please I grew out of that in my twenties-UUURH-“

“Weird flex but okay.” Peter laughed a little but resumed his serious manner when Tony shot him a look, despite still currently puking, inadvertently smacking his forehead onto the brim of the lid as he heaved. Peter rubbed his back gently and placed his hand in between Tony’s burning forehead and the toilet seat before the man knocked himself out. “Sorry- Alright uhm...Let’s get you cooled off first before we try and get some fluids in you. Once you can keep water down for a while we’ll try you on some Tylenol or something.”

Tony shook his head belligerently and the more he spoke the more it became apparent that the fever was affecting his mental capacity. He didn’t just sound drunk he was acting drunk. And he was insisting that he was still perfectly in control of his current situation. “I don’t need hel-”

“Yeah I get it, you’re big bad Tony Stark and you don’t need anyone. But you’re also my Dad so just shut up and let me help you for five minutes, please.” As disturbing as it was to see Tony Stark be so...un-Tony-Stark-like? For lack of a better term- Peter still didn’t care. He wasn’t worried about anything else in the world other than taking care of his Dad in his hour of need, as the man had done for him so many times before. So, he certainly wasn’t in the mood for any backchat or resistance from said man. “Lift your arms up.”

Tony tried his best to, but it was difficult considering he could barely raise them past elbow height. He muttered something about everything feeling so heavy. Luckily his son had more strength than the average fifteen year old and was able to peel his shirt off for him with little assistance on his part. Peter couldn’t tell if it was soaked in sweat or just vomit but either way he knew the wet fabric clinging to him wasn’t helping Tony’s high fever.

Peter brushed Tony’s wet hair off of his forehead and whispered very gently to him. “I’m gonna grab you some dry clothes okay? Don’t choke on your own vomit.”

“I’ll try my best.” Tony tried to say jokingly but it came out as a mere croak followed by some disturbingly harsh coughs.

As soon as Peter exited the bathroom, he heard more waves of vomit come out of the feverish genius. It was clear that he’d been trying his best to hold back whilst his son was in there, which Peter thought was absolutely ridiculous but on some level he could understand the embarrassment. He still cringed anytime his puking incident in the kitchen was mentioned. He was quick to grab Tony an entire change of clothes, as well as some clean towels, wash cloths and some chilled bottles of water from the man’s minifridge beside his bed.
“Okay I got- oh dear. Uhm...let’s just...let’s leave the shirt for now huh?” Peter said gently when he realised that Tony’s burst of nausea hadn’t all ending up in the appropriate vessel. Tony’s chest and lap were entirely covered with the acidic liquid, even more so than it had been before Peter left.

Tony looked up at him and looked as though he was on the verge of tears. He was so ashamed of himself for getting into such a state, let alone being caught by his child. “God Peter, you shouldn’t be dealing with this go and get Bruce-“

“No please don’t. Lemme take care of you for once okay? I’m gonna get Bruce after I get you cleaned up and put back to bed, don’t you worry I ain’t keeping this a secret-“

“Great.” Tony muttered miserably. He wanted to put up a more substantial fight but he was just too weak. He was barely staying conscious at this point.

“Yes, that is great Anthony. I’m not playing games when your health is involved-“

“Don’t call me that.” Tony snapped swallowing down another mouthful of bile as well as a bubble of air that made an instant reappearance.

“Then stop fighting me. Sit back a little. Does anything hurt?”

Tony lied about the pain in his chest and lungs in favour of moving the conversation along quicker. He didn’t want to worry the kid anymore and he certainly didn’t want to keep his mouth open for an extended period of time. “Just my head. It’s just a stomach virus or something Pete it’s nothing to worry-“

“Okay, I take it you didn’t let JARVIS run any blood work?”

“...no.” Tony sighed inwardly. He knew he wasn’t going to win this one.

“So how do you know it isn’t an infection or something more sinister?”

“Just do.”

Peter sat back on his heels and put his hands on his hips. “It must be difficult knowing everything, Iron Man.”

“Quit it I’m not in the mood- ah.”

Tony was cut off by a content sigh when Peter put a cold, damp washcloth on his forehead. “Feels nice huh?”

“Mhm.” Tony closed his eyes and Peter felt him relax against him, falling lazily to one side.

“Don’t fall asleep on me, Dad. We still gotta get you to drink something.” Peter cupped his cheek and brushed his thumb gently across it until Tony opened his eyes again, with a small pathetic whine. For Tony to be acting so odd he must’ve been in really bad shape and Peter gnawed his lip in concern. Maybe he ought to run and get Bruce, or have JARVIS send for him...then again they’d have to do all of this first anyway, so if anything he was cutting out the middle man by doing the brunt of the clean up and initial first aid first. He’d get Tony clean and comfy then he’d send for Bruce, that made the most sense. Plus he was sure if his dad had all his faculties about him he’d have preferred as little people saw him like that as possible.

In his half conscious state the man was adamantly fighting against the water bottle that was being
pushed against his lips as best as he could, by shaking his head vigorously. All that succeeded in doing was make his dizziness even worse, leading to him even passing out for a few scary seconds. But Peter remained patient and persevered, gently shushing him and coaxing the water bottle to his lips. “I know, I know, just small sips.”

Tony relented, even though he feared his stomach instantly rejecting the liquid, he part of him knew Peter was right. The cool water was refreshing to say the least, momentarily soothing the burn in the back of his throat and distracting him from the foul, bitter taste in his mouth.

“Easy, easy. Don’t overwhelm your tummy. We want you to keep this down, huh?” Peter took the water away and placed it beside him. The two sat there, not saying anything for a while, both for Tony’s sake and the fact that the silence was comfortable.

Tony hated how vulnerable he felt in that moment especially given it was his son who’s responsibility it now was to take care of him, it felt so wrong. The dynamic was backwards. But somehow Peter’s calm and collected presence helped to stop his anxieties around being so not in control, a feeling he detested. Even when he wanted to relinquish control and feel nothing, he did so through drugs and alcohol a substance he could control, put into his own body as much as and as often as he liked. Even if those things left him with the same feeling afterwards, this awful sick feeling was almost unbearable and despite himself, he found that he was glad his son was there after all. Even though he felt incredibly guilty for his son being in that position in the first place he had to admit the boy was unbelievably natural and comfortable in the role.

The time Tony had spent thinking about all those things gave his body time to make a minor recovery, giving him enough respite to be able to start conversing without the fear of puking.

“You’re pretty good at this you know. Maybe you should consider a career in nursing.”

Peter chuckled softly and continued wiping Tony’s mouth and chest with the damp washcloth he was brandishing. “Yeah I don’t know about that, I’m not too good with blood yet.”

“Well, I had a lotta practise with Aunt May before...well you know.” Peter trailed off. Tony had never really spoken in depth about May’s illnesses with him, as Peter tended to get very upset and defensive anytime it was brought up. He always thought it was down to the boy still somewhat resenting both him and May for making such a life changing decision as her going into residential care, without his input. Which was understandable so he never pressed the issue.

“I didn’t realise it was that bad.” Tony said quietly, watching Peter’s expression carefully.

“It wasn’t. I mean...it was, but I didn’t mind it at all, just, I know you guys didn’t want me being a young carer. But to be honest I kind of enjoyed it, I don’t like the idea of other people doing my job, you know? She’s my aunt, she looked after me all those times I was sick I wanted to return the favour. I couldn’t make her better but I could at least help in some way, it made me feel useful instead of...instead of just watching helplessly as our life together just turned to shit around us. I wish I was still the one looking after her sometimes.”

Tony could feel himself welling up at the boy’s admission. He’d never heard all of that before and though he knew his son was a wonderful person, he hadn’t seen this caregiving side of him before. He wasn’t sure if it was the fever or if he was just getting sensitive in his old age, but it was incredibly humbling to hear a teenage boy talk about such a difficult topic in such a mature way. What had he done to deserve such a sweet boy in his life? It must’ve been something he’d done in a
past life because he knew he was not worthy to have such an amazing kid calm him Dad. Not in a million years. Yeah he was definitely sick, his brain was turning to emotional mush.

Though he couldn’t exactly hug Peter given his current state, he made the effort to grab his hand tightly in his and squeezed it. “I know bubs and I know how much you miss her. But she’s right—"

“I know, I know, I’m just saying I don’t mind taking care of people I love when they need me.” Peter shrugged nonchalantly, clearly getting uncomfortable with how emotional the conversation was becoming. He couldn’t handle praise at the best of times but especially not when he was dealing with a medical situation. He was too far into his practical, nursing mindset to be able to effectively engage with all the raw emotion his Dad was displaying.

“That’s sweet.” Tony said sincerely, making Peter worry if Tony’s brain was starting to melt from the heat of his fever.

“Shuddup, enough of the soppy stuff.” He chuckled. “Hand me your shirt- gross what did you eat?”

Tony grimaced and closed his eyes, breathing deeply and swallowing. “Can we not?”

Peter smiled sheepishly at him, realising it probably wasn’t a good idea to comment on someone's vomit while their stomach was still clearly weak. “Sorry. Dad how long were you hauled up in here?”

“Since dinner.”

“You said you had a- for god sakes man, are you that opposed to needing help? Good grief.” Peter said angrily. The idea that his Dad was in his room all this time getting violently ill all by himself was enough to make him wanna punch a wall. Or cry. Or both. “I knew you were lying, I saw your face before you even pulled out your phone you little- for a genius you really are an idiot sometimes, you know that?”

Tony didn’t react much, other than nod and smirk. “Yeah I get that a lot. Now quit roasting me I’m sick.”

“Oh now you’ll admit you’re sick? That only took what like four hours. I don’t need to roast you, you’re roasting in your own damn skin.” Peter pressed his hand against his father's forehead again and his temperature was still scarily high. He didn’t have the most extensive medical knowledge but he decided to go with his gut instinct and kill two birds with one stone. “Do you feel like you’re gonna get sicky anymore, dad?”

“Uh uh, think I’m done.” Tony was beginning to nod off again, slurring drowsily which frankly, freaked Peter out a lot. If the man couldn’t even keep himself conscious that was not a good sign.

“Stay with me for just a little longer, we’ll get you in bed soon alright? I’m gonna need your help in a second okay? I’m gonna try and get you in the shower.”

“N-no Pete, that’s inappropriate.” Tony interjected with his eyes still shut, hiccuping slightly.

“I don’t care, I’m not leaving you covered in barf just to save us some embarrassment later down the line. Don’t worry I won’t sue you for the trauma, now come on.” Peter rolled his eyes as he hoisted Tony up under his arms, again the man offering little help in doing so. He managed to sit him on the toilet, propped up against the sink, just long enough to get the man’s clothes off. It wasn’t until he got to Tony’s underwear when he felt a limp hand grab his wrist as firmly as it was able.
“Boxers stay on.” Tony said sternly. As sternly as a semi conscious man with a hospital grade fever could.

Peter respected the man’s boundaries and he wasn’t about to make him any more uncomfortable about the awful situation they were in. “Okay, leave ’em on in the shower that’s fine, but will you let me help you get changed into dry ones before you get you into bed?”

Tony nodded weakly, so Peter continued. “Good. Can you stand?”

Peter squatted down slightly holding out both of his arms for Tony to grab to help pull himself up; which he did, albeit very shakily. Peter certainly didn’t trust him to walk the short distance to the shower unaided, not that he was expecting him to. Luckily for them Tony’s shower had a bench in it so Peter didn’t have to worry about holding him up the entire time as well as hosing him down. He prided himself on his multitasking abilities but he didn’t wanna chance it when there was a feverish Tony involved. “Just stay there alright? If you wanna stand lemme know and I’ll help you.”

Tony nodded in agreement seemingly relishing in the cooling spray of the shower. He was content to all asleep right there but he knew it was important that he didn’t if he wanted to avoid giving himself a concussion on top of everything else. Whilst Tony was sat there getting the worst of the grime off, Peter made quick work of giving the bathroom a quick spot clean, gathering up all the soiled tissues, towels and clothing. Whilst he was doing so he realised he’d neglected to ask Tony something important.

“Dad where did the blood come from?”

“Hmm?” Came a sleepy reply.

Peter held up the blood soaked napkins to illustrate his question. “These Dad. There’s a lot of them, where did it come from?”

“My nose.” Tony sniffed.

Peter sighed in relief at that information, he’d been worried that something more sinister could be at play. As it still could be, he sure as hell didn’t know what was plaguing the man. “Do you have a medical scanner in here?”

“Peter, it’s okay I’ll let Bruce look me over in the morning-”

“Yes you will but it’ll make his job easier if I can give him readings from right now too, that way we can see if the Tylenol I’m about to give you makes any impact, yes?” He wasn’t about to let the man run the show when it came to his care, not when he’d let himself get into such a state without asking for help in the first place. It was clear that Tony wasn’t in the right state of mind to take care of himself and that was perfectly fine because Peter was more than happy to do it for him. “Now, where are they?”

Tony grumbled before answering, clearly unhappy with how easily Peter was winning every battle whilst he was in his weakened state. “Second draw under the towel rack.”

“Thank you. I’ll do that one we get you out. Now what soap do you want?”

“I don’t care, Peter, I just wanna go to bed.” Tony chuckled, though he was exasperated.

The boy didn’t listen instead he looked intently at the labels of the two of the bottles he was holding, ready to give the man his options. “We got tea tree and hibiscus or honey suckle and- I
don’t even know how you say that-“

Tony chuckled again. “Petey, those aren’t mine they’re Pepper’s.”

“Oh.” Peter paused. “Aww!”

“Save it. Too sick to threaten you with violence. Want bed.” Tony growled waringly and Peter relented. More so out of pity than fear of punishment though.

“Okay okay, well lavender it is then. That’ll help you sleep better too.” Peter smiled and began to help Tony wash himself, making sure to get all the spots he was missing due to his current lack of motor skills. It was when Tony was passing over his chest with the loofa that he realised. “Oh shit!”

“What?” Tony asked bleary eyed.

“Your arc, move your hand.” Peter was quick removing the outermost shell of Tony’s heart and dashed over to the sink with it, holding it delicately in both hands.

“Uh, you know it’s waterproof right?” Tony laughed and gave his son a quizzical look (well the best he could muster).

“I know that!” Peter rolled his eyes. “But do you really wanna walk around with dried puke all over you?”

“No.” Tony shrugged happy to drop the subject.

“I mean not only is that a quick way to get an infection, can you imagine all the bacteria festering on this thing right now?”

“I get it.” Tony didn’t want to admit it but Peter’s descriptions were starting to bring back that queasy feeling.

“But it’s just gross, look at all the gunk you’ve got in there. No one I gonna wanna be around you if you’ve got the rotting remnants of Steve’s hunters chicken-“

“Are you tryna make me throw up again? ‘Cause it’s working.” Tony lost his patience and bent forward, resting his elbows on his knees dropping the loofa in favour of manually holding his head up.

“I’m sorry!” Peter covered his mouth with the back of his hand and rushed forward to help Tony out of the shower.

“It’s okay, kiddo just please no more food talk. I can’t take it.” He smiled but grimaced at the same time swallowing thickly.

Peter wrapped Tony up in his towelled robe and lead him into his room, sitting him on the edge of his bed as opposed to the bathroom, that was still covered floor to ceiling in bodily fluids. He placed a trash can between Tony’s feet and gave him a bottle of water to sip. “Can I trust you to sit here for five minutes?”

“Pete, you don’t have to clean the bathroom, please it’s too much-“

“It’s not, I’m gonna do it properly once I’ve got you into bed. I’m just gonna run in and clean it enough so I can use the toilet, real quick.” Peter added proof to his point by crossing his legs. Tony
hadn’t noticed how bouncy the boy was being whilst the shower was running, though in fairness he had been preoccupied trying not to fall.

“Why did you go while I was in there?! That must’ve been torture!” Tony was almost angry at the idea that Peter had forced himself to wait so long just so he could help Tony get comfortable.

“Well I was kind of preoccupied!” Peter bobbed up and down.

“I would’ve been fine for two minutes while you peed, you idiot.”

“Don’t call me an idiot Mr. ‘I’m gonna puke my guts up alone for five hours until someone finds me half dead’! Besides you know how I get when someone’s in the room with me.” His potty dancing was escalating dramatically. It seemed his bladder didn’t enjoy being talked about.

“You just watched me throw up all over the place for two hours straight but you can’t pee in front of me?”

“Don’t mock my paruresis!” Peter stomped his foot angrily which apparently jolted his bladder as he was forced to grab his crotch immediately after doing so.

“Go before there’s another mess to clean up.” Tony sighed and rubbed his forehead. The headache aftermath was really starting to kick in.

Despite being mere seconds away from watering the man’s carpet, Peter still hesitated. “You- you gonna be alright while I-“

“Peter! Potty! Now!” Tony barked, losing his patience and pointing at the open bathroom door.

“Okay, okay I’m going- and don’t call it that, jeez!” The boy scurried off into the restroom.

“Okay, okay I’m going- and don’t call it that, jeez!” The boy scurried off into the restroom.

Despite Tony having his walls semi-sound proofed he could still hear the audible groan of relief that came from inside the bathroom. He just shook his head and laughed, when was his son gonna learn to stop waiting until the very last minute to pee?

“What you laughing old man?” Peter grumbled, though he seemed much more relaxed than when he went it.

“Nothing, young man.” Tony smiled before a yawn took over him.

“Okay, come on. Let’s get you in your jammers.”

“Stop making this weirder than it needs to be, dear god.” Tony groaned.

“Says the one who just told me to go potty.” Peter deadpanned. “You’re no one to talk.”

“Well you pee pee dance like a five year old so I thought it was the appropriate language to use-“

“Shut your- you know you’re lucky you’re sick right now I swear to god!” Peter scowled but even in the semi darkness Tony could see the blush that rose to his son's cheeks. Good now he knew that phrase got to him he could add it to the blackmail bank. “Just hush your mouth for five minutes. Arms up.”

Peter helped get Tony changed, allowing the man to change his own underwear with great difficulty. By the time they managed to wrestle him into his clothes they were both breathless and exhausted, Tony more so as he kept coughing which made Peter worry even more that he wasn’t just suffering from a stomach virus. Tony was about ready to pass out at the edge of the bed and
probably would have done if Peter wasn’t there to catch him.

“Easy, easy.” He knew Tony wouldn’t like it but he picked him up, bridal style, with very little effort. He was quick to place him back down without giving Tony time to cuss him out, sitting him at the top of the bed so he could lean against the headboard. “I’m sorry I know-“

“YOU JUST MANHANDED ME LIKE OWEN WILSON IN THAT STUPID BEN STILLER MOVIE!”

“Ow! My ears- chill! And that movie isn’t stupid, it’s very touching and hilarious so shut your mouth.” He distracted Tony from his anger by pricking his finger against the medical scanner, again without leaving room for resistance. While he was waiting for the results to show up, he took a second to ponder why Tony would have ever watched Night at the museum without him and he was about to ask when the small device beeped. He used Tony’s phone to take a picture of the results so he’d be able to show Bruce later.

“I want you to finish that bottle before you fall asleep, okay?” Peter said seriously and handed Tony some Tylenol. “JARVIS?”

“Yes Master Peter?”

“I’m sorry for being rude to you earlier.” Tony smiled at that. He liked hearing his boys getting along.

“That’s quite alright, I too apologise. Is there something I can help you with?”

“Can you run Tony’s temp for me again please?”

“Certainly. He is still running a fever at one hundred and one point three degrees but it has improved slightly. Most likely due to the cool shower you gave him.”

“Okay thanks, see Dad that’s good. JARVIS can you run a temp scan every hour whilst Tony is asleep and keep a record going for me? And let me know if it spikes again.”

“Yes Sir.”

“Thank you.” Peter said quietly as he started stripping the sheets back for Tony to crawl under them. When Tony went to pull them back over himself however he stopped him. “Uh uh, no comforter tonight, you’ll overheat.”

“Peter, let me have my blankets, I’m freezing. I’ll turn my fan on.” Tony tried to bargain but the teen wasn’t having any of it.

“No, I’m sorry. You can have the fan on if you want it. If your temp drops below ninety nine I’ll consider it.

Tony was too tired to argue and part of him (albeit a part way in the back of his feverish mind) knew his son was right. He sighed and let himself fall back against his pillow, pouting. “You’re mean.”

“Yeah, I know it. You can sleep Dad. Remember the trash can is right here if you need it.” Peter shook the container briefly before placing it strategically next to the man’s bed.

“Peter, I’m so sorry.” Tony suddenly sounded very emotional.
He moved back over to the man’s side and knelt next to the bed. “Stop that, it’s not your fault you’re sick, I just wish you would’ve told someone-“

“Not just that. For everything. For arguing with you and leaving it for so long. I’m sorry I made you feel like I was ignoring you. I do care I know I’m not always very good at showing it but-“

Peter cut him off, both because Tony sounded like he was going to cry and he knew the man would be embarrassed in the morning, but also because he felt like he was gonna start tearing up too. Instead he just hugged him gently. “I’m sorry for being a spoiled little shit too, Dad. Steve’s right we’re just too similar sometimes. Don’t worry about all that now, yeah? Let just get some sleep.”

“You gotta sleep too bubbly, have you even been to bed yet?”

“Uh uh. I couldn’t.”

“What was wrong?”

“My spidey-son-senses were tingling.”

“You’re such a nerd.” Tony chuckled, seeming satisfied with that answer and he nodded slowly before he allowed his eyes to shut. “I love you Underoos.”

Peter smiled fondly at the feverish man he’d come to call his father. “I love you too, Dad.”
Peter stayed with Tony the entire night. He woke up a few times to vomit or use the bathroom, both of which required various levels of assistance on Peter’s part so the teen was glad he stayed. Every time he woke up Tony was never lucid, only conscious enough to mutter apologies for Peter seeing him in such a state, which he’d try and soothe as best he could. The man’s coughing and wheezing became increasingly apparent as the night went on and Peter kept questioning whether he should go and wake Bruce up early.

Peter was sure to monitor the man’s temperature and hydration levels, having JARVIS keep a tally on so that they could monitor the trend and ensure Tony’s condition remained stable, which it was...ish. It wasn’t improving but it wasn’t rapidly deteriorating, so Peter could deal with that until the morning like he’d promised the man. It got to be six in the morning when JARVIS informed him that Bruce was awake and he asked the AI to call the doctor down as soon as he was ready. Bruce was down there within five minutes knowing that if Tony Stark was actually asking for help, something must be seriously wrong. Though it was clear that Bruce was trying to remain outwardly calm his disheveled hair and wrongly buttoned shirt showed how concerned he was.

“Peter wha-“

“Shh! He’s still asleep!” Peter hissed leaning protectively over the sweaty, sleeping man. “I came down in the middle of the night and he had puked everywhere and he keeps coughing, like, really bad. I had JARVIS taking his vitals, the list should have gone through to you-“

“Yep.” Bruce nodded as he corroborated the information via his tablet as Peter spoke.

“He’s been in and out, I’ve been trying to keep him hydrated but waters not really staying down anymore. He kept down some painkillers though.”

“You managed to get him to take medicine?” Bruce sounded genuinely shocked and slightly
impressed. “That’s no easy feat.”

“Yeah, he was pretty out of it. Didn’t have the energy to argue. He’s been sick for a couple days JARVIS told me.”

“I’ll be having a word with you later Mr. Computer.” Bruce shook his head pointedly towards the ceiling. He continued shaking his head as he looked through the information that said computer and teenager had gathered for him over the night. “We’re gonna need to take him down to the medbay.”

“’Cause of the dehydration? Or has he got some kind of infection?” Peter gnawed his lip worriedly. Logically he knew that Tony would more likely than not need some level of medical intervention given the severity of his condition but it was still nerve wracking to hear it aloud.

“I’m not sure, pal. Either way it’ll be easier to do things for him if we’re up there. I’m gonna run and get a stretcher alright? I’ll be right back.”

“Should I...?” Peter gestured to Tony, asking whether or not he should wake him up and Bruce looked apprehensive in his answer.

“Uh, no. No it’s fine, we can fill him in later. It might be easier this way anyway...He’s not a very willing patient.” The doctor grimaced as he hurried out of the room before Peter could ask more questions.

The teen felt a bit weird not waking Tony up, though he understood the doctors worries. He’d heard about what a terrible patient Tony was and he had a mild dose of that the night before. Even though his Dad was in no state to argue with anyone he could imagine he’d still find a way to make things difficult. Still, he felt kinda funny about transporting the man whilst he was unconscious without consent.

“You okay lifting him?” Bruce asked after he’d wheeled the bed in. Peter gave him a blank look as though the pair didn’t already know that he could bench press the hulk without breaking a sweat. “Thought I’d ask.”

They got Tony up to infirmary without incident as the man didn’t wake up but it was as they were transferring him onto another bed when the genius sat up with a start. “What are you doing?”
“Getting you situated.” Peter said lightly sensing the panic in his father’s tone.

Tony’s voice sounded funny and Peter wasn’t sure if it was from throwing up all night or if the man was a little delirious from his high temperature. Peter concluded it was a combination of both as Tony swayed slightly when he tried to get himself up. “I’m fine, I feel a lot better-“

“Your fever is one hundred and four, T, save it.” Bruce smiled kindly waggling the thermometer in his hand.

“It’s spiked again.” Peter said quietly, gently but firmly forcing a bewildered Tony to lay back down.

“Don’t worry we’ll get a handle on it.” Bruce hummed as he wheeled over a small table with various medical apparatus on it, including a cannula tube and an IV bag. “Now Tony don’t fight me this ti-“

“No needles.” The man visibly paled and Peter quirked an eyebrow. He had the urge to laugh initially but then he realised the man was being serious. Tony looked downright petrified and Peter was sure had he been in his usual state of mind he would never have let that fear become evident in front of him. Tony shook his head back and forth so fervently that Peter was worried he’d make himself puke again. “No needles, I don’t want ‘em, no, no needles-“

Bruce seemed to mirror that sentiment and looked up at Peter with an apologetic smile as though he was begging the teen to wipe it from his memory and never let Tony know he was aware of his irrational fear. Peter nodded curtly and sat down beside his delirious dad, grabbing his hand. “Hey, uh, it’s all cool, Dad. Don’t look at what he’s doing, look at me.”

He spoke calmly with a smile and Tony turned to look at him. The man’s eyes didn’t focus on him at all and he looked confused. If he didn’t know better he would have assumed Tony didn’t even recognise him. Jesus, he must be even sicker that Peter had previously realised. “Don’t like ‘em.”

“Me either, but it’ll be over before you know it. Hey, you remember that XII model’s faulty filtration system? Do you think we could take that and develop it more since you’ve worked out the kinks with the V? It’s the same concept right?” Peters distraction tactic of asking a deliberately naive question worked and Bruce was able to insert the IV without Tony so much as flinching. That and the man was really, really out of it- passing out again not two seconds after he was finished explaining the inaccuracies of Peter’s ‘rookie assumption’. Even with a temperature so high that it was probably melting his brain Tony had to correct him in full before he let himself fall unconscious. Well if that didn’t sum the man up Peter didn’t know what did.
“God thank you, I really didn’t feel like busting out the restraints this time.” Bruce sighed dramatically as he moved over to mess with one of the monitoring machines.

“He’s that’s afraid of needles?” Peter asked.

“Yep. Everything medical really, I think it’s because of his control issues you know? I usually can’t so much as offer him Tylenol without his throwing a temper tantrum. But needles, needles are the worst.” Bruce went on the tell the tale of the first time he tried to draw the man’s blood, which ultimately led to the doctor going hulk and Tony developing the medical scanner.

“Never seen him that scared before.” Peter said sadly.

“I have.” Bruce’s observation made Peter look up. “Whenever you’ve gotten yourself hurt.”

Peter rolled his eyes making the doctor chuckle. “That doesn’t count.”

“Just don’t let on that you know when he comes to. Iron Man isn’t afraid of anything remember.”

“I won’t.” Peter promised, he knew full well that Tony would be mortified if he found out about his phobia on top of everything else. “So, what’s wrong with him?”

“Well right now, looks like a chest infection or something similar.” Bruce was mulling over the monitor as he spoke, looking at the live scans of Tony’s body. “There’s some fluid build up in his chest, probably a secondary infection.”

“So, he has been sick for a while…”

“Looks that way.” Bruce sighed. “I wouldn’t expect anything else though.”

“Yeah.” Peter said quietly. They both knew what Tony was like when it came to asking for help, his lack of self care over the past few weeks highlighting that perfectly. But the guilt he felt from pushing his Dad away instead of helping him only grew tenfold. “How bad is it?”
“I’ll run some blood tests to determine what kind of infection we’re looking at here, but it’s nothing to worry about. He’ll be okay.”

“That’s what they told me about my aunt and now she’s in a care facility getting experimental brain surgery every other month. Don’t sugarcoat it.” Peter deadpanned. Without realising it he’d started to slip into a dissociative spell as he so often did after moments of crisis passed. Now that Tony’s care was out of his hands and there was nothing left for him to help with his emotions started to make themselves known and he realised how scary it was seeing his dad so sick. His dad who was usually so strong and stoic and independent, laying unconscious with a dangerously high fever. Seeing the man look so...human, and vulnerable brought back feelings of the man’s mortality just like when he’d witnessed him almost die at the hands of the MV. The triggering memory along with all the medical side of things from his aunt Peter was starting to shut down and Bruce could see that.

“Pete.” Bruce walked around the table and clapped both hands on the teens shoulder. “I’ve hooked him with fluids and antibiotics. I guarantee by noon he’ll be up and trying to go back down to the lab.”

“The hell he is. I ain’t letting him out of my sight.” That snapped the boy out of his haze.

“You need to get some breakfast and sleep yourself, bud.” Bruce ruffled his hair and went back to the machine that was scanning Tony’s blood sample.

“Yeah yeah, we both know I’ll pass out in a couple hours anyway, I’m a lightweight. And like Steve’s gonna let anyone miss a meal ever after this.”

Peter was right, not two minutes after their set meal time Steve was already up in the medibay with a concerned look plastered across his face after JARVIS informed him why the three weren’t at breakfast. “Oh for goodness sakes, Tony.”

Bruce filled him in on the situation and Steve started ranting about how much trouble the man would be in once he woke up.

“Join the que Steve, I get to yell at him first me and Bruce already agreed.” Peter said dryly.

“Yeah, take a number and join the back of the line.” Bruce chuckled but Steve was in no mood for
“Peter go upstairs and get some food then go to bed.”

“Nuh uh, I ain’t moving.” Peter crossed his arms over his chest. “I’m staying here.”

“That wasn’t a request. Food. Nap. Now.” Steve didn’t usually use such a forceful tone and the authoritative voice he was using was nearly enough to weaken Peter’s resolve. But not quite.

Instead Peter used his cuteness to his advantage and took on a whiny tone. “Please, Steve. I wanna be here when he wakes up. He would do it for me.”

Steve looked as though he was about to give in for a moment but it didn’t last. “After you eat you can come back down here and nap in the chair if you want but you’re not skipping breakfast. He’s not on his own me and Bruce will be right here. Now go, no arguments.”

“Okay, fine.” Peter sighed and stood up, leaning over to whisper to Tony before he left. “I’ll be right back.”

He ate breakfast in record speed, answering the rest of the groups questions between mouthfuls before rushing back to Tony’s room. What he didn’t expect was to see an empty bed with a leaking IV bag and three men screaming at each other. Bruce and Steve had their arms held up defensively as they’d closed in on Tony at the far end of the room, blocking his exits and the man looked like a cornered animal.

“Don’t touch me!”

Steve moved forwards very slowly and deliberately but Tony still flinched like the man was trying to touch him with a red hot poker. “Tony just lay dow-“

“I SAID DON’T TOUCH ME!”

“You, come on it’s okay-“
“Dad...?” Peter said quietly coming up behind them. The man had a wild look on his face and he looked positively rabid. “...You okay?”

As soon as Tony locked eyes on him, his expression changed. But his speech was still slurred and he looked undoubtedly unstable on his feet, wobbling slightly as he spoke. Peter also took note that the man’s arm was bleeding where he’d clearly ripped his IV out. “Hey, Pete, why ain’t you at school?”

“I uh, I didn’t feel too good this morning..” What drugs had Bruce given him? Didn’t he remember what had happened that night? It didn’t seem that way. It’s didn’t even seem as though Tony knew where he was. The fever must’ve been getting to his head. Peter spoke very, very calmly and gently as he tried not to spook the man any further as he stepped forward. “What’s going on here, huh?”

“They’re tryna stick pins in me, but I won’ let em’.” Tony slurred and stumbled slightly, grabbing out at nothing in midair to stop himself from tipping over. Steve lurched forward to catch him but Tony pulled back and hissed at him. Literally hissed like a feral cat. If Peter hadn’t been so concerned he would have laughed.

“Come on guys, whatcha doin’ that for?” Peter faux chastised them as though they were the ones being ridiculous, and they played along. Peter’s good cop persona seemed to be working as Tony’s defences were lowering. “You’re fine ain’t ya dad?”

“That’s what I keep sayin’ but they ain’t listenin’ to me.” Tony hiccuped and Peter was seriously starting to freak out. He was glad that Tony was a recovering alcoholic because seeing him like that made him sure that he’d never want to see his father drunk. Tony let him approach him and put an arm under him, so that Peter could support him enough to lead him over to the bed. As he did so Tony reached out and put a clammy hand on Peter’s forehead. “D’you say you don’ feel good, bubby?”

“Yeah, I got sick last night, remember? You had Bruce take a look at me and he said I’ve got a bug.” The lie came to Peter pretty quickly after that. “That’s why they wanna check you over to make sure I didn’t get you sick too.”

“Oh.” Was all Tony said as he let himself be laid down on the bench again. Even though it was him who was sick, he was still more concerned with Peter’s fake illness and everyone in the room found it very touching. “Are you okay now?”
“Yeah I’m fine, Dad. Don’t worry about me.” Peter smiled and held Tony’s hand again, mostly because this time the man saw the needle coming and he didn’t react too well.

“You sure- BRUCE GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM ME!” Tony tried to leap up but Peter held his wrist firm and Steve wasted no time diving round Tony’s other side and pinning his other arm down.

“Shh, shh, it’s okay, Dad. Don’t worry it’s not gonna hurt just try and relax.” Peter spoke calmly despite his mentors screaming and he had the foresight to warn Bruce to get out of the way when the man decided to start kicking too. “Bruce watch out for his legs.”

“It’s alright I’ve got it.” Bruce managed to reinstall Tony’s IV port despite the man struggling with help from the two super strong humans pinning his limbs down. He also made sure to inject Tony with a strong sedative which had the billionaire unconscious within seconds. “Well that wasn’t so bad.”

“Wha- I wa- wasn’t so bad?!” Peter exclaimed. “If that’s wasn’t so bad, what the hell does bad look like?!”

“Language.” Steve chimed in as always.

“Sorry.” Peter had learned his lesson after Steve had chastised him for his music preferences in the car and his potty mouth had gotten considerably better. “But seriously! He looked like he’d gone crazy!”

“Well, I think it was mostly the fever this time, he was pretty disoriented. He kept asking where Pepper was.” Bruce shook his head. Peter opened his mouth to comment on how he’d seen Pepper’s cosmetics in the bathroom the night before, so maybe her being there wasn’t out of the realms of possibility but he shut his mouth again quickly; figuring that was probably not something he should be telling anyone. If something was going on between the two past lovers and no one else knew, there must be a reason for that, so he respected Tony’s privacy; that and it wasn’t exactly the most opportune time to gossip.

“Man, I thought you gave him something to bring it down.” Peter muttered as he messed with Tony’s blankets a little to try and settle his nerves.

“I did but the infections pretty bad, worse than I thought initially.” Bruce said seriously making
both Peter and Steve frown.

“How bad we talking?” Steve asked.

Bruce hesitated for a moment, glancing at Peter, but decided not to make a show over asking the boy to leave. He knew if he did that Peter would just worry more in the long run and it would be better for everyone if he was honest with the pair. “Well, I thought it was just a chest infection, but I think it may have progressed into pneumonia.”

“How bacterial or viral?”

“I was in the middle of finding out when he woke up and went feral on us. Either way it’s treatable I’m just determining the best course of action.”

Bruce continued to run tests for the next few hours but despite the antibiotics, fluids and other various medications Tony’s condition made little improvement. The infection was running so rampant that the doctor was unable to bring his temperature down from dangerously high levels and they had to resort to covering Tony in ice packs just to keep him out of the danger zone. It got to the point where Bruce was considering adorning a mask as well as the gloves he was already wearing in case and quarantining the man, lest the illness they were dealing with was contagious or otherwise dangerous. Though the three in the room were at less risk than anyone else in the household Bruce didn’t want to take any chances.

Those first couple hours were really scary, for everyone involved. Bruce was trying to determine what strain of bacteria was causing the infection and Steve was anxiously nagging everyone to try and distract himself, namely Peter; who he told to go to bed at least eight times in the first forty five minutes before he got the hint that the boy was staying. And Tony...well Tony stayed unconscious the entire time, even though the sedatives Bruce gave him had long worn off his body had shut down to help conserve energy to fight the infection. This worried Peter greatly but Bruce tried to convince him it was a good thing, besides they could get a lot more done without Tony fighting them the entire time.

“I should have come to get you last night maybe he wouldn’t have been so bad.” Peter said guiltily.

“Pete, it’s okay. You took care of him the best you could and I know how difficult he is when he’s sick. You did the right thing, you got him cleaned up and rested and you definitely saved him by making him drink. JARVIS wouldn’t have let you wait if it was that dire. You did good, okay?” Bruce’s words were of little comfort when all Peter could do was watch as Tony slowly deteriorated, but he appreciated the sentiment all the same.
The adults were going back and forth trying to think about what could possibly be ailing the man but Peter stayed out of the conversation and thought to himself quietly. He was racking his brain trying to think of when he noticed a change in Tony’s behaviour. Since their argument he’d barely seen the man, but for an infection to take hold so rapidly in such a short amount of time in a healthy adult would be very unlikely. Though Tony’s immune system was slightly compromised due to his heart condition, Peter had never seen him in any ill health so Tony must have been sick for a while and kept it under wraps. For him to have gotten sick he must’ve had contact with someone who was sick, but Tony had barely been out of the lab in weeks, the only person who had spent extensive amounts of time with him was...wait. “Uh, Dr. Banner?”

“What is it Pete?”

“Has Tony had a flu shot this year?”

“I’m not sure.” Bruce gave him a skeptical look but was quick to check the system. “He should have, but no he hasn’t.”

“Remember a couple weeks ago when I had that cold but it went away after, like, a day?” Both adults nodded. “Well the flu was going around at school and I usually get it, like, super bad. But I guess my immune system is better now since the bite. What if I passed on a mutated version to Tony?”

Bruce blinked a couple of times as he considered Peter's words. “Sleeves up I need a blood sample.”

After a few tests (with Peter being a much easier patient) it turned out that the teens theory was correct. The bacteria had been no match for his immune system but the remaining cells that had been passed on to Tony had in fact become resistant to most antibiotics thanks to surviving Peter’s own antibodies. That explained why Tony was unable to fight of the infection and why the penicillin Bruce had administered initially had no effect. Using Peter’s sample the doctor was able to come up with a much stronger cocktail of drugs that helped bring Tony’s fever down in a matter of hours.

In that time Peter himself managed to fall asleep for a short while, though he remained in the seat next to his father and woke up if the man so much as moved. The man finally awoke around lunchtime much to everyone’s relief. His eyes fluttered open for a second and he stretched before realising exactly where he was and sitting bolt upright.
“Take it easy. No ripping tubes out of you again.” Steve day forward in his seat with both hands outstretched waiting for the man to do exactly that.

“Mm.” Tony grunted and attempted to sit himself up more. Peter was more than quick to assist him in doing so. Tony blinked around as his eyes adjusted to the harsh lighting, taking in his surroundings and trying to remember exactly what happened for him to be there. “Pete?”

“Hi there.” The teen chuckled as slowly leant Tony back against the now raised bed.

“Why ain’t you at school?” Clearly the genius didn’t remember anything during his fever induced rage a few hours earlier, which made the three other males sigh in relief. What Tony didn’t remember wouldn’t hurt him.

“Well I spent last night up with you and I didn’t wanna leave until I knew you were okay.” Peter shrugged honestly.

Tony groaned as the foggy memories of the night before came flooding back to him and he was washed over with a fresh new wave of guilt. “Petey I’m so sorry-“

“Shut up.” Peter nodded apologetically to Steve, as he knew the soldier hated that phrase, but it felt appropriate to use with Tony at that moment, so even he let that slide. “You’d do the same for me. It happens. You got sick, I dealt with it, get over it. It’s my fault you were ill in the first place.”

Tony looked confused at that so Bruce filled him in on the situation, simultaneously chastising him for not getting his annual inoculations. “You know how important it is for you Tony given your heart, this is exactly why-”

“I know I know, I was just-“

“Too busy.” Bruce, Steve and Peter said in unison.

“I get it.” Tony said through gritted teeth.

“We know you do. You always get it but that doesn’t stop you from making bad decisions.” Steve
said, making Tony cross his arms and roll his eyes. All he needed to do was pout and he’d look exactly like a grumpy Peter.

“Can we save the lecture for when I don’t feel like I’m being stabbed in the chest?” Tony sighed before coughing, inadvertently proving his point. The coughs were harsh and wet sounding making everyone in the room cringe.

“Fine.” Steve relented as he handed Tony a glass of water.

“Thank you.” Tony said raspily in between sips of water. “So, what’s the game plan?”

“You’re on bedrest.” Bruce said seriously but Tony laughed nonetheless. “I’m not kidding, Tony. The infection was seriously close to spreading to your heart and I’m not gonna let that happen again.”

“Again?” Peter interjected and Tony gave Bruce a look warning him about going into further detail but the doctor ignored it.

“Yep. Same thing happened four years ago, not with your mutated flu obviously but a similar type thing. He got an infection, didn’t take my advice, it got worse, he still didn’t take my advice and then he had to spend three months in intensive care on a ventilator because he’s lungs gave out on him completely.” Bruce said matter-of-factly making Tony scowl in his direction.

Peter absorbed the information then gave Tony a very dirty look. “Well he’s gonna listen to your advice this time.”

“Okay I get it I can’t take care of myself and everyone including the foetus knows what’s best for me-“ Tony said grudgingly.

“I’m glad that’s clear.” Steve chimed in.

Bruce continued with the back up from Peter and Steve. “That means no strenuous activity and no lab for a minimum of three days-“
Tony’s eyes widened. Though he was considerably more lucid than he had been a few hours earlier still wasn’t thinking completely clearly and the prospect of not being able to finish his project within his own deadline was out of the question. “Nope. Not now. I can’t afford three days—“

“You can and you will this is not negotiable. Fury will have to wait to get his new toy, you’re more important.” Peter snapped using a tone that none of the adults had heard from him before, bar from Tony. It was the same voice he had used with Ned when the teen was drunk and it made Tony feel like he was getting in trouble with his father- he hated it. “I’m not losing you to a common flu virus because you’re too stubborn to know when enough is enough, got it?”

Peter’s accidental admission of fear helped soften Tony’s anger, who weakly grabbed the boy’s hand. “Nobody’s losing anyone. I’ll take a couple days off.”

“Good.” Peter smiled smugly, letting Tony know the child had just emotionally manipulated him.

Tony crossed his arms over his chest again and this time he did pout. “But I’m not spending them in here. I hate it in here.”

Bruce smiled. “A transfer can be arranged.”

And it was. They helped move Tony up to the living room, getting him settled on the couch with his IV bag in tow as well as stocking him up with water, snacks, movies and other such comfort items- Peter including himself on that list. He stuck close to Tony for the rest of the day most of which Tony spent drifting in and out of consciousness; only leaving his side to use the bathroom, grab provisions and switch over discs.

“You don’t have to do all this you know—“

“I know. I wanna.” Peter cut him off for the fiftieth time that day. “Quit tryna push me away, let me love you.”

Tony sighed and laid his head against the teens shoulder, closing his eyes. “Fine. But only because I’m too sick to argue and you’re warm.”

“You have a temperature Dad.” Peter shook his head. As much as he enjoyed snuggles, and he really did, he was sure to go easy on them whilst Tony still had a fever. It pained him to push the
man away when he was being physically affectionate, especially on his own accord, but given Peter’s naturally raised temperature he knew they had to be careful.

“Well tell my body that, I’m freezing.” Tony shuddered triggering another coughing fit. Peter rubbed his back as Tony was forced to lurch forward and spit up mouthfuls of vomit that the intense coughs were pushing up into the bin that had been left for that very purpose. “God, fuck-“

“It’s alright, let it out.” Peter hummed.

Steve was already on high alert and appeared only seconds after Tony had started coughing. “Tony, you okay?”

“He’s fine I’ve got him.” Peter said defensively. He’d managed perfectly well without Steve there the night before, besides Peter was sure that his Dad didn’t want an audience.

Steve backed off but he remained within earshot. The rest of the Avengers filtered through the living room and Peter was equally hostile when they tried to make jokes about the man’s condition. Though he agreed that Tony deserved to feel bad about the severity of his self induced illness he at least wanted the man to have a fighting chance of defending himself- which he couldn’t do in his current drug and fever induced state. Everyone thought it was cute how protective he was but decided against commenting on that, lest they upset the boy more, so they compensated by shooting each other looks that conveyed the message.

Tony skipped dinner on account that his stomach would have rejected any solid food immediately but he settled on a slice of dry toast and a pedialyte ice pop since no one would let him go without eating anything (even though he argued tooth and nail about it “Bruce can just give me intravenous glucose, I don’t need to actually eat anything!”) and not long after that Steve was tasked with trying to get Peter to go to bed. It wasn’t easy considering the boy was taking his self appointed role of Tony’s primary care coordinator very seriously.

“Come on Pete, you’re exhausted and you have school tomorrow.”

Peter froze and whipped his head around. “I’m not going to school.”

“Well, well yes you are.” Steve smirked and raised an eyebrow.
“The hell I am.”

“Language-“

“Steve. I’m not going to school when Tony’s like that.” Peter pointed accusingly to the grey man-shaped lump partially covered by a blanket sprawled out on the couch.

The lump spoke, albeit with a croaky nasally voice. “Tony can hear you and Tony says you are going to school.”

“Well I don’t respect people who refer to themselves in the third person.” Peter said dryly. “So hush, sicky.”

“Hey.” Tony growled, though it wasn’t fully intentional his throat was just incredibly raw. “I’m still your parental figure and you’re going to school tomorrow. You’ve missed enough school as it is.”

“Uh uh.” Peter crosses his arms and looked back and forth between the blond and brunette. “No way. He can’t be trusted not to do dumb shit and make himself worse-“

“Language!” Both Tony and Steve yelled that time making Peter shuffle uncomfortably.

“I’m sorry.”

“And I can watch him whilst you’re at school, at least one of us can. He won’t be left unattended and Bruce has some strong words for JARVIS about not letting him know sooner-“

“Tell Bruce to leave my baby alone he was just following orders.” Tony gurgled through a mouthful of water which made Steve wrinkle his nose in disgust.

“Hey, I thought I was your baby.” Peter faux pouted and chuckled at the same time.

“You’re my number two baby, you were demoted after you ratted me out to Dr. Green.”
“Demoted as in I was number one before?”

“No you guys were equal but now Jar is back to being my favourite.”

“You’re making school sound very appealing.” Peter said dryly but he immediately regretted it as both adults jumped on the comment.

“Good because you’re going.” Steve smiled and clapped a hand on Peter’s shoulder as Tony cackled evilly from under his blanket fortress.

“But what if I’m still carrying that mutant flu and I get everyone sick?”

It was Bruce who chimed in from the kitchen this time. “That won’t happen. Your body is resistant to it now so you’ve killed it off completely there’s no chance of you passing it on. That’s why I used your blood to create a vaccine for Tony, besides the flu only caused the initial infection. The pneumonia is secondary and was his fault for overworking himself.”

“We get it Banner.” Tony coughed.

Peter wanted to argue but he knew he wasn’t going to win. Once his bed time came around he was pushed out of the living room by Steve, literally pushed as he kept resisting verbal commands. “Can’t I just sleep in here?”

“No because you won’t sleep you’ll spend all night checking on him. Bruce is gonna stay up here, you don’t need to. What you need to do is get some rest so you’re not grumpy tomorrow.”

“I’m gonna be grumpy anyway.” Peter huffed but Steve ignored him.

He took himself to bed at the usual time but of course he didn’t fall asleep and he kept making excuses to go back out to the living room, only for Steve to march him right back. First he’d forgotten his phone, which admittedly was a genuine mistake. But then he wanted some water and Steve gave him an exasperated look.
“Since when do you drink anything after dinner?” Nat chided with a smirk which earned her a smack on the arm from Bruce.

“Hey, don’t bring up...that! That’s so rude!” Peter scowled and his face flushed scarlet. “I’m thirsty!”

“There’s perfectly usable tap water in your room.” Steve said flatly.

“It doesn’t taste the same! Besides what am I meant to do suck it out of the faucet? You don’t let me keep cups in my room.” Peter said cheekily and it took all Steve had in him not to snap.

“Well hydrate yourself and get that butt back to bed, Peter.” Steve called not turning his head away from the screen to look at the teenager. The look he gave was a very serious one but Peter wasn’t paying much attention.

He couldn’t resist peeking over the couch to see if Tony was conscious. He wasn’t but the way he was slumped made him look suspiciously dead, he had to just check. Of course the heart monitor was still strapped to him but it wouldn’t hurt to get verbal confirmation. “Is he asleep or..”

“Bed!”

“Fine, fine I’m going.”

Not half an hour later he was back out in the common area, this time trying to sneak around the corner unnoticed. He just wanted one last look at Tony to settle his nerves-

“If I turn around and a certain prepubescent teenager is standing there I’m going to be installing external locks on said teenagers door.” Steve said flatly.

‘Ah shit. Wait a minute-’ “Prepubescent?! Excuse me?!”

“Peter go to your room now! It’s way past your bedtime and you have school tomorrow, I’m not gonna tell you again!” Steve whisper-yelled.
But Peter was too offended by the comment on his adolescence. “I’ve been shaving for like a year now-“

“That’s good, at least Tony won’t be the one to teach you. God knows he has an interesting style when it comes to facial hair.” Nat quipped, not looking up from the book she was reading. The comment made Peter bust out laughing which only pissed Steve off more.

“Peter.” Steve growled.

“Okay okay I was just going to the bathroom!”

“What’s wrong with the toilet in your room?”

“Uh...I broke it?”

“If you’re not out of my sight by the count of five I’m taking away all of your electronics. One. Two. Three-“

Steve didn’t get the four whilst Peter was in earshot because the teen ran back to his room. He made sure to stay there until he heard the others start making their way to bed, the blond soldier included and he waited another half an hour until he snuck back out to the living room; blanket and pillow (and bear) in tow. Of course Bruce was still out there as he’d promised to monitor Tony throughout the night but he knew the doctor wouldn’t tell on him.

“Just make sure you do sleep, Pete.” Was all he said as the boy burrowed himself down on the opposite side of the L shaped couch to where he was, laying almost head to head with Tony.

“I’ll sleep better here. Goodnight Bruce.” Peter said sweetly as he nestled into the blankets, leaning over one last time to make sure his comatose father was appropriately covered too.

“Goodnight Peter.”
Peter finally managed to get some decent sleep except, he didn’t. Because Tony couldn’t just lay down like a normal sick person he had to go and make things more difficult. Again.

Peter’s eyes flew open the second he heard Tony’s feet hitting the floor and the man coughing. By the time he stood up he just managed to catch the man as he collapsed onto the floor halfway between the kitchen and the living room. “Woah- hey! What’re you doing?!?”

Tony couldn’t speak between coughs and his knees gave out beneath him, luckily Peter had both arms under his and propped him up against the wall long enough for him to get his breath back. He considered lowering the man to the floor but Tony shot him a warning look against doing so. Bruce woke up during the commotion also springing to his feet and making his way quickly over to Tony’s side.

“Tony what are you doing up?”

“What I can’t go for a piss now?” Tony snapped irritability. It was frustrating enough not being able to speak between coughs but it was worse when he had people asking him questions without having the chance to answer them. No sooner than he answered his eyes rolled back and he started to collapse again, this time almost drifting unconscious.

“Okay, back down, easy does it.” Peter and Bruce brought him back over to the nearest spot on the couch and lowered him down even when the man tried to brush them off.

Tony's eyes snapped open no sooner had they sat him down and he immediately started to resist again. “I’m fine, can you just stop-“

“No Tony. You stop.” Peter said harshly, coming across a lot firmer than he had intended making both adults heads snap towards him. “Grow up for fuck sake you’re forty five, start acting like it. You need help to walk to the bathroom just admit it.”

“I was fine until I started coughing…” Tony grumbled in a quiet voice but Peter was clearly in no mood to deal with any form of backchat.

“Oh what did you expect when you have a severe lung infection, genius? That you’d make it there and back without coughing? Don’t be stupid.”

Peter’s sudden harsh and authoritative tone took everyone off guard and in his weak state Tony took it to heart, more so than he would have any other time. He wanted to come back with a witty remark but words escaped him, he was tired and in pain and he just wanted to use the bathroom. Now Peter was yelling at him and all that combined for some reason made him really emotional. Tony sniffed and gave him a pitiful look. “You’re mean.”

Peter softened a little bit when Tony’s voice changed. It was obvious the man was too ill to form an articulated argument which with Tony’s personality was very worrying; had Tony had all his faculties about him he for sure would have come back with a witty, sarcastic response or at the very least verbally punished Peter for his tone. But the teen felt the need to make a point whilst the man was too sick to protest. “Well someone has to be when you won’t listen. Now take a chill pill for a second and get your breath back then I’ll help you get to the bathroom alright?”

Tony simply nodded and closed his eyes, focussing on evening out his raspy breaths. It was apparent to even those in the room without hypersensitive hearing that Tony was finding it
increasingly difficult to breathe. Each inhale was becoming more and more laboured to the point it sounded like he was gasping. It was also obvious that he was trying to mask his own panic as he was trying not to scare Peter but he was failing to do so; he was utterly petrified as anyone would be when they felt as though they were drowning on dry land. Bruce and Peter exchanged worried looks and the doctor took the initiative once again.

“You get him to the restroom, I’m gonna go grab something.” He nodded to the teenager and hurried out of the room.

Peter nodded silently and looked over Tony worriedly. Even with the specifically designed antibiotics the man’s condition only seemed to be worsening. He hoped it was a natural part of the process, maybe Tony had to get over the worst part of the infection before it would improve, a ‘get worse before it gets better’ kind of situation, but it was still scary. The fact that Tony looked scared as well was a bad sign.

Tony could practically hear the anxiety ridden thoughts running around Peter’s head and despite the burning ache in his lungs and the splitting pain in his head, his parental instincts kicked in and he desperately tried to comfort him. He put a hand on Peter’s arm and ran it up and down but he kept his eyes closed, knowing if Peter saw even an ounce of panic in his own eyes the teen would immediately over react and drag him back down to the infirmary. “I’m fine bubby, I just- I just pushed it a little. I’m alright.”

“Yeah you sound it.” Peter chuckled but there was no humour behind it. In fact it sounded more as though he was trying not to cry. It was then the teens eyes trailed down to Tony’s own arm and noticed the lack of tubing attached to it. “Dad did you rip your IV out again?!”

Oops, Peter hadn’t meant to let on what had happened earlier when Tony went of his fever induced rampage; they’d agreed to pretend it had never happened so Tony would be spared the embarrassment of Peter knowing one of his most well kept secrets. “Uh, Dr. Banner said you took it out earlier when I was eating breakfast.”

Though his lie was less than convincing Tony was too exhausted, pained and panicked to pick up on it. He chalked Peter’s nervousness up to his shaky breathing. “Right. Well, I didn’t I just unhooked the drip. A drip I’ve had going constantly for oh, about six hours now so can you please get me to the bathroom before all that liquid makes a reappearance.”

“Oh, right! Sorry! Here.” Peter had forgotten about the man’s initial mission during all the chaos especially since Tony was showing any outward signs that he needed to go. He could only imagine how uncomfortable his dad was having not gone to the bathroom the entire day. That being said he had been severely dehydrated, his body clearly needed the liquid. After Tony reminded him he made quick work of hoisting the man up and ushering him to the restroom. When the man’s legs gave out once again Peter gave up trying to assist him and just picked him up bridal style which made Tony let out a shrill yelp that certainly didn’t suit him. Peter snickered as he set Tony down inside the restroom which made the older man explode angrily.

“DON’T FUCKING LAUGH AT ME PARKER!”

“Sorry, I’ll just let you pee yourself next time then.” Peter chuckled and stepped out, letting Tony continue to rant about Peter carrying him as he relieved himself. His yelling soon turned back into violent coughing, which in turn caused him to start vomiting again. Though of course Tony refused to unlock the door. “Dad don’t make me override the lock, for Christ sake.”
After another round of coughs combined with a disgusting, splattering sound Tony answered.
“It’s fine I got it, it’s mostly in the toilet this time-“

“Anthony-“

“DON’T YOU DARE!” How dare his son use his full name like that- oh that kid was in for it as soon as he got his stomach back under control-

“Edward Stark open the door right now.”

“No! I can wait for Bruce to get back- just go to bed!” The yelling triggered his chest into spasm again and he was back to coughing violently and wheezing. Then Peter heard a sound that sounded suspiciously like the man’s knees hitting the floor.

“Stop shouting you’re making it worse.” Peter sighed but he doubted Tony could hear him over the sound of his own lungs scraping together. Peter took it upon himself to rip the door frame out, along with all the expensive wiring but he managed to keep it mostly intact.

“I could have opened the door should you have asked, Master Peter.” JARVIS chimed in smoothly.

“Okay well next time can you use that preemptive floodlight cognitive capacity I know Tony installed in you please? The critical thinking element of your design would have been great right about now.” Peter sighed. He didn’t want to snap at the AI again but it was rather frustrating that JARVIS seemed to pick and choose when he had free will. He picked Tony up again but this time the man didn’t little to fight him, he was too busy trying to catch his breath. “Easy, easy, try and stay calm-“

“I am calm!” Tony wheezed out but he certainly didn’t look it. He was clutching his chest as he drew in shallower and shallower breaths, to the point where his eyes were bulging and his face was turning a disturbing shade of purple.

Since Tony couldn’t be, Peter elected to be the level headed one in the situation. He took his dad’s free hand and made eye contact, lowering his voice and speaking much more calmly. The pair had built themselves up into a near argument and the tense atmosphere was doing nothing to settle the situation so Peter took it upon himself to try and defuse the tension. “Hey, it’s alright. Stop getting mad at me I’m just trying to help, I know it’s scary when you can’t breathe. Just remember all the things you tell me when I’m having a panic attack, right? Try and do those breathing exercises with me.”

Tony tried his best to copy Peter’s own breathing pattern but his lungs were spasming too ferociously for him to get any real semblance of control. He was still trying not to convey how scared he was in front of his son but he couldn’t help it. The dark spots on his vision told him that he was mere moments away from passing out and he really wanted to wait until Bruce was back in the room at least so that Peter wouldn’t have to deal with that alone. He hated the loss of control and he hated feeling so vulnerable- he was Tony Stark for Christ’s sake and right now he could barely stand up. He didn’t want anyone, let alone his fifteen year old recently adopted son, seeing him in such a position.

Luckily the doctor reappeared not a few moments later with an oxygen tank, a humidifier and a mask in tow. He surveyed the scene in front of him, making note of the fresh vomit on Tony’s clothes as well as the unhinged door propped up against the wall but didn’t question any of it, instead he elected to work quickly hooking the man up to the breathing machines.

“Deep inhales through the nose, T, there that’s good.” Bruce coached the man similarly to how
Peter had been trying to with the added benefit of the filtered gasses. Very quickly Tony’s breaths started to even out though they were still shallow and strained.

“What happened?” Peter asked worriedly, gnawing on his thumb.

“Bronchospasms. Nothing too severe, basically a bad asthma attack.” Bruce said quietly as he messed with the various dials and knobs on the machines next to him. “They’re probably being caused by the infection or the antibiotics, him moving around too much probably triggered an attack.”

“So, he’s not dying?” Peter sighed.

“Nope, not on my watch, eh Tony?” Bruce slapped the man’s thigh as he stood up from his crouched position and the billionaire flipped him off in response. “I should have had him on the breathing treatments earlier.”

The doctor then went to attach a small grey, plastic clip onto Tony’s finger but the man jerked his hand away instinctively. “Relax big guy, it’s just a pulse oximeter. If you dip down below eighty percent again you’re going back upstairs. No getting up by yourself Tony I mean it.”

“What’s that doing?” Peter asked curiously. He understood the premise that the machine was taking his blood oxygen levels and that below ninety was considered dangerous- he knew that much. But he was seeing other numbers flash up on the monitor that he didn’t recognise.

“It’s showing arterial oxygen levels in mm Hg.”

“Millimetres of Mercury?”

“Uh huh. It should be between seventy five and one hundred but by the looks of things Tony’s has dropped below sixty which is not good.” Bruce stressed each syllable of the last four words shaking Tony’s wrist (that he was manually checking for the man’s pulse and skin temperature) with each one.

Tony himself looked grey and he wasn’t even responding to Bruce’s chiding anymore. His face was sagging in relief from finally being able to breathe and his eyes were drooping too; he looked ready to pass out.

“Tony was there any blood in your vomit?” The man shook his head limply from side to side. “Are you experiencing any diarrhea or blood in your stool?”

Tony giggled at the question like a fifth grader and had the man not been so sick Peter would have smacked him. He shook his head again and let himself relax back against the sofa, throwing his head back and shutting his eyes completely.

“Man you need to grow up. How’s his temp?” Peter yawned.

“Improving. Back down to one O one. I think we can relax now he’s breathing has improved.” Bruce said calmly then looked up at the teen. “You need to get some more sleep kiddo.”

“What time is it?”

“Four forty eight.” Bruce checked his watch and yawned himself. The doctor then picked Tony’s legs up and rotated him on the couch so he was back to laying down as he’d either passed out again or was too weak to do so himself.
“Eh, I’ve slept enough. I better fix the door before his lordship comes round and realises what I did.” Peter chuckled and pointed a thumb over his shoulder towards the discarded door.

“Yeah, why didn’t you just ask JARVIS to open it?”

“I panicked he was throwing up again.” Peter said defensively before he grimaced. He had yet to look inside the bathroom and he recalled Tony saying only most of his puke had ended up in the toilet; when he’d retrieved the breathless man he didn’t take the time to note the extent of the damage so now he had to prepare himself for another night of scrubbing puke off of ceramic tiles. Great. “I better go clean that up.”

“I’ll handle the sick you fix the door.” Bruce said kindly as he went to retrieve the cleaning supplies out from under the kitchen sink.

“Oh, you don’t have to, I can-”

“Save it. Let me help, you dealt with enough last night.” Bruce waved his hand flippantly still speaking in his same soft spoken voice that anyone found difficult to argue with, especially Peter.

The clean up job fortunately wasn’t too intensive and neither was the delicate mechanics of the door. Peter was rather impressed with how much of the delicate circuitry he’d preserved even in his panic. Since Bruce’s job was a relatively short one and Tony’s breathing had drastically improved since he was given the oxygen mask, the man decided to get some more sleep but Peter didn’t bother. He was too awake by that point and he wanted to make himself useful. Since he couldn’t help Tony feel better he could at least do something productive so he decided to get a head start on making breakfast. He’d never been allowed to cook much before since there was no need for him to, Steve and Clint shared that responsibility, but he found his way around the kitchen with little difficulty. What he did find difficult however was the bacon sticking to the pan and the yolks of the eggs breaking. Just as he was starting to get frustrated Steve strolled in, as smiley as ever.

“Good morning Pe- hey what you up to there?”

“Well, I was trying to be helpful but I’m about to give up.” He pouted glumly and stabbed angrily at the bacon stuck to the pan.

Steve looked over the mess of a meal Peter was making and smiled wider. “Hey it’s not so bad, it’s better than what your dad can do. That man can’t make cereal without burning it.”

“I’m usually not a bad cook, I swear!” Peter cried indignantly.

“Well it could be because you’re using a sauté pan instead of a non stick frying pan, bud.” Steve chuckled and reached over to help save what was left of the burnt food.

“Okay well in fairness I’m usually the sous chef.” Peter giggled sheepishly. It was true usually he was second in command to May in the kitchen, then it occurred to him it really had been a while since he was tasked with making a meal; the last time he’d done any real cooking was on mothers day...man he missed his aunt. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t sweat it, it’s sweet that you tried in the first place. Look-“ Steve went on to show Peter some basic kitchen skills, explaining the use for different metals and oils and such. It was very informative and Peter regretted not waiting for Steve assistance in the first place. It was a very nice bonding experience and it helped Peter’s anxiety riddle brain confirm that Steve didn’t hate him after he refused to go to sleep the night before. “How’s the patient?”

Peter sighed and shot a look of sustain over towards the man with the breathing mask. “He’s an
“Well, we know that.” Steve chuckled lightly deciding against chastising Peter for the rude language because he most certainly agreed.

“He had to pee in the night and rather than wake one of us up he tried to walk by himself and almost passed out. Then he had some major bronchial spasm thingy and Bruce had to run down and get the oxygen tank. Oh- and he threw up all over the bathroom again because he was too stubborn to let me help.”

“So, a calm night, yeah?” Steve smirked. The soldier chose not to comment on the fact that Peter hadn’t stayed in his own room, he had expected nothing less and he didn’t see the point in punishing the teen who had obviously been stressed out enough by the consequences of that decision.

“Seriously I don’t know how you guys deal with him. How did that man survive having heart surgery?” Peter shook his head and moved to put some bread in the toaster.

“His stubbornness helps in some ways I guess. Makes him more determined to get better faster.” Steve shrugged. “Don’t stress we won’t let him hurt himself anymore, we just need to get JARVIS on our side.”

Peter let out a frustrated noise. “Don’t get me started on that stupid thing! Bruce asked him to notify us if Tony tried to get up and he didn’t!”

“He’s programmed to listen to Tony’s orders above everything else, you know that.”

“Yes bu-bu-but he should know to override those commands if he’s in danger! Tony couldn’t breathe last night, Steve, I thought he was gonna die from lack of oxygen and I really don’t wanna have to do CPR again it’s very traumatic and I’d probably damage his arc reactor or at the very least his ribs and I-“

Steve grabbed Peter by both shoulders and moved the boy away from the stove. “Deep breaths, Pete. You’re working yourself up again.”

Peter shook his head as he caught himself just in the nick of time to avoid a panic attack. “Right. Yeah, m’sorry.”

“It’s alright. No one will need resuscitating, Tony’s fine I promise. Stubborn and pretty sick, but fine.” Steve brushed a hand through the teens hair and he couldn’t help but take note of how Peter said ‘again’ in regards to doing CPR. Tony had kept Peter’s life before moving there rather private, though it became more and more apparent during stressful situations that the boy had seen some things. The idea of a child that young having to go through such trauma made Steve’s heart ache, he wished people would understand that’s why he was strict and sometimes treated the boy younger than his years. “Can you set the table for me, please?”

“Sure.” Peter moved to oblige with the man’s request, resisting the urge to use his webs to reach the plates on the high shelf where he couldn’t reach them. He settled on jumping inhumanly high to grab them when he thought Steve’s back was turned.

“Pete, no powers in the house we’ve discussed this.” Steve turned and ‘menacingly’ pointed a spatula at the boy.

“I didn’t even climb on the counter that time!”
“Peter Parker, listen to your mother!” Croaked a sarcastic, raspy voice from under the mess of blankets on the couch. The voice was followed by a few crackly chuckles then a round of coughing. Peter dropped the plates on the table, jumped over said table and the back of the couch (so much for not using his powers) to get to his newly conscious dad.

“No taking the mask off! You know what Bruce said.” Peter huffed and forcefully repositioned the mask on the man’s face who didn’t bother to protest.

“Sorry, Nurse Ratched.” Tony croaked again but his eyes were smiling at Peter’s over protectiveness. He couldn’t blame the boy as he recalled how careless he’d been the night before, no wonder Peter was overreacting he must have scared his son half to death.

“I don’t understand that reference so imma ignore it.” Peter rolled his eyes but then his face softened. “How you feeling?”

“Like I’ve been hit by a dump truck.” Tony said honestly. Every one of his muscles ached and his chest felt like there were giant rubber bands binding it, not allowing his lungs to expand properly. It was a considerable improvement to the night before where he was barely able to draw a breath but it was still very uncomfortable. He struggled to sit himself up into a sitting upright as his legs refused to move and his arms were too weak to support him long enough for him to reposition. Peter automatically moved his limbs for him and got him into a comfortable position without either of the pair needing to exchange a word.

“Yeah, you look like it.” Peter said, messing with the blankets and pillows surrounding Tony’s nest.

“Why thank you son, that was just the boost of confidence I need- hey!” Peter cut him off by sticking a thermometer in his mouth.

“Hush, close your mouth.”

Tony struggled to talk around the device. “JARVIS ‘an ‘o tha’ without the ‘ick-“

“I said hush!” Peter snapped and Tony pouted but relented.

Steve snickered from behind the couch. “Man, he’s giving you a run for your money, eh Stark?”

“Shut up Captain Popsicle- ow!” The thermometer stabbed into the underside of his tongue as he spat the words across the room at the man.

“I told you to keep quiet. It’s your own fault.” Peter said coolly which made Tony pout more. He frowned when he surveyed the thermometer’s reading. “Hmm, one O two. I was hoping it would have gone down some more.”

“He was under three blankets, Pete.” Steve shrugged.

“Yeah, well you try prying them off of him. He threw a major tantrum last night when I tried.” Peter spoke absentmindedly as he looked at the thermometer, turning it over in his hands and gnawing his lip worriedly. He bit back the urge to wake Bruce up, the doctor was exhausted after their eventful twenty-four hours. He knew that Tony’s condition was stable and there was no need to panic over nothing, he had all the necessary drugs in his system he just wanted Tony to get better. It was scary seeing him hooked up to machines- and not the ones one would expect to see Tony Stark hooked up to.

“I’m sitting right here.” Tony croaked grudgingly before coughing again. After he recovered he
sniffed indignantly. “I was cold.”

“Man, you’re a baby when you’re sick huh?” Peter smirked and brushed some of Tony’s hair off of his face.

“Bite me.” The man growled and tried to weakly slap Peter’s hand away.

“No thanks, I don’t know what I’d catch.” The teen grinned at the reaction he got out of Tony, it was so easy to piss him off when he was in an altered state of consciousness. Though he knew he should feel guilty about picking on the man when he was vulnerable it made up for all the times Tony had done the same to him. Little paybacks. He stood up from his seated position at the edge of Tony’s makeshift bed. Peter lowered his voice a little. “You gotta go?”

Tony still had his arms crossed angrily but he nodded, a very slight blush rising to his cheeks. Peter knew better than to tease the man about it though, as he knew how embarrassing it was to have to admit to others about bodily functions, let alone your son having to help you to the bathroom. He wasn’t that cruel. “Okay, we’re gonna take it easy this time though, okay?”

Tony nodded again but this time as Peter moved to help him he grabbed the boy’s shirt and looked him square in the eyes, an expression of pure fury strewn across his face. “If you dare pick me up again I’m sending you to live with the Leeds.”

Peter bit back a smile and agreed. “Understood.”

The blond man moved out from behind the kitchen counter. “Do you want me to-“

“I got him.” Peter cut Steve off. He realised immediately how rude he had sounded, it wasn’t intentional he was just automatically very defensive when it came to anyone else handling Tony other than him. “Thanks.”

Steve nodded and backed off, being pretty understanding of Peter’s tone. After their agonisingly slow trip to and from the restroom, which took longer when Tony’s body threatened to make him pass out again, it was then a fight of trying to get Tony to eat something. The others had already filed in, or in Bruce’s case moved from one end of the room to the other, and were enjoying the food that Peter proudly proclaimed he helped in preparing. Tony of course stayed nestled in his cocoon of blankets on the sofa. Nat was the one tasked with taking food to him.

“It’s just toast Tony, you can manage two slices of bread.”

“I am not. Hungry. Thank you.” Tony retorted and finished his sentence by pulling a blanket over his head.

“Dude I’m not above force feeding you. Do you remember Cabo?” Tony visibly shuddered at the memory but he refused to come out from under the blanket. In frustration Nat ripped said blanket off of him. “It’s that or Bruce can put in a feeding tube, your choice!”

Tony shivered at the sudden change in temperature, his fever made him feel as though he’d been pushed outside in a blizzard. His teeth even chattered slightly as he spoke. “Have you ever considered a job in the medical field, Rome? You have such an amazing bedside manner.”

“Sarcasm doesn’t work when your voice sounds like you’ve been smoking sixty a day for ten years, now eat!”

Peter took the opportunity to chime in, having finished his own food. “You know I could have Mrs. Leeds come over and deal with you. She’s a nurse and she doesn’t play around either.”
“I can imagine.” Tony grumbled. He wasn’t being deliberately difficult, he genuinely felt nauseated at the sight of food and he was getting increasingly frustrated by everyone around him insisting that he was incapable of making decisions. Yes okay, it was his poor decision making that caused him to become so dangerously ill but he was still one of the smartest minds in the world, he could decide whether or not he wanted some fucking toast. “Well excuse me if I don’t feel like puking my guts up again just so you can feel better about me eating some cold burnt bread-“

“It wasn’t cold ten minutes ago.” Nat said through gritted teeth.

“You won’t puke if you take it slowly. Just a couple bites and I’ll leave you alone.” Peter said softly, taking the ‘nice cop’ approach this time, though Tony didn’t react well to it given he was now much more in his right mind than he had been the day before.

“Don’t patronise me, I’m not a toddler-“

“Coulda fooled me.” Nat received daggers from both men and she took that as her que to return to her own breakfast, holding her arms up in defeat. “Fine, let him waste away, I tried.”

Peter turned back to Tony. “I’m not trying to patronise you I’m just worried. Not eating anything won’t help settle your stomach it’ll just make it worse when you do get hungry. Then you’ll try and eat a lot in one go and make yourself sick again.”

“I understand the premise but I’m telling you, I’m a grown ass adult and I know my body. If I eat right now I will throw up.” Tony said finally crossing his arms over his chest again.

“Okay.” Peter sighed and stood up. He didn’t see the use in arguing with him anymore and stressing them both out. Besides he knew if Tony didn’t eat for an extended period of time Bruce could fit him with a feeding tube or otherwise supplement his diet. “Okay you don’t have to eat now, but can you promise you’ll at least try something before I go to school? I’ll worry all day if not.”

As much as Tony wanted to kick off he didn’t want to upset Peter anymore than he already had. He knew how stressful medical situations were for the teen and he was surprised he’d even agreed to go to school without having a massive meltdown. Knowing Peter he was going to be worrying all day anyway and he didn’t want to add to it if he could help it. He also knew that he was acting like a bratty child, something he so often chastised Peter for, but he couldn’t help it. His entire body ached and he wanted nothing more than to be in his own bed asleep, the presence of his annoyingly doting family only adding to his discomfort. “Fine.”

“Thank you.” Peter smiled triumphantly.

“Shouldn’t you have left already?” Tony realised the time.

“I asked Happy to drive me today.” He shrugged. He wanted to spend as long as possible with Tony, at least long enough to see him eat and his fever go down. He made one last ditch attempt to beg Steve for the day off but the man wouldn’t back down. “Please Steve, just one more day?”

“No Peter. You had yesterday off to catch up on sleep you need to go to school.”

So the teens day already started off bad. Tony forced himself to eat some crackers to try and settle Peter’s nerves but he ended up puking again (much to his embarrassment having an audience witness him in such a vulnerable state). After that Peter started refusing to leave but Steve threatened him with sending Tony back up to the infirmary and being placed in quarantine, not
allowing Peter to see him until he was recovered. Usually Peter would never have believed such a threat but Steve delivered it so seriously he wasn’t sure whether or not the man was being genuine. He decided against pushing his luck to find out but he was in a considerably bad mood as soon as he left the house (not before tucking bear under Tony’s blanket when no one was looking and telling her to keep him out of trouble while he was gone).

He barely spoke two words to Happy in the car other than thanking him for the ride, which the agent knew was odd. Happy had been informed of Tony’s illness so he understood why the usually chatty teen was less than chipper that morning but it still concerned him. However, the agent didn’t have the necessary repertoire or social skills to deal with an upset teenager so he settled for allowing the uncomfortable silence to fill the car.

Peter was clearly distracted the entire day but his friends didn’t push him on it. He’d already told Ned about his last two days and MJ was good at reading the room. Peter’s usual bullies however, were less than understanding.

Flash made a comment the second Peter walked into his third period but he ignored him, walking past him towards his seat and stepping over Flash’s out turned foot having learned his lesson.

Ned was less forgiving of the comment. “Shut the fuck up Eugene or do you want Peter to dislocate your jaw again?”

“No, Ned- don’t. Just come on.” Peter sighed and dragged his friend away. “I’m not in the mood for this today.”

“I know that’s why I’m saying something-“

“No, Ned. J-just don’t.” Peter sighed again, not being able to form an articulate response. His mind was elsewhere and he was tired, the last thing he needed was Ned picking a fight.

“Yeah, Ned listen to P-p-p-penis.” Flash smirked, drawing attention to Peter’s stutter which made the teen blush. His stuttering had become significantly better in recent years but it had been the bane of his existence for a lot longer and Flash would pick up on it every time he could.

Ned gestured wildly to Flash again, giving Peter a wide eyed look that said ‘come on, let me hit him’. But Peter just shook his head and continued to pull him away.

Peter spent the entire lesson bored out of his mind as his teacher explained something about water distillation that he himself had learned in the second grade. With the lack of distraction he found it difficult not to let his mind wander back to the state his dad was in. He’d made Bruce and Steve repeatedly promise to update him should any issues arise, or even just to update him in general. He’d refrained from messaging them thus far as he didn’t want to seem completely insane; he knew Tony was in good hands, that his chest infection was being treated and was getting under control but the fact that he wasn’t there being the one to care for him was driving him crazy. It was a similar feeling he had gotten when May was first sent to a live in care facility. He hated it, he couldn’t see why Steve wouldn’t just let him stay home it’s not like he was learning anything in this stupid school anyway, the material was nothing to him. It wasn’t like one more day off would negatively impact on his grades.

The more he thought about it and got himself worked up, the more insistent the urge to text one of his housemates became. It got to the point where he couldn’t resist it anymore and he just had to. He convinced himself if he didn’t text someone right at that moment Tony would die, ah hello OCD my old friend-
The second the boy whipped his phone out under his desk he heard and annoying high pitched voice screech from the other side of the room: “Sir, Parker has his phone out!”

He froze as he felt all eyes in the room fall on him. ‘Screw you, Eugene.’

“Peter, what are you doing on your phone during my class?” Peter dared to look up as his teacher stopped talking and walked up to his desk in front of everyone.

“Uh...texting someone. I’m sorry sir, it’s really important-“

“If it’s an emergency you can contact people through the receptionist at the front desk. Give me your phone.” His teacher held his hand out but Peter hesitated. “Now, Peter, unless you want to go make a phone call in the principal's office.”

“No.” Peter said quietly.

“Excuse me?” The class fell dead silent. Peter was known to be a model student who wouldn’t say boo to a goose and he was outrightly defying a teacher? It was unheard of. It certainly drew unwanted attention.

Peter’s voice shook but he stayed firm. “I need to have my phone on me in case Mr. Stark needs to contact me, sir.”

The man rolled his eyes and clicked his tongue dramatically. “Really? For god’s sakes- you can’t use this ‘internship’ as an excuse to do whatever you want Peter.”

The class stayed silent apart from the few gasps and Flash’s snickering. It was Peter’s turn to get angry this time. “With all due respect Sir, when have I ever used it as an excuse to get out of anything? I’ve never even brought it up in your presence let alone disrupted your class. I’m a good student, I’ve never so much as missed a homework assignment from you and I think you’ll find if you look on my file there’s a note with expressed permission from the principal to keep my phone on me at all times, per Mr. Stark’s request. So if you don’t like it, you can take it up with either of them..sir.”

The man’s lips pressed into a thin line and for a second Peter was sure he was about to explode and he was going to be sent to the principal’s office, but then his face relaxed. “Well until I check that information I’ll be confiscating your phone. If it goes off I’ll be sure to notify you. You can have it back after class.”

The man outstretched his palm again and Peter begrudgingly placed the device in it. His heart was beating so loud, he couldn’t believe he’d just sassed a teacher like that in front of an entire room of his peers but in a way he was immensely proud of himself for standing his ground; his time training at the compound had really done wonders for his social anxiety though he still struggled with it, he was a lot better at sticking up for himself around authority figures. And what he said had been true, it was bad enough that everyone, other than the Principal, the school nurse and a few of the teachers he was close with as well as Ned and MJ, thought the internship was fake; it infuriated him that the man had the audacity to try and embarrass him like that, like having Ned and Flash outing him constantly wasn’t bad enough.

That aside he was still stuck in the same position he would have been had he not protested, and he’d inadvertently drawn attention to himself with the whole name-dropping thing again, something he swore up and down not to do. So now he was stuck with no phone to help relieve his crippling anxiety, a very angry teacher and a room full of people staring and whispering about him. Great. He looked back at Ned for emotional support, which his friend had an abundance of waiting
for him at all times, who gave him a kind smile that mirrored his own feelings. A smile that silently said ‘good job sticking up for yourself, I know this sucks, bro.’

Once class was over Peter retrieved his phone from a very grouchy teacher and ran out of the class immediately, dialing Bruce directly. There was no time to text, Tony could’ve been dead by now-

“How is he?!”

Bruce chuckled very quietly, trying not to let Peter hear the amusement in his voice. He didn’t want the child to think he was laughing at him. “He’s fine, Pete, he’s resting at the moment or I’d have him confirm that verbally.”

“You sure he’s asleep and not dead?”

Bruce bit back a laugh again and unbeknownst to Peter, he was exchanging knowing nods with Steve. The two had predicted that the teen wouldn’t be able to go a full day without calling. But now he owed Clint ten dollars, as he’d bet that Peter would at least make it til lunch. “Yeah, I’m pretty sure. He’s snoring so there’s that.”

“Oh thank god- has his temp gone down?”

“It went down to ninety nine earlier but it’s spiking a little more now. Managed to make him eat something before he passed out again too. Not much but it was something.”

Peter panted in relief. He truly had convinced himself that his dad was inches from death. Good thing he called when he did. “That’s so good to hear.”

“I was surprised you didn’t text me sooner.” Bruce chuckled.

“Yeah, well I was gonna but my teacher caught me.”

The doctor sighed softly and lowered his voice. “Peter don’t get yourself into trouble-“

Peter heard another voice call out in the background. “Who’s in trouble?! Why’s he in trouble?!”

“No ones in trouble Cap, calm yourself.”

“Who’s in trouble?! Why’s he in trouble?!”

“No I will. I’ll see you later, pal.”

The rest of the day went similarly crummy. Peter got caught with his phone out an additional two times but luckily Mr. Brunswick was a lot more understanding than his science teacher had been, once Peter quietly explained the situation. He used May as an excuse rather than Tony but it did the trick, he didn’t get in trouble.

Flash kept bringing up the name dropping incident though, continuously talking about how Peter thought he was better than everyone and was using his status to bend the rules, as though that wasn’t something Flash himself did on a daily basis. As much as he was getting on Peter’s nerves he knew not to rise to it, if he knew he was getting under his skin it would only escalate, but it was getting increasingly difficult to ignore. He was already in a bad mood so his patience was wearing thin and Ned wasn’t helping. Instead of helping to distract him he kept riling Peter up, encouraging
him to say something back or punch the kid.

“Ned if you don’t shut up I’m going to punch you.”

Just as he was finishing his threat MJ made an appearance at their lunch table. “Someone’s feisty today.”

“Not in the mood.” He said flippantly, not even bothering to look at the girl. He didn’t have the energy to entertain her teasing banter, he was too busy worrying himself sick.

MJ frowned as she detected the seriousness in Peter’s voice immediately and she changed her tone accordingly, though with MJ the difference was hardly stark. “What’s wrong?”

Peter didn’t feel like explaining the situation again. “Nothing-“

“Tony’s sick.” Ned chimed in helpfully though he revived a seriously dirty look for doing so.

“How sick?” The girl furrowed her brows.

“He’s got pneumonia because I gave him the flu and he refused to stop working.” Peter sighed quietly. “Him up two days in a row puking and coughing his lungs up sick.

“Shit.” MJ’s eyes widened slightly as she sat down. “That’s rough.”

“I don’t wanna talk about it.” Peter said through gritted teeth looking pointedly at Ned, who held his hands up defensively. Though his friends moved on from that topic of conversation, Peter didn’t join in. He was too busy staring at his blank phone screen waiting for a text or call to come through.

“You know he’s an adult right? You don’t have to worry so much, you live with a doctor.” MJ laughed.

Peter just scowled at her. He knew he was being ridiculous and that he shouldn’t worry so much, but he couldn’t help it. It was hardwired into his brain to overthink and worry about everything, he wasn’t exactly doing it on purpose. He couldn’t control it, especially not when it was something medical and it happened so suddenly. It gave him emotional flashbacks to May’s quick decline in health and the prospect of the same thing happening to Tony made him feel physically ill. “Wow, thanks. You know, I think you single handedly just cured anxiety. Maybe you should become a psychologist.”

“Don’t get pissy with me I’m just saying-“

“Well next time don’t.” Peter huffed. Of course MJ didn’t know when to back down, it was an infuriating trait the girl shared with his dad. He got his backpack and walked away, Ned having the forethought to stop MJ from following him. He’d decided he’d had enough of school. It was Thursday, meaning he only had one day left before the weekend anyway, Steve was just going to have to deal with him skipping. He couldn’t handle all the noise and the stupid people and being away from his dad, he was way to close to hitting someone. In fact he very nearly did when two junior boys were messing around in the hallway and bashed into him, he was dangerously close to losing control he needed to get out of there.

He texted Happy to meet him at their usual spot and he took himself to the nurses office. Due to his high metabolism his body ran at a slightly elevated temperature so it wasn’t difficult to convince the lady that he was sick and he was signed off for the rest of the day. “Take care of yourself honey, there’s that flu going around.”
‘Tell me about it.’ Peter thought bitterly to himself as he hightailed it out of the school and out to Happy’s car.

“Hey Mr. Hogan, could you stop off at the store on our way back? I need to grab a few things.” He had an idea brewing in his head that he wanted to execute before Steve had the chance to interrupt.

“Do I look like I work for postmates?” The man replied as cheerful as ever.

“No but I’m not asking you to go into the store for me, just to stop there. So, if anything you’re more like an über driver.”

Happy scowled at him in the rear view mirror but honestly, it was such a common occurrence that it didn’t phase Peter anymore. “Just get in and grab your shit kid I ain’t got all day.”

He did as he was told, grabbing the grouchy man a candy bar as a thanks and even almost getting a smile in return. Peter got home at around two pm, but he wanted outside until two thirty, knowing that was when Steve usually left to go to one of his readings with kids at the library or something equally wholesome. He wanted to avoid the blond for as long as possible since he knew he was going to get into trouble for leaving school early. He’d have to face his fate sooner or later but in this case he opted for the latter option. Peter went so far as to scale the side of the building (a route he knew wasn’t visible to pedestrians or members of staff, one that had been pointed out to him by Tony to only use in emergency situations) to avoid coming into contact with anyone at all.

He climbed in through a window JARVIS so graciously opened for him on the common floor and no sooner had his feet touched the ground in the living room he heard Tony’s voice. “Hey kiddo.”

“Hi.” Peter hadn’t expected the man to be conscious.

“Had enough of school?” Though his voice was just as crackly and strained as it was earlier, there was a distinct lack of accusation in his tone. Peter breathed a sigh of relief that Tony wasn’t mad at him for skipping half the day, now it meant he’d only have to deal with Steve.

“Yeah. I’m sorry, I tried but I didn’t wanna lose it.” Peter said sheepishly, making Tony chuckle. “How you feeling?”

“Better.” Tony croaked, but it sounded less convincing as it was followed by another coughing fit.

“Liar.” Peter rolled his eyes and put his backpack down on the table. He moved over and placed a hand on Tony’s forehead and even to him the skin felt warm. “You’re still burning up.”

“Get your cold dead hands off me.” Tony chuckled. He was in a considerably better mood than he had been that morning. Steve had Captain America business to attend to so Bruce was the one tasked with watching him and his old friend was a lot less militant about it. He still made him stay off his feet but he wasn’t fussing over him every five minutes. Spending half the day sleeping definitely did wonders for his attitude too, even if he did still feel like he’d inhaled sulfuric acid.

“What was your temp last time you checked?”

“One O two.” Bruce called from the kitchen. Peter hadn’t noticed he was there, his spidey-sense being dulled due to his worrying. “I just gave him another dose of paracetamol so it should go back down soon. Are you alright to babysit for a while Pete? I could use the lab time to work on a vaccine for next year, so you don’t give him super germs again.”

“Sure thing.” Peter smiled. He was grateful for Bruce giving the pair some time alone, something Steve would never have done given their current situation. God, he loved the man, but he could be
so suffocating at times- and Peter thought he was overprotective and paranoid.

The second Bruce was out of the room Tony moved to stand up. But Peter put a hand on the man’s chest to stop him. “Hey, what do you think you’re doing?”

“I was just going to grab my phone.” Tony sighed and flopped back against the couch. He didn’t know why he’d expected Peter to be any more lenient with him than the rest of the team, maybe since the teen was meant to be his subordinate. Though he knew better than that by now, Peter had made it abundantly clear that he was willing to defy him in favour of protecting his health; if only he’d gotten sick around six or so months before when Peter would have been too shy to challenge him.

“Lemme get it, jeez.” Peter rolled his eyes and grabbed the device from the coffee table. Just as he was about to hand it to him he pulled his hand back. “Wait, why was it confiscated in the first place?”

Tony looked away from the boy and huffed, waving his hand flippantly. “I don’t know Steve was being a bitch.”

“Tony.” Peter said exasperatedly. “Be nice.”

“Well he was!”

“Be. Nice. Now tell me or I’ll put this somewhere secret.” Peter waggled the phone in his hand. Oh how the tables had turned- maybe Peter should send a video of himself trash talking Tony to Pepper whilst he had the power.

Tony growled in frustration and crossed his arms again. That seemed to be his go to thing when he was having a ‘mantrum’ lately, especially since he’d started getting sick. The usually silver tongued, sharp witted man was reduced to resembling an angry toddler due to the brain fog and exhaustion that came from being so ill. “He called Fury to tell him that the project was going to be delayed until I’m better and he said I’m not allowed to do anything work related.”

“Maybe that’s not a bad thing.” Peter said gently, knowing full well what the man’s reaction to that statement was going to be. Tony lived and breathed work, he always had done, even in his downtime he spent it working; on side projects, getting ahead on new ones or catching up on old ones. Peter understood, he was the same way, when you had a billion ideas running through your head all at once but there was only so many hours in a day. Not being able to work on a project that had consumed his entire being for weeks must be killing him- but not as much as the pneumonia was. So, though Peter was sympathetic, he definitely agreed with the work ban.

“I’m bored out of my mind Peter! There’s only so much sleeping and daytime television I can do before my brain starts to-“ Having raised his voice above a meek whisper, the man’s lungs started to rebel once again and he was sent into another painful coughing fit.

Peter rolled his eyes as he rubbed the man’s back. Trust Tony to be so dramatic, he was acting as though he’d been on bedrest for weeks when it’s had only been two days, one of which he spent almost entirely unconscious. “Easy, easy. I get it, I really do but you need a break from work. How can you not see that when you’re this sick?”

“You’re the one who made me sick in the first place.” Tony choked out angrily, still grabbing his throat and wheezing.

Peter scowled. “Oh, so you need a break from me then? It’s MY fault you waited a week for the
infection to fully kick in before saying anything. And it’s MY fault you didn’t get your flu shot this year. Well fine, I guess I’ll go back to school. I can probably make it in time for home room—“

As he stood up from the couch Tony grabbed his wrist and ‘pulled’ him back down. “I’m sorry.”

“I know, I was just kidding.” Peter smiled, having not taken the snidey remark to heart. He understood where the man’s frustrations were coming from and that he was the nearest receptacle for which Tony could vent. He knew Tony didn’t mean it, he was just angry at himself because he knew Peter was right. “You’re not getting rid of me.”

“How is going on Twitter, work?!” Tony snapped.

“Because it’s PR work, and that’ll lead onto you answering emails which will lead onto you getting more ideas, it’s a slippery slope. And I ain’t about to disobey orders from Fury.”

“He’s not my boss.”

“Sure, sweetie whatever you say.” Peter said patronisingly and had Tony had the strength he would have punched the boy’s arm, but he didn’t so he settled for giving him a death glare instead.

“Then what am I allowed to do? Colouring?” Tony spat sarcastically.

“I’ve got some adult colouring books actually, they’re good for stress relief.” Peter said honestly ignoring the sarcasm in the man’s tone. “How ‘bout a movie?”

“Fine. Whatever.” Tony said grumpily. He wanted to continue protesting but his head was hurting too badly for him to think of a legitimate response.

“Any preferences?”

“I don’t care.”

Peter grinned and sprang up from the couch, making Tony instantly regret his choice of words. As soon as Peter put in a disc he was surprised. He’d expected Star Wars for the millionth time, or Lord Of The Rings or Planet Of The Apes- one of Peter’s nostalgic go to’s. But it was none of those, the screen flashed up with ads that Tony didn’t immediately recognise until it got to the Disney and Pixar Animations studio logo. Then that awfully catchy but ridiculous song by Randy Newman and a shot of blue wallpaper with a cloud design.

Tony rolled his eyes into another dimension and stared at his nearly sixteen year old son. “Toy Story? Really?”

“Well have you ever seen it?”

“No because I’m an adult who didn’t have a child until a year ago, and said child is way past Toy Story age.” Tony said dryly.

“Hey, hey, hey, don’t knock it til you try it alright? And unlike you I can appreciate things despite their intended age group thank you very much. It’s a heartwarming story and the animation is
amazing.”

“God, you are such a dork.” Tony sighed and ran a hand over his face, but Peter paid no mind to it. He sat back down on the couch next to his dad, snuggling up close to him, which the man didn’t protest against. Even in his sour mood the physical affection was nice and he welcomed it without argument.

“Thank you. Seriously if you’re not interested in the storyline- which you totally will be by the way, just enjoy the visuals. They’re awesome.”

“Is that so?” Tony smirked and started absentmindedly playing with the boy’s hair. Despite his asinine choice in visual media Tony couldn’t help but enjoy the teens excitement to share it with him. Maybe he was just getting soft because of the cocktail of drugs he was on but he was willing to sit through a thousand stupid Disney movies if he got to see Peter that relaxed, especially after the emotional turmoil he’d put him through in the last forty eight hours. The boy’s presence was calming and though he’d never admit it, he was happy that he had come home early to cheer him up. Even though he desperately wanted to be back in his lab a movie day on the couch with his weird little kid didn't sound half bad either.

Peter relaxed into the man’s touch, leaning against him but being sure not to put any pressure on Tony’s chest. “Don’t judge me I wanted to be an animator for a while.”

“Was this before or after you wanted to be a veterinarian?”

“After. Just before I wanted to be a prosthetic limb technician.” Peter answered seriously, not realising Tony’s question had been sarcastic.

Despite having been joking initially, Tony loved hearing about baby Peter’s hopes and dreams and he gazed down at the boy fondly. “You’ve wanted to be everything at one point or another. And you could have been.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Peter laughed, he was expecting some kind of sarcastic comment about Peter’s lack of commitment.

“You’re incredibly smart, creative and talented. The world is literally your oyster I can’t think of a single career you couldn’t do if you set your mind on it.” Tony said earnestly.

“Wow, yeah okay you’re really sick. Is that fever hitting you again?” Peter was taken aback by the comment and tried to cover his embarrassment by making a joke. “Seriously Tony, be careful with the compliments. I might start to think you like me.”

“I compliment you all the time.” Tony chuckled.

“Backhanded compliments don’t count.”

“Do too. If I tell you to stop being stupid it implies you’re smart the rest of the time.”

“Does not.”

“Does too.”

Peter sighed dramatically but chuckled and stole one of Tony’s blankets to burrow under. “You’re so annoying.”

“I know you are but what am I?”
“You’re annoying and sick, so shut up and watch the movie I lovingly picked out.”

The pair fell silent for around five minutes before Tony started to question elements of the film, mostly just to irritate Peter. After all annoying the teenager was one of his favourite pastimes. “How old is this kid? Ain’t he a little old to be playing with dolls?”

The teen took the bait. “He’s like eight!”

“Well he looks like a twelve year old.”

“Dad, you still play make believe with your little toys down in the lab I don’t wanna hear it.” Peter said grumpily.

“Excuse me?” Tony raised his eyebrows and put his tongue in his cheek, trying to bite back a smile and appear genuinely offended.

“I’ve heard you talking to the suits when you think no ones around.”

“This is coming from the kid who still has literal dolls in his room.”

“They’re collectibles!”

“Then why are half of them out of their boxes?”

“I...I like to pose them and stuff- shut up!” Peter pouted going red faced. He wasn’t about to admit he’d reenacted a few of their missions and fights using the figurines.

Tony was satisfied with the teasing and actually paid attention to the movie going forward. But he couldn’t help but notice Peter kept giggling at random times that didn’t correspond with anything particularly funny going on on screen. “What is it?”

“Oh nothing. I’ll tell you at the end.” Peter giggled again, but Tony ignored it. He found himself actually enjoying the movie, not that he’d dare ever admit it to another living soul, especially not Peter. His son was right, the visuals were very aesthetically pleasing and the more adult jokes the directors had thrown in for the adults were mildly entertaining.

But right up until the scene where the cowboy and the spaceman were trapped inside one of those arcade grabber machines with the weird little aliens, Peter continued to giggle to himself and Tony couldn’t ignore it anymore. He paused the movie and turned to the kid beside him. “Okay, what’s so funny?”

“I just realised something.” Peter spluttered trying to contain his laughter.

“Care to share?”

“You’re gonna yell at me and I don’t want you to start coughing again.”

‘Why would I yell at him for laughing at a kids movie?’ “Is it inappropriate?”

“Uh uh.” Peter shook his head honestly.

“Then spit it out.”

Peter paused for a moment, then looked up at Tony very innocently. “Don’t the main two protagonists remind you of anyone?”
Tony furrowed his brows slightly and tried to read Peter’s expression. “No?”

The teenagers face broke into a smile again when he couldn’t contain his laughter at the man’s bewildered look. “It’s you and Steve.”

“What?” Tony deadpanned and scowled more not seeing the resemblance.

“You’re Woody. He was like the head honcho and then he was threatened when Buzz, Steve, came in and everyone liked him and started to listen to him instead and Woody got insecure. Then they fought but they end up working together and being friends. Woody’s all sarcastic and brooding and bitter and Buzz is all clean cut and wholesome-“

Tony had heard enough and he didn’t much appreciate the comparison of his and Steve’s civil war that had nearly cost them everything to a child’s cartoon, as amusing as it was. “You know I would love to get a peek inside your head just so I can figure out where you get all this shit from.”

“Oh come on! Tell me you can’t see it!”

“I can’t see it.” Tony said dryly returning his focus back to the screen.

“That’s total bull-“

Tony raised his eyebrows warningly. “Peter.”

“-honk.” He caught himself. “And Nat and Clint are Ham and Mr. Potato head ‘cause they’re all nihilistic and sarcastic- and Thor is Rex ‘cause, well he just is. I’m not sure who Bruce would be-

“So, who does that make you in this little analogy?”

“Hmm, I don’t know. Slinky maybe, he’s the one who stays the most loyal but even he can see when Woody’s being a bit of a prick.” Tony raised his eyebrows again and Peter quickly stumbled over his words to take that statement back. “I didn’t mean you were- I’m just saying I- uh...hey when was the last time you ate?”

“Don’t change the subject.” Tony laughed.

“I’m not! Well I am, but not just ‘cause I inadvertently called you a prick, I just remembered what the time was. Bruce said you ate a little this morning but did you try anything after that?”

Tony shook his head. He was considerably less nauseous than he had been but he still didn’t feel one hundred percent. He’d much rather stick to the liquid diet he’d been consuming than solid food.

“Okay, well after the movie I’ll make you something.”

The man smiled. He couldn’t help but find it adorable when Peter went into care giver mode. “You don’t have t-“

“I know. Shut up, don’t you wanna see how you and Cap make friends?”

True to his word once the movie was over Peter moved over to the kitchen, pulling out the groceries he’d bought on his way home from school. He had the idea to make something especially generic when you were dealing with a sick person, but ultimately delicious and something that would be light enough for Tony to keep down. When the man heard the sound of vegetables being chopped as opposed to wrappers or containers being opened he peered around in his seat, only to
“See that Peter had set up his own little chefs station. “Wait, you’re actually cooking cooking?””

“Yup.” Peter answered simply, adding chopped carrots, onions and celery into a pot.

Tony smirked. As touching as it was that the boy was going through the effort of making something from scratch he couldn’t resist commenting on the culinary disaster that occurred earlier that day. “That didn’t go well this morning.”

“That was an isolated incident. I have practice with this one, I know what I’m doing. Just sit there and chill, ‘aight?” Peter rolled his eyes. He knew Tony couldn’t help himself when there was an opportunity for sarcasm and by that point he expected no less. He understood that it wasn’t a personal attack, if anything it was a sign of endearment.

“Okay, just remember I don’t need food poisoning on top of everything else.”

Peter ignored the comment and continued making the soup he’d learned the recipe of off by heart when May was sick. It was a family one that she’d made for him as a child so he’d spent the time perfecting it. It wasn’t a difficult recipe, in fairness it was probably the same as any chicken soup you’d find on Pinterest, but it tasted good and it never failed to make him feel better. Besides, after the bacon catastrophe Peter wanted to prove his culinary skills to everyone to show that he wasn’t completely useless in the kitchen.

It didn’t take too long to make either, which was good considering Peter hadn’t eaten lunch and he was practically starving; the smell was both nostalgic and mouth watering and even if Tony tried to deny it Peter saw him perk up slightly as the aroma filled the room. Once it was done he grabbed him and the man a bowl, giving Tony mostly broth in hopes that his stomach would be better appeased with liquid as opposed to solids.

Tony tried his best to look apprehensive about trying the brew but he couldn’t resist digging into it the second Peter handed him a spoon.

“See?” Peter said smugly. “I told you it was good.”

“My compliments to the chef.” Tony smirked when Peter bowed dramatically. “See I do compliment you all the time.”

“Yeah, and I’m the dork.”

“You still are the dork, I’m just hungry.”

“Hi hungry, I’m- hey!” Before Peter could finish the awful joke Tony flicked droplets of soup at him with his spoon. “Don’t play with your food you child!”

“You’re the one who just had me watching Toy Story.” The man shrugged as he slurped another mouthful. That was when he pulled out Peter’s old stuffed bear from under the covers and pointed it towards himself as though he was having a conversation with it. “You know toys really are sentient, right? This little lady has been telling me all kinds of stories.”

“Pfft, you think I’m that naive? She’s my number one confidant. She’s sworn to take my secrets to the grave, I trust her with my life.”

“You know, you never told me her name-”

Peter cut him off by yelling loudly; “Sooooooo Toy Story 2?”
“Fine.” Tony sighed and rolled his eyes, but he tucked the stuffed animal under his arm with great care, ensuring that ‘she’ could still see the screen as Peter collected the bowls to wash up; silently vowing to himself to catch Peter off guard when he was back on top form and ambush him about what the bears name was. It must be some juicy blackmail material for the teen to have reacted like that and he’d be damned if he let it pass him by.

“Yay! See I knew you’d like it! But if you don’t cry when we watch this I’ll know you have no heart for realsies.”

“Realsies?”

“I know what I said. I’m sticking with it.”
Okay so I considered writing another quick fluffy chapter before this one because it gets DARK ma friends and I know this probably wasn't the kind of chapter y'all were expecting after the lighter stuff with Tony getting sick buuuut now it's Peter's turn. I know some of y'all are gonna hate this one but I pinky promise no one dies in this fic (nor will they ever we've all had enough of that from MCU) and as much angst as there is in the next few chapters- it'll all be happy in the end I promise! After the next little storyline I've got a load of really fluffy, cutesy stuff where Peter's being a goofy teenager again just be patient XD Anyway- warning for graphic descriptions of injury and other medical stuff in the next few.

“Where’re you stationed tonight?”

Peter checked the holo-screen built into the arm of his suit and sighed. “Precinct ninety to one fourteen.”

Peter had been going on patrol alone, three nights a week for just over a month now, starting as soon as Tony had recovered from his pneumonia and he enjoyed every minute of it. Well, nearly every minute of it; course there were some slow, boring nights but they were worth it if it meant he could have that same free feeling he used to have before he moved in with the Avengers. Back when he was allowed to roam the city as he pleased, within his time constraints of course- well he wasn't technically \textit{allowed} to since Aunt May hadn't know where he was off to at night, but still.

He’d never had much action in those days but then again he wasn’t wired in with the police back then; now whenever shady activity was reported Peter could intercept it thanks to Karen’s help. Since he’d slowly gotten into a routine and spent time in many different districts, he knew which ones were more or less busy so he knew the precincts he was meant to be covering that Friday night were particularly dull; he was itching for something more exciting. But hey, at least it was an opportunity to play with the new and improved web canisters he’d just made, which he definitely needed given the old suit he was wearing.

It had been a while since he’d been in that suit- the slightly older model that Tony had gifted to him for Germany his first \textit{real} Spidey suit; Tony said the Pajamas, goggles and water shoes didn’t count, hence the birth of his favourite nickname. Since then he’d had two upgrades so it felt particularly clunky but at the same time comfortably familiar. It’s somewhat rudimentary design (comparatively of course, it was still incredibly advanced by normal people standards- then again when had Peter ever been normal?) helped bring back that nostalgic feeling of when his life was
simple. He was back to being a fourteen year old kid who had helped save the world that one time but was ultimately just a goof in a suit who helped old ladies and was given churros; instead of being a very serious fifteen year old avenger. Okay, so he wasn’t very serious- but his life had become significantly more dramatic and professional. Of course Peter was incredibly happy with how his career was advancing, now that he’d finally got the ball rolling by officially enlisting, but still all the heavy S.H.I.E.L.D stuff could get a little...stressful at times. It felt nice to reminisce, so maybe a night in a more boring district would do him some good. Some free time to just play around in the suit, like the old days before everything became so utterly complicated. He needed some downtime after the day he’d had.

“Okay, I’ll let Tony know where you’re occupying-“

“Don’t bother. It’s not like he gives two shits anyway.” Peter grumbled and threw himself off of the balcony before Steve could chastise him, both for the comment and the cursing. He wasn’t in the mood to hear Steve’s argument to Tony’s defence, he was still furious at him.

Earlier that day Peter had to admit to Tony that he’d wrecked yet another suit and the man had blown up at him. Since he’d gotten back on the workhorse after his long break after his bought of illness, Tony had work up to his eyeballs. He’d ended up spending two weeks away from the lab, which in Tony Stark work time was an eternity, but it couldn’t be helped. Despite the initial three day ban Bruce had put on his lab time, the rest of the team decided Tony needed a lot longer not only because of his physical health (which was awful, he ended up doing long term damage to his lungs from the severity of the infection) but also his mental health and the genius had reluctantly agreed; even he knew when he’d gone too far and he’d really slipped back into old habits. The fortnight he’d taken off had done him a lot of good but it also meant that once he returned to work he had mountains of things he had to tackle.

Though he was definitely caring for himself better and having Peter help out when he needed it, he was still understandably very stressed. Somehow he’d managed to stick to the parameters the rest of their housemates had set up for him; Lab time from seven until six on weekdays, no skipping meals, one day off per week etc. They had helped avoid any more medical emergencies, but the time limits only led to the man being even more stressed when he was in the lab as that was the only place he was allowed to deal with work stuff; so the pressure to get things done in such a short amount of time was high. Now whenever he was in there, he was extremely stressed and extremely hostile- namely towards his intern.

Now Peter and Tony discussed this in their downtime, knowing from experience that leaving animosity unresolved between them only caused bigger rifts in their relationship in the long run. As soon as they left the lab and Tony had ten or so minutes to himself to calm down he’d immediately flood Peter with apologies about how harsh he had been and he’d spend the rest of the evening making it up to him; but the teen promised he understood. And he did. He understood completely but that didn’t always stop the comments and looks from hurting. It was Peter who suggested they try and separate their working and personal relationships, to avoid arguments whilst they were trying to deal with the intense workload but it had backfired, leading to even more as Peter wasn’t
as accustomed to compartmentalising his emotions as Tony was. Tony was exceedingly good at treating Peter like a colleague during working hours then snapping back into dad mode as soon as the left the lab, but Peter struggled to do the same thing.

Tony had yet to have a full on meltdown at him (like he had once, and only once, but it was enough for Peter to ignore his texts and calls for over a week and Tony felt so bad at that time that he’d relapsed for the first time in four years- but that was during the early stages of their working relationship) but the teen was also nearing the end of his tether with the man’s short attitude. After all that time and energy he’d spent taking care of him when he was sick, it was a bit of a kick in the teeth for the man to snap at him when he accidentally handed him the wrong sized tool or berated him over a minor error in some wiring; he kept telling himself that it wasn’t his Dad’s fault, in a way it was probably Tony subconsciously trying to regain control after being so sick- that being said it wasn’t Peter’s fault either, but after a couple weeks of trying to remain impartial to the whole ordeal he was starting to crack under the pressure.

Of course he couldn’t tell Tony that, the man would be overwhelmed with guilt, not to mention he’d probably stop asking for Peter’s assistance with his bigger projects and Peter didn’t want that for two reasons; mostly because his Dad had only just recovered from an illness that had left him with lasting health issues, including but not limited to now needing an inhaler and breathing treatments on a regular basis as well as damaging his already weak heart; and he didn’t want him to slip back into self neglect but another reason being what they were working on was really cool and exciting! Tony was showing Peter a bunch of intricate and sometimes dangerous things that he usually wouldn’t let the boy touch with a ten foot pole. He was enjoying the responsibility and the experience, so having to deal with Tony’s mantrums was worth it. At least it was better than the man ignoring him like he had the weeks before he fell ill.

Though once he saw Tony’s expression that evening after he told him he’d broken the articulated armoured joint as well as torn several lines throughout the complex circuitry in his suit, he wished that the man had been ignoring him. He’d been in a particularly bad mood that day, one of the worst Peter had seen for a while and he’d been treading on eggshells around him all day trying to avoid the man’s explosive temper.

As much as Peter had tried to wait until an opportune time where the man wasn’t busy, clearly he had asked at a bad time because as soon as he held up the torn garment Tony’s face went blank, his eyes darkened and he clenched his jaw. “Again?”

Peter shuffled uncomfortably and spoke in a quiet voice. “It was an accident-“

“It’s always an accident, everything you ever do is an accident. Why can’t you man up and take some responsibility for your actions? It’s not like I don’t have enough work around here to do without cleaning up your messes as well!” Tony barked, the sudden change in his voice shocked Peter into stumbling backwards; only Tony didn’t see this as Peter was standing behind him. Had
he seen the boys reaction he may have taken it down a notch but unfortunately he was blissfully unaware of the storm brewing.

He felt his chin wobble, but Peter took a deep breath and continued. The phrase ‘man-up’ stung in particular but Peter tried his best to brush it off, though it was hard when he knew that Tony understood how much those two words plagued his mind on a daily basis. It was practically a trigger phrase at that point and he had told his Dad that on countless occasions, so the fact that he had specifically said that instead of an alternative really hurt Peter on a level he’d never be able to explain. He swallowed the urge to bite back and took a deep breath. ‘He didn’t mean it. He’s just stressed and he’s right- you were careless. Don’t take it to heart Pete.’

“I’m sorry, if I knew how to fix it myself I would.” Peter said quietly but his mentor didn’t react. “I need it for patrol toni-“

“You’re not going.”

“What? But I-“

Tony whipped around in his chair and stood up, ripping the suit out of Peter’s hands and holding it up between them, practically shoving it into the boy’s face. “If you can’t be trusted to take care of the things I make you, you can’t be trusted to go out into the field. It’s not rocket science Peter, and I know you know rocket science.”

Peter’s mouth gaped open. That wasn’t fair. “I’m scheduled in I can’t just-“

“Are you disobeying me?” Tony growled and Peter took another step back. He hadn’t seen Tony that angry in a long time, a long, long time and he was ashamed to admit it scared him. He knew Tony would never hurt him, never in a million years but the crazed look in the man’s eyes was telling his heart otherwise; it was beating a mile a minute. Tony had been snappy all week but this..this was crossing an uncomfortable line and he really, really didn’t like it.

Somehow Peter managed to stand his ground. He knew Tony was going to feel guilty later so he just hoped he could snap him out of whatever rage fueled haze he was in before they both did something they’d regret later. So he tried his best to stay calm and reserved in hopes of bringing Tony’s anger levels back down. “What’s with you today? I know the VX12’s core reactor didn’t go how we planned but-“
Tony slammed the suit down on the bench next to him. “This has nothing to do with that. This is to do with your recklessness. I’m not letting you go out there if you can’t take care of yourself Peter, I won’t allow it.”

Tony promptly slammed himself back into his seat and turned his back on Peter, back to his workbench. Then the realisation hit the boy what he was actually upset about. “Oh. I get it now.”

There was no bite to Peter’s quiet words but Tony reacted as though the teen was sassing him. “Get. What.”

“That you’re worried about me being out there by myself, but you’re too proud to admit it- or you’re worried I’ll get mad and throw a fit if you try and talk to me about it. That and you’re too proud to admit you need my help here. So, now you’re getting mad and finding an excuse to pull me-“

“Oh, so you took psych one o one now you think you’re some kind of mind reader now?” Tony laughed meanly and didn’t turn around. He wasn’t about to admit to his son that he was right. “Quit being a know-it-all kid it doesn’t suit you, not when you can’t even go a week without breaking something.”

Peter huffed through his nose. Tony was getting nasty now, lashing out because he was upset and Peter had been taking it for weeks now. Nat was right, he really did act like a child sometimes and he’d had enough of babysitting the man; putting up with his tantrums only to get that kind of verbal treatment in response- to a simple mistake. He hadn’t meant to wreck the suit, it was an accident. A genuine accident. His dad would never have been mad at him for something he didn’t do on purpose, but apparently Tony Stark would...that was it. Since they’d split their father-son time and boss-apprentice time up, Tony had gone back to being the cold, aloof, militant man he’d been when Peter had first met him, whenever they were in the lab for a prolonged period of time; only now there were emotions involved. And his feelings were starting to get hurt- again. Had the weeks leading up to Tony getting sick not taught him anything? Did Tony really not learn his lesson after their argument that lead to them not talking for days? Well apparently not, and if he was going to be nasty Peter was going to be nasty back. He didn’t deserve this.

On any other night Peter would have bit his tongue and walked away, then awaited Tony to catch him before he went to bed; To hug him and tell him he was sorry, then offer to watch a movie with him. But it seemed that Tony had become too comfortable in that routine and now he was taking advantage of Peter’s forgiving nature. He’d never go as far to say abusive but it was definitely bordering on manipulative and Peter wasn’t having it. He didn’t want a half assed apology and a hug only for it to happen again the next day; emotional stuff aside he needed a suit to go on patrol with. Even though he understood the man’s anxieties and inability to voice them (god knows Peter struggled to express himself) in that moment he didn’t care. He was hurt and angry, all he wanted was some help in return for everything he’d been doing and his dad was being- well he was being-
“Fuck you, Mr. Stark.” Peter muttered under his breath and the second the comment left his lips he froze. He did not just say that out loud.

Oh, but he did. And the genius heard it loud and clear, dropping whatever he had in his hands onto the metal work bench with a reverberating clang in the otherwise silent room. There was a tense few seconds where neither of them moved or said anything and Peter was sure that he was about to be murdered. “What did you just say?”

He thought about backing down, he really did, but Tony had him too hett up. Besides he’d said it now, even if he went back and apologised a thousand times he was still likely to be screamed at so, screw it. He deserved to hear his side of the story. “You heard me.”

Quicker than Peter had ever seen the man move, he was up out of his chair and facing him, standing barely a foot apart from him and Peter realised how significant their height difference really was when Tony’s cold, dark eyes stared down at him. His expression was blank which was even more terrifying than seeing the man angry. “Say that again.”

Peter took a step back. “N-no.”

Tony’s head twitched. “I said-“

Peter stepped back again almost tripping over his own foot. “Dad stop, you’re freaking me out-“

Tony’s shoulders relaxed and he took a deep inhale through his nose. It seemed Peter had managed to snap him out of whatever psychotic rage he’d just induced in the man, which was good as he was positive Tony was about to try and strangle him. Of course he knew he never would but Christ, Tony was a scary man when he was angry. Tony’s voice changed back to his usual sarcastic volume and tone and he crossed his arms over his chest. “Oh, so I’m Dad now? I thought I was Mr. Stark.”

“You know what I mean- I’ve been doing everything I can to help and you keep being mean to me!” Peter cried indignantly, not caring how childish he sounded. Now Tony had stopped looking like Jack Nicholson in The Shining, the original anger and hurt Peter felt had come back full force and was now pouring out of his mouth. No one made him lose his temper like Tony could, not even those bullies at the compound or Flash. He couldn’t wrap his head around how he could be so furious with someone he loved so much but if anything that made it worse. Tony could be the most kind and caring human in the entire world but then there were times- like this- that he could be a
complete- well a complete- “You’re being a total dick, Tony. So yeah, calling you Mr. Stark felt appropriate since the terms are practically interchangeable with at times. I’ve been doing nothing but helping you all week and you keep picking at me then even when you say you’re sorry you do it again a-and I just have to stand there and take it because you’re the boss and I don’t have a choice!”

Tony hummed in response in such a patronising way that Peter had to fight the urge to kick him in his smug face. “Funny Pete, because you know what you just described? A working relationship. You’re my intern, it’s your job to help me.”

“What about being your son? Huh? Does that not count for anything anymore?” Peter felt his face getting hot and his eyes started to water, but he’d be dammed if he let a tear fall right then and there. He wasn’t about to give this hollow version of the Tony he knew have the satisfaction of seeing him cry.

But his comment did seem to snap Tony out of it a little as Peter watched a warmth flicker across his eyes. “Don’t. Don’t play that card, alright? It was your idea to separate the two in the first place.”

“Yeah because I thought it would help you! I thought it would stop you going all crazy hyper fixated again- b-but I didn’t think you’d be able to switch it on and off so easily, I know I can’t!” Peter sniffed. “It’s so easy for you-god I’m so stupid!”

Tony sighed and uncrossed his arms, for a second looking as though he was going to reach out and offer Peter some sort of comfort but the boy flinched away. “Peter don’t start with that again-“

“Don’t touch me!” The teen rubbed the back of his hand across his eyes angrily. “Of course it’s easy for you, you can compartmentalise everything. You can switch on and off when you care and when you don’t.”

“That’s not true.” Tony’s heart started beating faster as he realised the full weight of how his son was feeling. He hadn’t realised the extent his treatment of the boy had been affecting him, he’d seemed fine in the evenings. But he knew he was naive for thinking that. He knew Peter better-dammit he knew better. Fuck. Of course being nice to him half the time and stern the rest was enough to upset the fragile boy, why had he ever agreed to such a stupid idea anyway? Of course it wasn’t going to work out.

But he didn’t have time to do all this again. Why hadn’t Peter just told him earlier before they became settled in the routine? He was too busy trying to catch up with weeks of lost time- like he
hadn’t been drowning in work in the first place- he couldn’t afford to take the evening off to deal with yet another tantrum because the boy felt ignored. From Tony’s point of view everything had been fine, he was looking out for the signs this time; before he had noticed when Peter started to act funny but ignored it but this time he had been checking up on him constantly, making sure he was okay, spending the evenings with him- and Peter seemed happy with that. So why the sudden outburst? In fairness Tony had been mean to him, but Peter was acting like everything was okay how was he meant to know that the boy was taking it so personally?

Of course he was meant to know, he knew Peter. He knew how the kid hid things and wouldn’t tell him when he was upset..ugh..but he’d tried so hard to not let things go so far again. No matter how much he tried he only ended up hurting the kid anyway. Fuck, _he didn’t have time for this._ Why couldn’t things go back to how the used to be?

“Bullshit, you’ve always done it.” Peter laughed coldly, but tears were now running down his face freely despite his attempts to wipe them away. “It’s one of your many talents.”

Tony sighed, knowing full well where the conversation was heading, where it always headed when Peter got himself worked up. “What are you talking about?”

“After Germany.” Peter growled.

“Oh, not this again.” Tony wiped a hand over his face. “Why do you always have to bring it back to that? After everything? You can’t just bring it back to that every time we have a fight it’s not fair.”

“But that’s how I feel!”

“You’re old enough now to know that feelings don’t always equal reality. I thought we’d moved past this. How many times do we have to go over this for you to-“

“You were just trying to protect me- yeah I know! It was so easy for you to just drop me. Not talk to me. For two months. Nothing- not even Happy talked to me- do you know how that made me feel?”

“I-“
But Peter continued ranting to himself, the metaphorical emotional dam having broken. “Of course you don’t. And you don’t care, you were only thinking about covering your own ass. You put me back on the shelf and only picked me back up when you were bored and needed a new toy to play with- covering it up by saying it was for my own good.”

“Shut your mouth.” Tony lowered his voice again but Peter was just getting started. He wanted to hurt him, to push him away again? Fine, but two can play at that game.

“No. You didn’t give a shit about me- you still don’t. If you did it wouldn’t be so easy to turn it on and off like that. You just lie to yourself to help you live with it but you know deep down you don’t care.”

“I’m not doing this again! If I didn’t care about you I wouldn't have saved you that day when you went all vigilante and fell into the lake would I?! You should already know by now- how fucking dare you say I don’t give a shit about you!” Tony screamed suddenly, turning around and throwing his lab chair across the room, anything to avoid lashing out at his son. He just needed to make the boy stop talking- saying such stupid things, the kind of things his Brian told him when he was having a bad night; part of him liked to still think that he was a monster, that he didn’t really have a heart, that he really didn’t care about Peter he was just using him because having the kid around booster his self esteem. He spent enough time fighting those voices in his head so hearing them out loud coming from Peter was too much to bare and he just needed him to stop talking.

But it didn’t have the effect he was expecting. Peter didn’t cower away or jump back or back down, he carried on staring right through him, ready to make his next point. Tony couldn’t tell if he was disassociating or just having a psychotic break. “What else do I need to say?! What do I need to do?! What more do we need to go through for you to fucking believe me when I say I love you, Peter?! I love you more than anything how can I prove that-“

“Stop treating me like shit then!” Peter screamed back with equal fury.

“This, down here, this is a work environment. It was you who said you wanted to be treated like an adult, you.”

“Well if this is how you treat people you work with no wonder you don’t have any friends.”

“Oh for god- What more do you expect from me?! You act like I’m cussing you out constantly, or I’m ignoring you or some shit, but I spend all the time I already don’t have to waste with you- I’m doing everything right!”
“You always think that! And I’m a waste of time now am I?! Nice one- you think you’re fucking perfect- god everything you do is right! You’re never wrong!”

Tony laughed. He knew he was the furthest thing from perfect. “That’s not what I said. I know I’m a fuck up, but I’m not going to stop trying to protect you just because it pisses you off!”

“Where were you when I needed protecting? With the Vulture? Not when you suddenly realised ‘oh wait, maybe I shouldn’t abandon this superhuman spider freak ‘cause he might get into some trouble- oh look he did!’ Not then. I mean before that, when I needed you and you ignored me because you were too busy. Like you are now- too busy to be a decent human being and treat me with some respect let alone kindness. You only give a fuck when something bad happens. You only came back because May was dying-“

“SHUT UP!” Tony bellowed loud enough to make Peter’s ears ring and he closed his mouth.

Wow he’d really been holding on to a lot of abandonment issues...that may not have been the right time to let them all out- and the May comment? Fuck even he knew that was way too far. Where did that even come from?


“Tony I-“

“Quiet! You’ve said quite enough.” Tony kept walking towards him and Peter winced. He didn’t know what to expect but a million thoughts rushed through his head. This was it. He’d finally pushed too far. He was going to have to move in with Ned or on his own or in with some other S.H.I.E.L.D team- if he was even still a member Tony could have him kicked out in a second-

But Tony walked past him. After a minute he circled back round the lab with Peter’s old suit in his hand. The man’s voice was soft but despondent. The contrast to the high levels of emotion he’d just displayed was scarily drastic and Peter wasn’t sure what to make of the man’s sudden calmness. It frightened him more than the yelling, it was like he stopped caring and Peter knew from experience that wasn’t a good sign. He couldn’t read what the man was thinking. At least when he was yelling he knew where he stood but now...now the man was acting like a robot on autopilot. “Here. Wear this on patrol tonight. I’ll fix your other one when I have the chance-“
After all that Tony was going to fix his suit? After what Peter had said? That wasn’t the real Tony. It was a robot. “No you don’t have t-“

Tony avoided eye contact, something the billionaire very rarely did and shoved the suit into Peter’s hand before turning away. “Take it. And get out. We’ll talk about this later when we’ve both cleared our heads- and trust me we will talk about it. We’ll stay up all night if we have to because we are not ignoring all this shit and you best believe we're gonna talk about your behaviour. But right now I don’t want to be around you.”

Peter nodded though the man was facing away from him and quickly left the room to get changed. His head was spinning from the whole exchange. So Tony wasn’t going to kill him or fire him (can you be fired from being someone’s son? Peter guessed so since he was only newly adopted and he wasn’t even sure if any kind of paperwork had been done) as he would’ve just done it then and there. Unless he needed time to think over exactly what he was going to do with the body. No, Tony Stark definitely knew how to get rid of a body and with a shiver Peter thought how the man possibly could have done so in the past. No if he was mulling something over it would be what to do with Peter once he kicked him out. To the Leeds maybe, or into government care. But Peter knew too much, maybe he’d have him lobotomised first.

God, no, he was being stupid. Yes he’d gone too far, but they both had gone too far before, countless times. They always bounced back, it was inevitable. For the first time Peter felt secure in having an argument with the man- yes emotionally he was still panicking but cognitively he knew that Tony wouldn’t get rid of him, despite what his insecurities were telling him. That was a significant development as had they had that kind of blazing row a few months earlier Peter would have run away before Tony got the chance to kick him out, so the fact that at least part of him knew that wouldn’t happen was pretty impressive.

Since he’d managed to talk himself down from the edge, why not let himself live in the moment? He was allowed to be angry, he was angry. Tony deserved what he had said to him, at least some of it...Okay he’d gone too far, but he had a right to be upset and Tony had a right to hear it. Every time one of them bottled something up it always exploded so why not get it all out on the table? Accept he should have said something sooner because had exploded. And it was all out on the table. Shit, why did Peter let himself get so upset? It’s not like Tony was being any more of an ass than usual. But that was the problem- he didn’t need to be an ass at all. He didn’t have anything to prove, not to Peter who adored him unconditionally, the whole ‘Tony Stark’ bravado character was wearing. He was a grown ass man he needed to learn not to take his feelings out on other people. But then again maybe Peter was still on edge since his medication was still settling back into his system and it was his fault that he’d lied to Tony continuously about being okay...

Tony was right. They’d talk about it later. They both needed to cool off. What better way to cool off than go galavanting around Brooklyn until three in the morning? It was one of the first times Steve had agreed to let him out that far past his curfew too so he didn’t want to miss the opportunity. Besides, it would be nice to let off a little steam and get reacquainted with his old suit. So he was gonna let himself be mad. He was gonna feel his emotions instead of pushing them
down only for them to come up later, just like his therapist had told him. He’d work through his emotions out on patrol and he’d have a clear head when he got back so he could have a constructive conversation with his fuckwad of a father. God why was everything so dramatic and complicated and why did it have to escalate so quickly? Why couldn’t things go back to how they used to be...simpler times...well for the evening Peter was gonna take out his janky old suit and play pretend.

So he hopped in the car with Happy after making his impromptu exit through the window, much to Steve’s upset and they made their way down to Peter’s drop off point.

“You know the drill kid, yell if you need me.” Happy said as he drove away leaving the teen to his own devices.

Once he was out there, swinging amongst the buildings as though they were his own personal playground, he felt his stress melt away as it so often did. He played Tarzan for a while, practising dives and flips, ricocheting off walls and seeing how far he could jump between gaps of houses. He couldn’t help but lose himself in the moment, he just hoped his dad was finding a similar outlet to occupy his mind after everything that he’d said...

‘No, Peter. Enjoy this moment for you. Home stress stays at home, this is work now. Spider-Man brain on Peter brain was left back at the tower. You gotta stay sharp, man, or you could get caught short-’

Speaking of getting caught short Peter felt a familiar twinge in his lower tummy. Damn, in his rush to get out of the house he’d forgotten to use the bathroom. That was usually first on his checklist but all of his plans had gone out of the window- as did he. It wasn’t that bad yet, but he’d rather not wander around with a full bladder unnecessarily. The problem was, he wasn’t that familiar with the area yet, having only patrolled there a handful of times. In the old days he’d stick close enough to home that he could rush back to the apartment and go when he had to. Or Neds once the boy found out about his alter ego, he always kept his window unlocked for him. Sometimes he’d be too far away and have to duck down alleyways to avoid ruining the suit and one time he’d even snuck into an old lady’s apartment; okay yes, technically he broke in- but it wasn’t his fault! It was an emergency- like a real emergency and he knew her anyway, she was his neighbor. She was out of the house at the time and had left her window open so he just dipped in and out to use the toilet- he wasn’t some kind of fellen!

In recent weeks he’d gone back to making do with alleys when it was safe or if not he ended up just...going. Usually because he couldn’t hold it anymore but sometimes it was out of convenience but the issue was his old suit didn’t have the filtration system his new one did. If he peed his pants he’d just pee in his pants, no absorption, the stain would show badly on the light fabric; not to mention he’d probably end up destroying the intricate wiring inside. That and his shoes were connected to the suit so they’d probably get filled with pee too- bleurgh! Okay maybe the nostalgia
factor wasn’t worth it, he’d be sticking to his second suit from now on. This one had parts missing anyway as he and Tony had been using certain bits for scrap.

He looked around for a while but there was nowhere secluded enough for him to relieve himself. The area of town was rather busy considering it was a Friday night, a lot of people out on the town. He was barely managing not to be spotted up high on the sides of apartments, he couldn’t risk dropping down to the sidewalk. Even if he did manage not to get caught he wouldn’t feel secure enough to let go without his bladder locking up on him. He could only ever force himself to go outside like that if he was really, really desperate and by that point his body tended to make the decision for him. The need was nowhere near that urgent yet but it was still uncomfortable. Of course, he could just drop down to the sidewalk and ask to use one of the bathrooms inside the bars or restaurants that lined the street he was on but that carried too much risk too. Not that he was meant to be a secret or anything, Spider-Man had a fast growing social media presence as well as the fact that Tony had mentioned the new hero directly in a press conference more than once. Not much, just mentioning him casually, but it was enough to get his name out there and for people to form an association with him towards the Avengers which made him a target for paparazzi and Instagramers alike. Not that he minded at all, he just didn’t feel like stopping to take pictures with civilians if there was a chance he could end up wetting himself in front of them- that was not the kind of image he wanted to put out there. If Peter Parker couldn’t be cool at least Spider-Man could, he was not about to ruin that.

He wasn’t really sure what to do, he’d never been in such a situation before. Had he not been being tracked by Happy, Steve and some other random S.H.I.E.L.D agent in an office somewhere far away, making sure he stayed within his patrol boundaries, he would have headed somewhere a lot more private, a lot more familiar. Since he was at a loss of what to do he guessed he only had one option and he just hoped his one option didn’t make a big deal out of it.

Happy pulled up in a car in a secluded enough spot to where they wouldn’t be spotted (but not secluded enough for a certain someone to pee without getting caught) within minutes of Peter texting him. The teen hopped in the car before the man even came to a full stop. “Where to ki- hey what’s wrong?”

Peter squirmed uncomfortably in the backseat but due to his mask the adult driving couldn’t see his expression. Karen was meant to notify him if he got hurt but the agent didn’t trust technology completely, at least not as much as Tony did and he definitely didn’t like the fact that Peter was wearing his outdated half destroyed suit. Why she Tony let the kid go out in that thing? Sure it still functioned but come on, the man didn’t think to make back ups for when the kid wrecked them?

“Nothing just drive- can you find like a McDonald’s or something? Anything.” The teen rushed out all in one breath, slowly stripping out of his suit trying not to jostle his angry bladder too much in the process, which was a difficult feat when changing in the back of a car.
Okay now the kid was taking his suit off? Alarm bells. “Peter what the hells wrong with you?”

“Happy just drive! I don’t have time to- mmf please just-“

“I will call Tony right now if you don’t-“

“I have to go! Alright?! Now please just drive for the love of god!” There was a moment of silence at Peters sudden admission which was broken by what the teen swore was a snicker coming from the front seat. “Stop laughing at me Happy, I swear to god, this is not a joke and I ain’t in the mood.”

Happy had been made aware of Peter and Tony’s little tiff as he’d received a call from Steve saying his boss and long time friend was having a small melt down in his lab, not minutes before Peter had texted. As much as he wanted to tease the kid he knew when to pick his moments and this was not one of them. “I’m not laughing at you kid keep your hair on, I just thought it was something serious.”

“Oh so me wetting myself isn’t something serious?”

“Not really, it’s not like you haven’t-“

“Shut up!”

Happy had found a McDonald’s pretty quickly as they were abundant in the city, as they are everywhere, and luckily Peter managed to make it in and out without incident; though he had been forced to buy something in lew of using the facilities. He shoved the Diet Coke he’d bought in the cup holder at the front of the vehicle as soon as he got in the car. “Kid, I don’t want this take it with you-“

“Heck no, I ain’t drinking anything else tonight I don’t want that to happen again!”

After his impromptu potty break Peter was able to get back out into the field and back into the action. Well, less of the action part but he got back to swinging around and helping the occasional drunk person get into a cab and home safely, as well as pointing a group of young Swedish backpackers towards the nearest hostel (he’d actually retained how to say hello in Swedish from watching that stupid clock making programme in the hotel he Nat and Tony stayed in, even though
it felt like a lifetime ago). Of course he didn’t do any of this before he shot Tony a text too.

Peter: I’m sorry, Dad. I didn’t mean what I said.

He didn’t get a reply immediately which worried him a little bit. He was conscious of the man relapsing after stories he’d heard from listening in on Steve and Bruce’s private conversations but Tony didn’t leave him hanging for long.

Tony: I know. I’ll see you when you get home, bub.

‘Okay, he called me bub. That’s a good sign.’ He hadn’t expected his father to apologise straight away of course and definitely not over text where Peter would have undeniable proof of his humility- especially since it was Peter had cussed him out first (holy shit he had actually said fuck you to Tony Stark - if he had told himself that a year ago he could have fainted). They’d talk it out later and everything would be hunky-dory. ‘Curse you Steve for making me use phrases like hunky-dory- even in my own damn head!’

Allowing himself the grace of working through his anger, rather than burying it deep down inside for it to bubble up as self hatred later for once, was very refreshing. And liberating. For the first time in a long time his head felt pretty clear, he was even managing to push the anxiety about his impending conversation with Tony to the back of his mind in favour of feeling free for just that little while longer. It was as he was thinking about what he’d say to apologise he spotted a few guys that were not going to be feeling free, not once he’d caught them.

Four men running down the street, each of them clutching bags of stolen goods, weapons and screaming could be heard in the distance? Text book criminals and after such a slow night Peter was itching to catch himself some bad guys.

Chasing them down into a dark, dingy garage round the back of an abandoned building (very original place to take your loot, baddies, come on now) took no time at all and he was ready to pounce on them from his perched position on the wall at any moment. He was waiting for them to load at least some of their weapons and other various illegal items into the back of the car so he had videographic evidence to send through to the police after he called them in. Once he deemed he’d gathered enough he swooped down, immediately knocking one of the men unconscious and startling the rest.

He tried to think of something clever to say but he still had a ways to go with his improv skills as part of his training so he settled with; “Good evening gentlemen. Well, not so gentle tonight, huh? Robbing young ladies. I wouldn’t call you much of a man either, dude. No wait- that was lame
forget I said that- then again you’re all about to get some nasty concussions so I don’t suppose you’ll remember anyway so- oh forget it-“

He incapacitated another of the men with a single blow to the side of his head, as well as simultaneously knocking his feet out from under him, propelling the man against the wall and webbing him there, all in one swift move. As he was doing on of the last two robbers standing tried to run away but Peter shot another web, securing him to an opposing wall that he threw himself against, bouncing the brutes head off of the brickwork, rendering him unconscious also, just as he’d done to his partners.

Peter whipped around to deal with the last guy who had been opposing him, only to see he wasn’t in the spot he’d been expecting. Huh? Where’d he go-

He heard a sound behind him. The sound of feet shuffling against the pavement and he twisted his body one hundred and eighty degrees again and he was met with the man, brandishing a weapon Peter hadn’t seen him carrying before. A gun.

No big deal, he’d disarmed plenty of gun wielding maniacs before but something in Peter’s brain short circuited. For the first time in months he looked at the pistol but it wasn’t the same gun it had been milliseconds before. And Peter wasn’t in the same place. His vision flashed pictures of a familiar white room, a white room in which sat his Dad, bloodied and bruised and strapped to a chair. And a man with a gun, pointed at his Dad’s head. And the man pulled the trigger.

The man pulled the trigger.

The bullet left the chamber.

Peter was transported back to the correct place and time just in time for him to duck out of the way, slinging a web against the man’s hand, knocking the offending weapon out of his hand, sending it crashing and skidding across the cement floor under the gangs escape vehicle. He used the web he’d wrapped around the man’s limb to pull him towards himself like some kind of Spider-Lasso (he cringed internally at the simile, but stored it in the back of his mind knowing Clint would get a kick out of that one) and grappled with the man for a moment, the belligerent and clearly intoxicated criminal actually managing to punch Peter in the gut, or so it felt like. No matter, the teen had him knocked out cold and on the floor in a matter of seconds.

Once he’d successfully taken down the group he stood back for a second to survey the scene and marvel at his handiwork. He shook off the feeling the flashback had given him, one that made him feel sick, gave him a weird ache in his tummy. It was odd, he hadn’t experienced a flashback like
that in months and he’d faced more than a couple men with guns since his last one. Maybe it had something to do with the argument he’d had with his dad…his brain trying to tell him something- a ‘never go to sleep on an argument kind of thing’ except it was more like ‘never go on patrol after screaming fuck you at your dad and accusing him of not really caring about you’, man he really owed Tony an apology… Whatever the feeling was he wanted it to go away, it was making the anxiety cramps in his chest even worse than usual. But they weren’t like his normal chest pains where he’d start to hyperventilate, the tight ache was lower this time and concentrated on one side. He put a hand down to his stomach and realised it was wet.

Crap, had be peed himself when that guy hit him in the stomach? No, thankfully not, it was too high up for that, thank god he wouldn’t have to explain that one to Tony. Then what was he covered in? He looked down to see what the problem was, maybe he’d busted one of his spare canisters in the struggle, it wouldn’t be the first time. There was a hole, weird. His suit was meant to be tear resistant. Oh, right the old suit hadn’t been made of anything super substantial. It was still decently shock absorbent, flame retardant and impact resistant but it wasn’t meant to be a permanent thing so the fabric wasn’t as resistant to tears as his new one was. It was just something Tony had whipped up in time for Germany. It was still state of the art but it wasn’t one hundred percent up to Stark standard as he knew Steve wouldn’t actually let anyone hurt Peter in the first place. It was one of the reasons Tony was so quick to get in contact with Peter when he found out he was still running around at night with the suit on, there were a few design elements that worried him with the boy being on the streets of New York at night. This suit wasn’t-

It wasn’t bulletproof anymore.

They’d stripped out the lining to use for another suit as part of their scavenging- he wasn’t meant to use it anymore.

Fuck.

He hadn’t been punched in the stomach.

He’d been shot.
Seventy Two Hours Of Hell

Chapter Summary

Okay I get it- no more cliffhangers XD
I'm sorry I'm so evil lol I made this chapter longer instead of breaking it to compensate for where I left off
There's a lot of angst and medical descriptions in this chapter, also I touch on Tony's substance abuse quite a bit so if that makes you uncomfortable or you find it triggering I encourage you to skip this one <3
((Also there is mentioning of diapers in this one- I don't really intend for it to become a thing, it was just medically necessary given the scenario))

Peter tried his best not to panic but that was difficult once he realised he had a hole in his abdomen. His training kicked in, thankfully as his mind was definitely not cooperating. He didn’t feel any pain yet, probably due to his survival instincts but his legs were numb and his lungs were refusing to expand properly, and it wasn’t due to him panicking. They physically refused to expand all the way no matter how much he tried to breathe deeply, like all of his muscles were spamming. It definitely wasn’t a panic response, in fact he stayed relatively calm considering. His head felt fuzzy, a similar feeling to how he’d get just before he passed out but he couldn’t let that happen. Somehow in his daze he managed to alert the police, relay to footage to them, convince Karen not to contact anyone about his injury (as he promised he would seek medical attention immediately, he just wanted to finish the job first) and text Happy. It was miraculous that Karen listened to him about not contacting anyone, though she had threatened him if he didn’t call Bruce the minute he got in the car she’d have three ambulances, a helicopter and an armed guard, as well as Tony there ASAP. He believed her.

When Happy pulled up he deliberately got in the car much slower than he head done previously, both as not to damage himself more or raise alarm in the man again. He shakily strapped himself in and before he could get a word out Happy spoke for him, assuming that Peter had to pee again. “There’s a 7/11 on maple can you make it that far?”

“No I’m fine, can you just drive me home?” Peters voice was barely audible, had it not been for the silent engine Happy would have had no hope of hearing him.

The agent’s eyes snapped up to look at the teen in the backseat but Peter had positioned himself to where he couldn’t see his face. Alarm bells sounded off in his head again and he was set on edge for the second time that night, this time with good reason. “What? I thought your shift covered until three? It’s only eleven forty?”

Peter swallowed thickly as bile threatened to rise in his throat. He didn’t want to admit what was
happening right then. He’d just been shot, he could feel a foreign object inside of him, as well as his body trying to stitch him back together he could feel it; the pinching, shifting, pulling sensations in his body and it was sickening. It was enough to turn his stomach and as much as he didn’t want to tell Happy exactly what was going on he needed the man to move. Fast. “I just need to go home Happy. Please.”

“Kid what’s the matter?” Happy adjusted the mirror and this time he caught a glimpse of the kids face. He was grey. Not white or pale or even green, fucking grey. With a pale sheen of sweat on him and his eyes looked slightly glazed over. That was not good. “Don’t ignore me Parker I will call your boss-“

“He’s not my boss. He’s your boss. I’m a higher ranking agent than you, don’t call him.” Peter snapped. Could the agent not tell it was an emergency situation? Well no, of course he couldn’t because he hadn’t told him- but he should have an inkling working in that field do so long for Christ’s sake! Peter shouldn’t have to spell it out for him just take the order and drive! His head was swimming and pain. Pain was starting to spread now, hadn’t felt it before but there it was. It was indescribable, it was like nothing he had ever felt before in his short life- the only thing comparable was the pain he felt after the bite but even that he could barely remember. It was an excruciating internal burn almost- that he felt the urge to try and scratch but if air so much as even brushed past the open wound in his belly it made him want to scream. Every time he moved, or even breathed it felt as though a piece of his flesh was being torn even more. He wanted to cry out but he couldn’t if he wanted to. Despite the pain he couldn’t bring himself to speak above a whisper, in fear that using his muscles to raise his voice would cause more irrevocable waves of agony to course through him.

“I don’t take orders from you now what the fuck is going on-“. Happy hit a microscopic bump in the road and the teenage passenger suddenly lurched forward, groaning loudly. Fuck this was bad, he was pulling over. “Peter?!“

“I’m fine can you- just give me a minute.” His voice was strained, like he was holding his breath, and he was clutching his abdomen.

“You’re hurt. What hurts?” Happy knew he sounded ridiculously simple in that moment but he didn’t care, he was panicking. He’d expected to be running the kid to a toilet, not to a hospital. How hadn’t he noticed the smell of blood as soon as he got in the car, the air was heavy with the thick scent of iron and Happy himself felt as though he was going to vomit. It was a huge part of his job as a bodyguard to one of the world’s most famous people to stay calm in stressful situations but this was a kid. This was Tony’s kid. His best friends kid and he was hurt, he’d let that happen under his watch. Fuck.

Peter’s breaths turned raspy and he spoke quickly, strangled words in between the waves of pain convulsing through him. “Call Dr. Banner. Not dad. Speaker, please, now.”
Happy did as instructed, not willing to argue as that would only waste time. And the kid was asking for a doctor which he so obviously needed so that was a good thing. Though they’d both have to face Tony eventually, the agent pushed Stark to the back of his mind in favour of complying to the boy’s request quicker.

Pressing a couple buttons on the dashboard, the intercom system rang twice before Bruce picked up. He too instantly knew something was wrong, no one would call him out of the blue like that, not when they were on patrol and certainly not Peter. “Pete what’s wrong?”

“I’ve been shot, in my abdomen somewhere around the left lumbar or left iliac region I can’t really tell cause of the suit. The bleeding has stopped- mostly now I-I think, but I don’t think the bullet exited my back and I can feel the entry wound healing up so can you meet me when we get home please. And don’t tell Tony.” Peter rushed out in only a couple breaths. As soon as he finished talking he collapsed back against the seat, throwing his head back and hissing through his teeth.

“Got it. Happy bring him straight up in the elevator.” Bruce sounded considerably less calm than usual but not necessarily panicked, the same way he always did when he went into doctor mode.

“Yes Doc.” Happy said breathlessly. Shot? He didn’t know what he was expecting but shot? The boy was fifteen who the fuck would shoot a fifteen year old?! Of course they’d have no way of knowing his age- oh bullshit it was obvious just by looking at him he was a kid. Keep it together Hogan, you don’t need to crash the car on top of everything else. Years of emergencies under his belt that he’d handled with ease but something about the child in the backseat being hurt was especially scary. “Peter why the fuck didn’t you say something-”

“I was in shock and I knew you’d immediately tell Mr. Stark. I know that’s what you’ve been told to do but he’s been sick and we had a fight and he’d just freak out and I don’t wanna have to worry about him too right now. As soon as I’ve seen Dr. Banner and found out what I need done I’ll let you tell him. Like if I need an operation or something I’ll let him see me before but I don’t need him buzzing around me while were trying to get shit done so can you just shut up and drive .” Peter said calmly though it was through gritted teeth. Happy took it as a good sign that the kid was still alert and thinking clearly, a little too clearly for his own good but they could worry about that later.

“You in pain?” Happy said after a moment. Another dumb question and it was met with an appropriately sarcastic comment.

Peter let out a strangled chuckle. “No it feels fantastic-“
“Peter.” Happy said sternly but inside he was begging the child to be straight with him.

“It’s fine. The shocks wearing off now so I’m starting to feel it but it ain’t that bad.”

“I’ve got a needle full of your high strength drugs I can give you if you need.”

“There’s no point stopping for that let’s just get home quicker.” Peters speech started to slur towards the latter part of that sentence which was deeply worrying to the agent. His tone of voice changed completely, going from his confident, harsh Spider-Man ‘get shit done’ voice to sounding like the nervous, fifteen year old kid that Happy knew. “Uhh, e-everything’s starting to go fuzzy.”

“Kid, stay awake for me alright? You don’t have to talk just keep your eyes open.”

“M’tryin’ Mr. Hogan but my head feels too heavy for my neck..” Peter’s head suddenly lulled to one side, dropping towards the window and Happy swerved the car to both avoid the boy smacking his head into the glass and to shock him into waking up. “Mm- ow!”

“Sorry but you gotta stay awake. Just a little longer, we’re almost home.” Happy tried to assure him but he could see the boy’s eyes were glazing over and he wanted to reach back into the backseat and shake him, but he was too far away and he was driving too fast, he had to keep in control of the car.

“I don wan dad to be mad at me anymore..” Peter mumbled quietly and god the boy sounded so young.

He was so young and someone so young shouldn’t be bleeding so much..he’d never seen so much blood. That wasn’t true but...all the stories he had with that much of the red stuff didn’t end well. No he couldn’t think like that, it wasn’t so bad, he’d be okay- probably just superficial. Doctor Banner was an amazing doctor he’d have him fixed in no time. ‘If he makes it that far.’

“He- he’s not, kid. He’s not mad, I promise, he told me so himself.”

“Really?” Peter said dreamily, his head dropping to the side again.
“Yeah really. But he did say you have to stay up until we get home because he wanted to talk to you, remember? You wanna talk to your dad right?”

“Mmhmm... gotta tell him m’sorry, I-I didn’t mean it..” Peter trailed off and Happy didn’t fail to notice the tears running down the boy’s face.

“I know, he knows too but you wanna tell him yourself right? So, you gotta keep those eyes open for me buddy. Just a little while longer.” The engine roared violently as Happy attempted to accelerate, but the car was at capacity and he was already scarily close to losing control of the vehicle; if it wasn’t for Karen’s input they no doubt would have crashed because the adrenaline that had dumped into the agent’s system was making his hands shake violently.

“Mr. Hogan there’s a lot of blood..” Peter swallowed thickly as he gazed drunkenly down to spreading pool in the footwell.

“I know, but it’s okay, you’re gonna be okay-”

“I don’t care about me I’m gonna stain the seats!”

Happy looked up in the rearview mirror incredulously. “Peter I couldn’t give a fuck about the seats right now and you shouldn’t either!”

The teen whimpered which immediately pulled at the agents heart strings. “M’sorry please don’ be mad at me I didn’ mean to..”

“No, no, I’m sorry for yelling. I’m sorry- It’s- It’s alright kid. Everythings gonna be alright. Don’t worry about the seats, kid, worry about you. Seats can be replaced, y-you can’t.” He would have denied it if anyone ever brought it up but Happy has tears running down his own face at that point.

They made it back to the tower in record time, Happy having Karen hooked up to the vehicles own computer system, which was wiring information about Peter’s condition straight through to Dr. Banner allowing him to prepare for their arrival; the suit was monitoring the teens vital signs, and Happy was no doctor but even he could tell the numbers were steadily going down and up in all the wrong places.
True to his word Bruce was waiting with a stretcher right by the elevator next to the front desk, adamantly ignoring the various workers who were asking what he was doing there. By the time they made it back Peter had started to slip unconscious but he was trying desperately, as was Happy, to keep him awake. As soon as Peter had seen the tower however, he’d allowed himself to become too relaxed knowing he’d be in safe hands soon and had unfortunately slipped under.

Happy pulled the kids mask back on remembering just in the nick of time to conceal the teens identity in front of the many staff members that had congregated in the lobby of Stark Tower. He picked Peter up finding the dead weight to be surprisingly light and hoisted him out of the car. When he looked back at the back seat he found it was soaked with blood and for once he didn’t even care about the state of his car. He only cared about the alarming amount of blood that had come out of such a small body.

Happy kicked the automatic door to show JARVIS he wasn’t happy about how slowly it was opening and ran through the lobby calling out to Bruce as soon as the man was in eyesight. There were people screaming and running around as soon as he walked in but he laid zero attention to them, just as Bruce was. The doctor was accompanied by Natasha who looked nearly as scared as he felt. “Doc?!?”

“Here, lay him down.” Happy did as he was told laying Peter flat out on the stretcher as they wheeled him into the elevator away from prying eyes. Bruce wasted no time taking off his mask and cutting through his suit and clothing, using specially designed scissors Tony had given him for this very occasion. He grimaced at the sight of the boy’s stomach, finding the wound in the exact place Peter had said it would be. “Christ.”

He turned him slightly on the table, examining his back to find that there was an exit wound, Peter just hadn’t felt it, whilst Nat hooked him up to various monitors and machines. She looked over the wound and commented on it. “High cal, probably a forty five, could be more than one bullet though, who knows what the rate was.”

“Karen scanned him, said there were fragments of- woah! Peter! Peter no!” Just as Bruce was about to discuss her observation Peter without warning sat bolt upright. It took Nat, Happy and Bruce combined to force him back into a lying position. “Pete, pal, you gotta lay down you’re gonna hurt yourself-”

“He’ll he here in just a minute curly, Happy’s gonna go grab him. But we gotta get you situated first okay?” Nat said hurriedly as she brushed his hair away from his face in an attempt to calm him down. “We’ve got you okay? Can you look at me honey?”
“My tummy hurts.” Peter frowned and instinctively went to grab at the sensitive area but Bruce blocked him.

“I’m working on that, bud, but you just gotta lie still. Can you do that for me?” But Peter didn’t answer, his eyes rolled back into his head and he shook slightly. For a second Happy thought he was having a seizure but Bruce assured him that Peter’s brain activity was normal, it was just his body going into shock.

They didn’t bother stopping the elevator to let Happy out on Tony’s lab floor time was too precious, instead taking the man all the way up with them and having him stay in there by himself to go face Tony alone. They whisked Peter off into the medibay, Steve having met them there and Happy took a deep shaky breath as he pressed the button for Tony’s floor, whispering a silent prayer. This was not going to go well.

As apprehensive as he was Happy still ran as fast as he could down to the lab, knowing full well JARVIS was moments away from informing Tony of what was happening and he wanted to get there first. He hoped in vain that the news would come easier from a human but he knew Tony too well. He was preparing himself to get punched in the face.

When he entered the lab Tony was facing the opposite direction from the door and seemingly assumed it was Peter coming in. He was ready to say sorry and hug it out, he’d felt like shit after the whole argument and he wanted to make up for it. He’d been worried sick since the moment he left; not only because of the boys mental state when he had gone out but he realised almost immediately that the suit he had given him to wear was incomplete. He and Peter had harvested a lot of the components for other projects and he’d just been too busy to get around to replacing them. It had been on his to-do list for weeks but he hadn’t had the chance to yet. He had been so mad he just wasn’t thinking clearly as all he wanted to do was get the kid out of his face. By the time he realised his mistake though, he checked Peter’s location and saw that Happy was already bringing him back and he sighed in relief; Peter must have realised at the same time and was coming back to get a more appropriate suit of armour, which was good since he’d taken the rest of the evening off to work on the Spidey-Suit. Peter was more important than all of his projects combined and he’d let himself forget that, but not anymore. He was gonna make a point of showing the kid that he was the most important thing in the world, starting with showing him the upgrades he’d just made as an apology for how he’d been acting; something he should have done earlier, but that was okay. He was gonna make it up to him now he was home safe. “Hey, bubby. I saw Hap bringing you back early is everything-“

“Tony.” The genius froze. Happy. Why was Happy there? He knew that voice. That was the ‘shit’s going down’ voice. Where was his kid? He turned around and saw his friend covered in blood.
No. No this wasn’t happening.

“It’s the kid. He’s hurt. It’s bad.” Happy’s voice shook and he looked like he was on the verge of tears.

And that was the moment Tony’s world stopped spinning. He felt himself moving, suiting up and blasting up the elevator shaft, but he wasn’t in control. He had a sickening sense of déjà vu, from the time Peter had that stomach virus but this time he knew his panic was justified. He hadn’t been delivered a vague message about Peter being with Bruce, Happy had told him it was bad. He was hurt and it was bad. And there was blood. So, much blood. Too much for a scraped knee or a broken nose. ‘Why now, kid? Why after we’d had a fight? Why didn’t I just say sorry back when you texted me? I should have gone after you, why did I let you go...’

When Tony got up there Peter was already in surgery with Bruce to retrieve the bullet casings, as well as repair any internal damage and survey how bad said damaged was. He was prepared to wash up and scrub in but Steve and Nat grabbed him.

Everything was numb. He couldn’t feel anything and he wanted to. He wanted those fatherly fight or flight feelings to kick in but they wouldn’t. He couldn’t do anything but wait. The last thing he’d said to him was “I don’t want to be around you” when that had been the farthest thing from the truth. What he’d give to turn time back a few hours...what the fuck was wrong with him?! He’s already spent that time mulling over their argument, letting Peter’s words sink in, realising how shitty he’d been to the boy in recent weeks, all that and he wasn’t even going to get a chance to say sorry. He needed to say he was sorry, he- he had to hug him and play around with his suit and watch a movie with him and snuggle with him on the couch. They were gonna take the night off, he was gonna show him that he meant more than any of Tony’s work and the man was gonna make up for being a militant prick- then things were gonna be better, that was his plan. He had to..he had to say sorry.

Why didn’t he stop him from leaving? Why didn’t he at least text him back? Butterfly effect. If he had texted Peter back straight away and said he was sorry then, called him even, maybe he wouldn’t have gotten hurt. Maybe he would’ve come home. He did come home but he wasn’t...he wasn’t safe...Tony was meant to keep him safe and he..wasn’t. This was all his fault. He couldn’t breathe.

“Tony. You need to sit down.” It was Steve’s hand on his shoulder, guiding him towards a chair from where Tony had been pacing back and forth. The brunette didn’t respond. But he let the soldier move him

Nat sat beside him and grabbed one of his hands, which were cold and clammy. “He’s gonna be
okay, T. He’s just lost a lot of blood—"

“What happened?” Tony heard himself say, but he felt like he was sitting in a movie theatre, watching the scene play out. Only this wasn’t the movie he paid to see and he wanted to leave but he couldn’t. His eyes were glued to the screen. Is that what Peter felt like when he switched off? It’s not like Tony could ask him. His boy wasn’t there. His boy was laying on a table getting carved into like a piece of meat and all he could do was sit there. And wait.

“He mistimed a doge. I watched the footage.” Steve said with a grimace. His eyes were red like he’d been crying and his face was pale and it occurred to Tony that Steve was the man in the chair for Peter that night- he must’ve seen what happened in real time. “He was shot. He could have moved out of the way in time, from the pupil tracking in Karen- he saw the weapon he just..he just didn’t move in time I don’t know why.”

Tony felt his head started to shake and he heard himself shouting. “Guns Steve he hates guns you know that- he froze because he- fuck—"

“It was just once but. But there was a lot of blood.” Steve continued as though Tony wasn’t screaming, talking slowly, robotically and staring at the floor. The blond swayed slightly where he stood and for a second it looked like he was going to pass out.

“Steve you ought to sit down too.” Nat kicked another chair towards him, but she didn’t let go of Tony’s hand. Even if she had wanted to, which she didn’t, the man had it in a vice.

“He didn’t, uh, he didn’t—” Steve blinked a couple times and leant forward after he’s sat himself down. “He didn’t let them get away though. They’ve got the guys who did it. So—"

“So I won’t have to go out and find them, I can go straight to the police station and kill them. Good to know.” Tony laughed coldly, squeezing Nat’s hand so hard that a lesser agent would have cried out in pain but the woman’s face didn’t even flicker.

“Tony—"

“Where?"

“Location or—"
“On his body. Where on his body?” Tony said shakily, anger starting to kick in full force. Well, that was better than being numb.

“His abdomen, left side.” Steve went on to answer all of Tony’s questions, giving as much information as he had, which wasn’t much as Bruce had rushed Peter off into theatre very quickly, to try and counteract the effects of his accelerated healing. Of course Tony wasn’t satisfied with these answers but rather than becoming belligerent like they’d expected the man crumpled in on himself breathing shakily. He stayed like that the entire time Peter was being operated on, which was around four hours as Bruce was the only surgeon along with some machines.

Of course Peter was unaware of all the grief and stress he was causing his loved ones. He was blissfully unaware of everything. He didn’t feel any pain or fear or anything, not for three whole days he finally woke up.

Three entire days.

When his eyes fluttered open, he grumbled. The bright lights attacking his sensitive eyes so he moved to cover them but his arms felt too heavy to lift. He was barely able to turn his head away from the ceiling looking over at the figure in the chair beside him. “Dad?”

His throat was incredibly dry and he felt as though he’d been eating sand, so his voice was pretty croaky but Tony didn’t react to it at all. He lurched forward and grabbed Peter’s hand. “Hey, bubbie.”

“Mm..what happened?” Peter asked drowsily. The last thing he remembered was asking Happy to take him to McDonald’s so he could pee. Then they were in the car again but only this time Happy was driving real fast..but he couldn’t remember why. He made an attempt to sit up but before he could so much as lift his shoulders off of the bed Tony was putting his hand on his chest to stop him.

“Woah, hey now. Just relax. Don’t worry about what happened just yet, okay? How do you feel?” Tony was speaking gently but his eyes were glossy and his face was the picture of worry and guilt. It was then that Peter looked down and saw his hands had IV’s in them and he was laying in a hospital type bed in their medical area.
“Dad what’s going on?” Peter’s voice wavered as his chin wobbled. The confusion combined with the sudden deep pain he felt in his stomach was enough to push him to the point of crying.

“Shh, shh, shh, no baby it’s okay don’t cry. Everything’s okay, I’m right here.” Tony leant over to hug him and pulled Peter close, careful not to put any pressure on his stomach. “You got into an accident, bubbly. You got hurt but Bruce has you all patched up now okay? Nothing to worry about. You’re safe. I’m right here.”

“S-So you’re not mad at me anymore?” Peter sniffed. The last thing he remembered was him and his father having a screaming contest in the lab.

Tony pulled back out of the hug so that him and Peter were face to face as he held the boys in his hands. He was crying. Peter had never seen Tony cry. “No Underoos, I’m not mad. I promise. I’m so sorry.”

“It’s my fault for being mean.” Peter cried pitifully. He’d made Tony Stark cry. “I was so horrible, I didn’t mean any of it Dad I’m so sorry-“

“Uh uh, no I’m not having any of that. Come here.” Tony climbed up into Peter’s bed with him and pulled the boy onto his chest. “We were both assholes, but none of that matters now. Okay? You’re here. You’re okay, god Petey I was so scared. I thought I lost you.”

Tony was shaking but he held Peter as tightly as he could without hurting him, pulling the boy impossibly close to his chest with his chin resting on his head. Peter kept muttering apologies over and over but Tony shushed him. He’d never been more relieved in his life to see those big brown eyes open, finally, after days of waiting.

“Bruce! He’s awake get your green ass in here!” Tony yelled after a minute or so, realising he probably should have done that in the first place. Peter was still crying but it wasn’t the same wracking sobs and Tony didn’t want to risk him falling asleep again before Bruce got the chance to check him over.

The doctor skidded around the corner quickly, almost slipping over which had that happened any other time Peter and Tony would have laughed but there was nothing funny in that moment. Bruce straightened up instantly and regained his composure- well, as composed as a man who had barely slept in seventy two hours could be. “Well, good morning.”
“Hi?” Peter said unsurly and sniffed. He went to raise his arm to wipe his face but as soon as he
did he felt a sharp, pulling sensation deep in his gut. “Urgh-”

“Careful.” Tony said gently but there was an urgent bite to his voice as he manually lowered
Peter’s arm again. He reached over and wiped his face for him.

“How are you feeling, Pete?” Bruce asked as he pulled up a chair next to Peter’s bed.

“Uhm..I don’t..what’s uh..” Peter blinked again, the harshness of the lights and all the sounds were
starting to affect him. Usually he could hone into his super senses as and when he needed them but
for some reason it was like they were all turned up to eleven; the lights were impossibly bright,
every little sound, from the fabric rustling as he shifted round to the ticking of the clock at the far
end of the room resounded painfully in his ears. The blankets and the hospital gown he was
wearing were itching him, like his skin was covered in goosebumps and hypersensitive, he could
feel as every little hair on his body was rubbed by the fabric and it made him want to scratch
himself violently all over. He could smell iron and ammonia and iodine, a cacophony of offending
chemicals mixing into a sickening aroma that made his stomach churn. He could even hear his
teeth rubbing together and the pulse of not only his heart beat, but Tony’s and Bruce’s as well.
Suddenly he was on the verge of tears again and he felt his breath picking up, being hyper aware of
his own breathing making the sensation worse and the pain, the pain he felt in his stomach with
each sharp inhale was almost too much to bare. “I..mm..”

Luckily for him Tony was intune with him and already recognised the signs of what was
happening. “Overstimulated?”

Peter nodded quickly and scrunched his eyes up like he was trying to suck the tears back in. It had
been a while since it was that bad; the last time he’d lost control of his powers like that was the day
Tony designed his ear plugs to help him cope on a daily basis, when they had been testing a
machine in the lab and the boy had suddenly collapsed to the floor screaming in pain and covering
his ears. It turned out it was emitting a sound at a frequency only Peter could hear and the scene
had been so disturbing Tony started taking molds of his ears as soon as he’d recovered.

Tony had prepared for the eventuality of Peter losing some semblance of control over his senses,
fortunately for the teen and pulled out a small case from his pocket, containing the special ‘hearing
hinderers’ (“What? Well, they don’t aid my hearing, do they?”). “Here bubby.”

Peter grabbed the gratefully and immediately stuck them in, sighing with relief as all the noises
dwindled down to a tolerable level. Things were still uncomfortably loud but he could handle it
without wanting to knock himself out again to evade it.
“Better?”

Peter nodded but the adults still patiently waited for a minute for him to catch his bearings before he answered Bruce’s original question. Though he didn’t really answer it he just asked his own follow up questions. “What’s going on? Why am I here?”

Bruce smiled slightly, looking sad rather than happy. “What’s the last thing you remember and we can work from there.”

Peter felt the grip Tony had around him tighten slightly as he started to speak. “Uhh, I went out on patrol after w-we had a fight. I’d just texted you to say I was sorry and then I went to McDonald’s- no wait, no that was before. I had to uh, eat something so Happy took me to McDonald’s, then I texted you and then I- there were these guys, I think? Then- then I’m not sure.”

“That’s okay Pete, you’ve been asleep for a little bit. Your brains probably feeling a little fuzzy. Huh?” Bruce said gently and Peter nodded. “That’s alright, you can just take a minute to think, there’s no rush.”

Peter nodded again, feeling even more confused. Despite his own confusion he didn’t fail to notice Tony trembling slightly against him and when he looked up at his dad’s face he looked like he was on the verge of tears again. “Hey, are you okay?”

Tony huffed a laugh through his nose and shook his head. “You should not be worried about me right now.”

“Well, you’re my dad and I am so- hss ah!” Peter went to sit up a little before Tony had the chance to stop him as pain exploded through his abdomen, much worse than before, causing him to hiss in pain. “W-what the hell-”

He moved his hands down to his stomach and didn’t feel skin, just bandages and padding and both Tony and Bruce rushed forward to pull his arms back. “Woah, hey Pete don’t.”

“Did- did I get shot!!”

The room stilled, falling silent and Bruce and Tony waited for the memories to come flooding back to him, which they did. All at once.
The gun, the flashback, the pain, the blood. Happy’s face, then Nat and Bruce and Steve—very briefly. Then everything went all warm and dark and it didn’t hurt anymore.

He’d been shot.

Cool!

Maybe that shouldn’t have been his first internal reaction, granted, but he was still a teenage boy and the idea of actually being shot and living to tell the tale gave him some serious bragging rights in his own mind. He couldn’t wait to tell Ned. Wait, maybe he already knew? Had anyone told his friends, or his Aunt or-

The thoughts stopped when Peter looked back up at Tony, who looked a lot less enthusiastic about the news of Peter remembering what had happened. He looked broken and Peter instantly connected the dots that the man must have blamed himself. “Oh no. No, Dad, I’m...this wasn’t your fault—”

“Not now, Pete, please.” Tony said quietly, his warm dark eyes looking straight into his making Peter shut his mouth and nod. Though he stopped talking he made sure to grab Tony’s hand tightly in his own.

“S-so how bad was it? Like, what’s going on under all this?” Peter gestured to his mummified abdomen which made Bruce let out a light laugh.

“Well it could have been a lot worse, let’s put it that way. But I don’t want you to take this whole thing lightly, Peter. It was touch and go for a minute.”

Peter felt Tony flinch slightly and grip him tighter. It kinda hurt but there was no way he was about to say that to the clearly traumatised man. “Woah, really?”

Bruce nodded gravely. “You lost a lot of blood Pete, and the donor stuff didn’t sit right. You ended up seizing on the operating table. Now we know you can’t take foreign blood. Once you’re recovered we’re going to have to start stocking up.”
“Well, uh..that sucks.” Peter laughed shakily as the gravity of the situation started to sink in. Okay, maybe this whole thing wasn’t as cool as he initially thought.

“Yeah but that ain’t the worst of it I’m afraid.” Bruce said quietly, eyeing both Peter and Tony with sympathetic eyes as though he was considering leaving the conversation there for now but ultimately he decided to continue. “I managed to retrieve all the bullet fragments but-”

As interested as he was to find out the extent of his injuries, Peter had to interrupt as suddenly the combination of shock, the pain and the smells his stomach began to rebel, not taking the news well at all. “Uhm, D-Dr Banner. I’m gonna puke.”

Bruce smiled sympathetically again and shook his head. “No you’re not Peter. I know it feels like that but there’s nothing in your stomach, you haven’t eaten in-“

“I know but I really am gonna- ungh-“ Peter felt a rush of water in his mouth as well as all the muscles in his back and most painfully his stomach contract violently as he heaved.

“Bruce he’s serious, hand me that-“ Tony held his hand out, gesturing to a plastic bowl sitting on the counter nearest to the doctor, waving it anxiously to hurry the man up and he shoved the receptacle under Peter’s nose just in time to catch the wave of vomit.

Peter groaned as the acidic liquid left him. “I’m sorry-“

“Shh, shh, it’s okay. Not your fault don’t apologise.” Tony rubbed his back soothingly but shot daggers across the room at Bruce for having underestimated the boy’s ability to vomit on command.

Bruce stood quickly going to rush across the room. “I’ll give him some metoclopramide-“

“No! No more drugs!” Peter cried out wiping his mouth. His stomach had been empty so the actual evacuating process was a quick one but now he was left with empty dry heaves which he may have argued were worse. “That’s the stuff you gave me last time and it made me all weak and drowsy and I don’t want it!”

“Peter, it’ll help the nausea. You can’t keep throwing up you’ll end up undoing all the hard work I did fixing your stomach. You haven’t eaten in three days this shouldn’t be-”
“W- Three days?!”

Bruce cringed and smiled sheepishly. That wasn’t how he had intended to break the news about the boy’s mini coma. “Yeah...I kinda overestimated it with the anaesthetic a little, you slept for longer than anticipated. But you needed that time to recover and I ended up having to do a revision surgery a couple hours later anyway so the double dose just..just knocked you out.”

“W-why?” Peter cocked his head to the side as his head started spinning. “Why a revision I mean- and a revision of what?”

Bruce pulled up a page on his tablet that showed the x rays and other various scans of Peter’s abdomen at different stages during his unconscious recovery; flicking through to each relevant one that correlated with which body part or surgery the man was referring to. “The bullet went through part of your large intestine, shattering into several pieces which travelled through to the other side of your abdomen- Nat reckons the gang were using bullets that weren’t able to withstand the pressure from the caliber of the gun they were using and the trajectory they shot you at...well if they’d hit their intended target you wouldn’t be here right now. Luckily for us the bullet changed course midair because of the damage to its surface from the pressure in the chamber.”

“Psssh amateurs. Can’t even kill a guy right.” Peter scoffed but his joke was not well received as both Bruce and Tony gave him some very disapproving looks. The doctor paused for a moment as he gave Peter a glare, letting the boy realise how serious the conversation was meant to be and he waited for that to sink in before he continued.

“The bullet basically exploded, hitting your liver which is what caused the excessive bleeding as well as a few other spots. The main casing from the bullet exited your back, clipping your left kidney. Your body was healing your intestine fine I just had to intervene so it didn’t over heal or fuse with a kink in the passage so you won’t have any intestinal blockages or hernias, same with everywhere else, I’m not concerned about that. Your kidney is another story however-“

However just as Bruce was getting to the worst part he was interrupted again when Peter shifted uncomfortably in the bed and suddenly became enraged. “What the FUCK AM I WEARING?!”

Bruce grimaced, having expected such a reaction and looked over to Tony to handle it which the man did, albeit reluctantly. “Peter you’ve been in a coma for three days what did you expect-“

But the teen wasn’t willing to listen to reason, he was too furious with his sudden realisation.
Furious and mortified. “I’d have preferred a catheter over this- Who’s been- oh my god who’s been dealing with it-“

“Do you really want an answer to that question?”

“Well-“

“Exactly. So shut up.” Tony started to continue but he was forced to stop as Peter started to thrash around, trying to detangle himself from the sheets and he had to lunge forward to stop the boy hurting himself even more.

“Get it off me! I’m awake I don’t need it anymore! I-I want underwear. And pants. And a shir- I want clothes!” The injured boy was clearly starting to work himself up into a tantrum and after everything Tony didn’t have the energy to try and argue, so he gave in instantly. Anything to stop him from getting upset.

“Okay, okay, calm down. You’re gonna hurt yourself, just lay still for a minute, alright? We’ll get you changed." Tony soothed, or he attempted to but Peter’s face was burning and he looked as though he was going to either burst into tears or start swinging, neither of which were preferable when you were dealing with a baby superhero. “Jar can you ask Steve to bring Peter some clothes down?”

“Certainly sir.” The AI chimed.

“See? You’re okay, we’ll get you situated.” Tony petter the boy’s hair trying his best to calm him down as Peter was going from angry tears to embarrassed ones very quickly. “You just need to sit still for a minute longer.”

“I want this thing off of me.” Peter whimpered and shifted again. All the movement was making his abdomen twinge with newfound ferocity but in that moment he didn’t care, he just wanted the embarrassing undergarment off and away from his person as quickly as possible. God it was so humiliating.

Steve appeared not a moment later, handing Tony a stack of Peter’s pyjamas, knowing better than to say anything. As much as he wanted to run over and hug the teen too it was obvious why he was so upset and Steve conceded to hug him when he wasn’t on the brink of a tantrum.
Tony didn’t draw attention to Steve’s presence after nodding a silent thank you; but he also didn’t ask him to leave immediately. After all, despite being in a lot of pain Peter was still incredibly strong and if he decided he wanted to get up there would be no way that Tony could pin him down single handedly. “I know, it’s okay, we’ll get it off you. You’re gonna need to let someone help you though.”

Peter’s head snapped around, making him dizzy but he didn’t care. “Uh uh you’re not helping me, no one is helping me. All of you get out I can get changed by myself.”

Bruce took that as his cue to leave; he’d come back after Peter was comfy and settled to tell him the rest of the news about his injuries. The doctor also didn’t want to put the teen through any more unnecessary stress. But Steve and Tony didn’t budge.

Tony sighed a little and rubbed his temples. He knew it was going to be a fight. “How do you expect to do that with your stomach how it is?”

“I’ll figure it out now leave.” Peter deadpanned.

“Pete-”

“Now!” Peter pointed towards the door, inadvertently lifting his arm too quickly which led to him doubling over in pain and almost ripping one of his IV’s out. He was in too much pain to protest when Tony wrapped his arms around him and laid him back down flat.

Tony gnawed his lip before he spoke again, looking to Steve for emotional support but the soldier looked just as uncomfortable as he felt. Oh the wonders of being a parent, you get to deal with all kinds of weird awkward shit. “Remember how you helped me get dressed when I was sick? Same concept, this is no different. I’m not gonna look or touch anywhere you don’t want me to-“

“I don’t want you touching me period if you do I’ll scream at the top of my lungs and call Chris Hansen!” Cried the already screaming teenager.

“You’re being ridiculous.” Tony sighed but stepped back again. The last thing he wanted was to make Peter any more uncomfortable but there was no way that the kid would be able to change his clothes by himself, not without risking bursting his stitches or something worse.
“You’re ridiculous! Now go away!” Peter screamed again, this time reeling away in horror so violently that he lost control of his strength and ended up bending the metal railing that lined his bed. Usually the teen would have been mortified at damaging any property but he didn’t care in that moment, which was another warning sign to Tony.

“Just let me help—”

“No!” Peter shifted again, this time not being able to contain his cries of agony when his stomach protested at the sudden movement.

“Peter stop it you’re going to hurt yourself now lay down!” Tony nodded to Steve who helped him by pinning down the teens arms. They still weren’t going to start trying to cloth him especially not when Steve had him restrained but they did need him to stop moving long enough to calm himself down- which luckily he did, at least enough to stop thrashing around, but he still didn’t look happy.

“I’m going to kill myself.” The boy deadpanned and crossed his arms when Steve finally let go of him, looking despondently at the bed. Even in his ill state it was obvious from Steve’s face that he was all for smacking the boy upside the head for saying such a horrible thing, but Tony held up a hand to stop him. The teen was stressed, in pain and embarrassed- and a teen, teenagers say stupid stuff that they don’t mean all the time and his Peter would never usually say something so extreme so he decided to let that one slide. He would no doubt be nothing but apologetic later when he realised his tantrum and he could get a lecture from Steve then about saying such things- though in the moment it was clear Peter meant it, god he was turning into a right prema donna just like his dad.

“Stop being dramatic.” Tony said calmly. He amazed himself at how calm he was being, in fact, but he put it down to having spent three days going through every emotion under the sun and he was just so relieved that his son was still alive and kicking (almost literally kicking when Tony got too close to him) that he didn’t have the heart to be angry with his childish behaviour. That and he completely understood why Peter was reacting so badly; not only could he empathise as he’d been in similar situations and it was degrading, this was Peter they were dealing with. A kid that was too shy to ask them to pause a movie so he could go to the bathroom and wouldn’t drink all day at school so he could avoid needing to go during class; their kid that would only tell a select few people when he had to go, no one else, everyone else had to learn the signs- he was extra sensitive about this particular bodily function so no one expected a good response when the teen realised they had to have him wear a diaper.

“DUM-E! Get DUM-E to come in there and help!” The teen cried as a last resort, flinching away when Tony moved towards him again.
“Pete that’s not going to work just let me-“

“No!”

Tony sighed defeatedly and sat back again and much to his surprise it was Steve who stepped forward, grabbed Peter by the shoulders and forced the teen to make eye contact.

“Peter. I know you’re embarrassed and upset, I understand that. You have every right to be but you don’t have a right to act like a baby.” Steve said sternly which seemed to snap Peter out of the tantrum he was currently having as he looked up at Steve with big shocked eyes. Usually Steve would have left it up to Tony to be the bad cop but he knew his friend didn’t have it in him after everything he’d been through in the last seventy two hours and the situation was only escalating. That and the fact he had never seen the teen so hettyo about something so insignificant and it was both emotionally distressing and slightly irritating. “The longer you put up a fuss about us helping you, the longer you have to sit there uncomfortably. Let’s just stop the amateur dramatics and get it over with. I know it’s embarrassing and awkward that’s why we should get it done quickly so we can move on and never talk about it again. If you don’t start behaving I’ll get Nat up here, I know you won’t give her any crap over it.”

Peter shook his head quickly, that was the last thing he wanted and Tony chuckled at the scene. He knew the threat was empty but Peter was too high and naive to know that; and Tony also found it funny how his friend, who was usually the patron saint of patience, was resorting to such dirty tactics. He’d taught him well.

“That’s what I thought. Now come on, I’ll help you sit up and you and your dad can take the rest from there.”

Peter relented but only because he was tired and he felt as though he was backed into a corner. He was also in a lot of pain and he just wanted to lay still, maybe go back to sleep for a while and it hurt to move around. He couldn’t lean forward more that one hundred and fifty degrees unaided and he could barely lift his arms away from his sides, there was no way he’d be able to reach the tapes and get the stupid thing off without injuring himself. The realisation that he didn’t have another option was enough to make him cry silently as he sat back. “I hate this.”

“I know sweetie, I know. It’ll be done in a minute and you feel a lot better. We never have to talk about it again, we’ll erase this from our minds, won’t we Stevie?” Tony soothed and Steve nodded quickly in agreement.

Once Peter gave up fighting he moved as quickly as possible as he was trying not to prolong the
painful process, only stopping to ask if what he was doing was okay or if Peter wanted him to stop. In all honesty, changing and clothing his lower half wasn’t an issue, it was trying to wrestle the teen into a shirt that became a problem. No matter which way they gently tried to move him, Peter would wince in pain which prompted Tony and Steve to stop.

“Guys you don’t have to stop j-just hurry up and do it. I can take it.” Peter said through gritted teeth as he struggled not to scream.

“No, you know what, let’s just leave it there.” Tony said gently as he lowered Peter back against the bed. “There’s no point putting you through more pain just to get a T-shirt on. If you get cold I’ll grab you a hoodie or a robe or something, okay?”

Peter nodded weakly, sweating from the pain and the exhaustion that minor task had caused. “I’m sorry for being a baby.”

“You weren’t, I’m sorry I said that.” Steve said guiltily as he sat down beside Peter’s bed, finally giving the boy that hug he wanted which they both relished in. “I didn’t mean it I was just trying to get you to listen.”

“No it’s okay, I know you didn’t mean it but I was being a baby.” Peter sniffed and winced again. Now that he was back to wearing underwear appropriate for his age the embarrassment had all but left him because he only had enough energy for one emotion at a time and he’d gone back to feeling confused. “Why’s it hurtin’ worse now than when I woke up?”

Tony frowned and ran a hand through Peters now wet hair. “I’m not sure bubby, I’ll go grab Bruce, alright? He still needs to finish telling you about how fucked your organs are.”

“Yeah...did he say something about my kidney?” Peter blinked looking side to side between the two adults faces. Tony looked relatively calm but Steve was looking at him with sad, worried eyes which made Peter nervous about the news the doctor was about to give him.

“No it’s okay, I know you didn’t mean it but I was being a baby.” Peter sniffed and winced again. Now that he was back to wearing underwear appropriate for his age the embarrassment had all but left him because he only had enough energy for one emotion at a time and he’d gone back to feeling confused. “Why’s it hurtin’ worse now than when I woke up?”

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“Yup.” Tony popped the P and went to stand up but Steve held a hand up to stop him.

“I’ll get him, you stay here. I’ll grab you something to eat too T.” Steve knew full well that Tony’s separation anxiety was awful given their current situation so if he could help alleviate that he would. He was pretty sure Peter would prefer his dad stay with him at all times too and if it meant he could kill two birds with one stone by forcing the man to eat he was willing to do it; there was
no way Peter would let the man get away without eating when he was awake.

Steve was right because Peter looked straight up at Tony with an accusing glare. “Have you been eating?”

“I have.” Tony smiled softly and continued messing with the teens locks as he questioned him.

“You promise me? You’ve been looking after yourself too, not just me, right? And have you been doing your breathing treatments-“

“I have bubby, don’t worry about me.”

“It’s my job. I know what you’re like.” Peter sighed. His head was still spinning with a thousand questions but one stuck out the most in his mind. “Did you tell May?”

Tony cast his eyes to the floor and nodded, though he tried to keep his tone at its usual casualness. “I did.”

“She okay?”

“Worried. Very worried, obviously. I had Mrs. Leeds go round to be with her because she was adamant she was coming over to be with you even though she can barely walk herself right now. I texted her that you’re awake she said she wants you to FaceTime as soon as you’re up to it.”

Peter smiled. “Yep, sounds like May May. I’ll call her after we talk to Bruce.”

Tony smirked as he remembered how feisty the woman got with him on the phone when he said she wasn’t allowed to come and see her nephew. “Probably best.”

“Dad.” Peter said quietly after a moment.

“Yeah?”
“Please...please don’t blame yourself for this. It was an accident, we both forgot it’s not all on you—"

“P, don’t worry about me. I can handle this. This isn’t about me, this about you. Getting you better. I’m fine.” Tony said a little too quickly, like he’d been practising. Most people would have assumed the genius was telling the truth but Peter noticed the subtle signs. The swallowing after he spoke, the slight twitch at the corner of his mouth, then again he knew there wasn’t much he could do. He knew Tony was going to protect him in every way possible, which would include shielding him from his own emotional pain in favour of making Peter feel better. This worried him, as that had never turned out well for them in the past, he just hoped that the rest of their team were aware of that also and would take steps to stop Tony going down another path of self destruction; he was pretty sure they had measures in place already, after all they were all painfully aware of how Tony’s brain worked. How he’d blame himself and no doubt start tearing himself apart with the guilt. And how he’d fall back onto old coping mechanisms to deal with the pain. Everyone knew that, so all Peter could do was hope they managed to catch him before he fell off the wagon.

As Peter was gazing sadly at the broken shell of the man sitting next to him, Bruce popped back into view. “We all good in here now? Is it safe to come in or I’m I going to be assaulted by an angry spider kid?”

“I ain’t assaulting no one- Spider-Man!” Peter croaked making the adults in the room chuckle.

“You ready to see the damage now, Spider-Man?” Bruce sighed, pulling up a chair next to the teens bed, tablet in hand ready to go through the x-rays again.

“Yup, might as well.” Peter yawned.

“I’ll let you get some more rest in just a minute, P, I promise.” Bruce smiled gently.

“I’d be fine if someone wasn’t petting my hair.” Peter chuckled looking at Tony who frowned. He hadn’t even realised he was still doing it and abruptly pulled his hand away but the boy pouted. “Hey, that doesn’t mean stop.”

Tony scoffed and rolled his eyes but put his hand back and Peter relaxed. Bruce somehow managed to refrain from commenting on the adorableness of the scene in favour of getting down to business. “Now where were we?”
“Uh, my intestines are fine but my kidney ain’t?”

“Right.” Bruce nodded and pulled up the relevant scan. “See this dark mass? That’s your right kidney, it’s healthy and normal but this little blob here? That’s your left one. I had to remove more than half of it and it started to fail completely while you were out cold, your body started to reject it after it had been in contact with foreign materials. It’s functioning now but only at around thirty percent capacity.”

“Uh..I take it that’s not good..”

“No. It’s not good.” Bruce said dryly.

“But you can survive with one kidney, right? Like I’ve still got more than some people have?”

“Most people yes, but given your metabolism your renal system was under a lot of strain anyway. Before getting shot your kidneys had to work overtime to keep up with the rate your body produced waste and you didn’t help matters by not drinking enough. I hadn’t seen it before but you had some issues anyway. Your numbers are hard to read at the best of times so I figured there wasn’t an issue, that the high numbers of creatinine in your blood were down to the four one x serum or something but- basically you had kidney damage anyway.”

“Oh..” Peter said awkwardly, then looked up sheepishly towards his dad knowing full well the kind of look he was receiving. “I..uh..I didn’t know that..”

“I’m sure you didn’t.” Bruce said quietly. “Do you often get back aches?”

Peter thought for a moment. “Uhm, sometimes I guess. Usually in the evening, but they go away and they aren’t that bad.”

Bruce nodded and his eyes flickered between the monitor he was copying data down from and Peter’s face. “Uh huh. And you get them mostly after school, not really on the weekends right?”

He hadn’t really thought about it before but Bruce was right. He only really got them on school days but they never lasted long so he hadn’t thought much of it. He’d always assumed it was the
chairs, or the seats on the bus or something. “Yeah..?”

“And they go away once you get home and you let yourself drink something?”

“Yeah I guess they- oh.” The realisation hit him then. He never got the pains on the weekends when they were training because there was always a responsible adult around to make him drink; even Tony, for all of his flaws, always reminded Peter to stay hydrated when they were in the lab even when they were both completely in the zone stuck in their work. The back aches weren’t muscular, it was his body trying to tell him his kidneys were shrivelling up.

“Yeah.” Tony said sarcastically. “Oh.”

“You can’t dehydrate yourself like that anymore, Peter. For someone with your metabolic rate, let alone with only one fully functioning kidney, it’s too dangerous. You need to be able to flush out the toxins in your blood-“

“Uhm..can I get in trouble for that later? ‘Cause right now my tummy really hurts.” Peter whimpered pitifully as he bent over double again. He wasn’t saying it just to get out of a lecture, it was like his body knew it was being talked about and decided to act up accordingly.

Bruce was quick to take action, moving forward and situating Peter to where he could check him over without adding more pressure on his stomach. No doubt all the movement from his earlier panic attack had caused more injury to the wounded area. “Lemme take a look buddy, lie back.”

“Why hasn’t it healed up already?” Peter groaned when the doctor started unwinding the bandages around his midsection, the release of pressure making way for a deep, intense throbbing around the two incisions in his stomach.

“Well I think your body is preoccupied trying to make up for all the blood you’ve lost. Your regeneration is considerably slower than it usually is, but then again you’ve never had such as serious injury before.” Bruce theorised as he worked on messing with the packing material around Peter’s stomach. “Healing cuts and broken bones is nothing compared to replenishing almost five pints of blood as well as organ damage.”

“Oh fair enou- ahh!” Peter lurched forward when Bruce accidentally put too much pressure on his lower stomach which sent searing pain coursing through his entire abdomen, forcing the air out of his lungs.
“Bruce.” Tony growled instinctively grabbing the doctors wrist before he had a chance to stop himself, prying the man’s hand away from his son and putting himself in between the two.

Luckily the doctor was able to keep his composure even as Tony got physical with him and began to apologise profusely. “I’m so sorry Peter-”

“It’s fine, it’s fine I’m fine it’s just- mm ow.” Peter panted still gripping his stomach. “I just need a min- I need ah- Dad the bowl!”

Tony managed to grasp what Peter was saying and shoved the designated puke bowl under Peter’s face again, but unfortunately not quite quick enough and Peter ended up spitting up mouthfuls of watery red bile all over the sheets as well as almost on his abused stomach. Oh shit- red?

“Bruce did he-”

“No, he didn’t tear his esophagus again; it’s probably residuale from all the internal bleeding. It’s all good.” The doctor hummed as he confirmed the information with the live vital scans he was receiving from JARVIS. “But I am going to give you some metoclopramide now, Pete, whether you like it or not.”

“Fine.” Peter gurgled miserably as he spat into the bowl, leaning his head fully into Tony’s hand which was the only thing stopping him going face first into it. “So long as it doesn’t make me shit my brains out again.”

Bruce chuckled at the comment, knowing that if Peter was in his normal frame of mind he would have been mortified by what he’d just said; but the boy was too exhausted to care. “I can give you something for that too, though I doubt that will be an issue since you haven’t eaten.”

“Yeah well you said that about me puking and now there’s Hawaiian Punch everywhere.” Peter said before he retched violently again making both adults cringe.

“Some beautiful imagery there Pete.” Tony said as he patted the boys back but the boy just let out a pathetic whine in response. “Shh, you’re alright, just try and relax.”
“Hrgh- Just- god- kill me- urk-”

Hearing Peter say that was enough to make Tony cry but he held it together, somehow, settling with rocking the boy gently and rocking him. Where he had a hand around the boy’s midsection he didn’t fail to feel when a warm sticky wetness seeped through the bandages, coating his hand and he looked down to see red. “Bruce he’s bleeding again.”

“Yeah, I thought that would happen. It’s just external the internal stitches are intact, we’ll deal with that once his stomach settles. We gotta stop him moving around so much but I don’t wanna sedate him again, he only just came back around.” Bruce grimaced when Peter gagged violently again, sounding like he was choking. Peter didn’t even notice the man injecting one of the IV ports on his hand with the anti-sickness medication as he was starting to lose consciousness from the blinding pain. When the doctor was finishing administering the medication he looked back towards Tony who had visibly paled and was shaking himself. “T if you need a break I can-”

“No. I’ve got him.” Tony snapped and shook his head, both in response to Bruce’s suggestion that he leave the teen’s side and as he tried to shake off the panic attack that was brewing when he looked down at his blood stained hands. “You’re okay bubby, I’ve got you. I’m not going anywhere.”

It took several minutes for Peter’s body to absorb the medication; Bruce was right his metabolism had slowed down considerably and it was worrying Tony a great deal. He had hoped that Peter would bounce back a lot quicker and seeing the teen in so much pain was breaking his already shattered heart and he wasn’t sure how much more he could take. He wanted to fix it, to make him feel better but he couldn’t. There was nothing he could do other than gently rock the teen as he exhausted himself, gradually slipping unconscious when he couldn’t take the pain any more.

“I don’t think he reacts well to morphine.” Bruce said, though he was mostly just thinking out loud. “Maybe that’s what’s making him sick.”

“We gotta get him cleaned up. He’s a mess.” Tony said matter of factly but he made zero effort to move or detangle the boy clinging to him at all, he continued to rock him slightly as he stared off into space.

“I don’t wanna move him just yet, not until I can redress his wounds.” Bruce said gently as he moved back over to the bed. “Tony you’re gonna have to move so I can get to his stomach.”

But again Tony made zero effort to move and he didn’t react to Bruce’s presence at all. As soon as Peter fell back asleep Tony switched off again, like he had been for the past three days; he’d barely
slept, eaten or spoken a word to anybody since Peter was rushed home. Bruce sighed gently and put his hand on the zombified man's shoulder. “Tony.”

“Hm?” The man hummed, though he didn’t affix his gaze.

“You need to let go of him—”

“No.” Tony’s voice shook and it was clear the phrasing Bruce chose had a lot more emotional significance to him than the doctor had intended.

“Just for a second. We need to get him comfy, remember? Let’s get him cleaned up.” Bruce shook Tony gently, trying to get him to snap out of his daze but it didn’t seem to be working. The doctor crouched down, forcing Tony to look at him. “Tony please. I need to patch him up.”

“Yeah.” Tony said quietly, but he still looked right through Bruce as though he wasn’t there. He did however, finally move slightly so Bruce could gain access to where he needed; he remained on the bed with Peter though, keeping a firm grip on him. He helped change Peter’s clothes again, being glad that the boy was unconscious for the process as he’d wet himself when he was being sick; understandably so considering how violently he was puking, it would be hard for anyone to hold their bladder under that kind of strain. They decided between them it would be best to put the boy back into the more protective undergarment the boy detested so much, since he was unconscious and they didn’t want to risk him wetting the bed then having a tantrum over having to change the sheets. Though in all honesty they were prepared for a tantrum either way, but a tantrum with minimal mess (which meant less clean up and less risk of hurting the kid) was the lesser of two evils.

“Tony you need to go get washed up yourself.” Bruce said gently, though he knew what kind of response he would get.

“Later.”

“Usually I wouldn’t bug you but come on, you’re covered in Hawaiian punch. You need to take a shower.”

“Later.”
“Tony, don’t make me get Steve-“

“And what’s he gonna do?” Tony huffed a laugh but he held on to Peter with newfound vigor at the threat. He’d like to see anyone try and take his kid away from him again.

“Drag you out of here kicking and screaming if he has to. You need to call May anyway.”

Hearing the woman’s name mentioned did hit home with Tony however, snapping him out of the daze he was in. He needed to tell her Peter was finally awake. “Yeah..yeah I know…”

“. or I can do that if it makes it easier? I’ll call her while you run up and get changed then you can come straight back down.”

“What if he wakes up?” Tony said quietly, not realising that he hadn’t responded to Bruce’s suggestion.

“Then I’ll be here and have JARVIS call you back down the second he does.”

“I don’t want to. I don’t want him out of my sight.” The man admitted, looking down sadly at the boy curled up in his arms. He had said he didn’t want to be around Peter now he didn’t want to be without him ever again.

“I know. I know.” The doctor squeezed Tony’s shoulder to try and show him some kind of support that he couldn’t convey verbally, try as he might. “I promise I’ll take care of him. I won’t let anything happen to him.”

“I know you won’t..I just..” Tony cut himself of sighing and shaking his head as he ran his hands over his face and through his hair. He realised how ridiculous he sounded and he had to at least pretend he wasn’t going absolutely insane, so he did the only thing he knew what to do; Pretend to be fine and walk away. Put on his Tony Stark mask and hide his emotions behind that, at least until he was in private. “I gotta get my shit together.”

“I wouldn’t have put it quite like that but-“
Tony stood up abruptly, cutting the Doctor off who was trying his best to have a compassionate conversation, but he knew by now that Tony wasn’t very good at having heart to hearts. The genius just nodded to him as he left the room. “I’ll be right back, look after Underoos.”

Tony made his way down to his own quarters, going a different route than he usually would to avoid bumping into any of his housemates; they most likely knew that Peter had woken up and were itching to ask questions and he didn’t have the energy to deal with all that. He barely had the energy to exist. He changed and showered quickly, something he hadn’t done in three days, then called May to tell her the good news and update her on everything. She wasn’t even upset that she got to miss talking to the boy while he was awake, much to the man’s relief, she was just glad he was awake; but he promised he’d have Peter call her first thing when he next regained consciousness.

On his way back up, Tony went down to Peter’s room to grab him some comfy clothes to change into since he’d soiled the other ones. Once he was there he found himself lost, spending an extended period of time just looking around the boy’s immaculately tidy room; he wasn’t sure if Steve had been in there since the boy was in a coma to clean up, as the man so often did when he was stressed out or if it was just how it was when the boy left it. Peter always kept his room clean, especially for a teenage boy as he valued everything he had. Tony just stood there peering around his room, looking at all the nicknacks, figurines, comics, various half finished projects and awards and the weird shit the kid had in there. His weird kid; he loved him for all his quirks, especially the nerdy ones he so often teased him about. Not that he ever meant it, he loved hearing about random Harry Potter facts and the latest studio ghibli movie Peter had discovered- he loved hearing him so passionate about such random, obscure things, that he’d usually drop into casual conversation.

Tony was so lost in thought he forgot why he’d originally gone in there, his brain was so foggy. For a second he glanced at the teens bed as though he had gone in to wake the boy up or check on him but of course it was empty. Peter wasn’t in his own bed, he was in a hospital bed upstairs...alone...like he had been when...

The man shook himself, trying not to let the bad thoughts creep in. He had a job to do. Clothes. Right. Peter needed comfy clothes. He looked around the room again spotting a crumpled pile of what must’ve been pyjamas (though it was sometimes hard to tell as Peter wore cute, usually science related graphic Tees all the time) at the bottom of the boy’s bed. Ah, so Steve hadn’t been in there, he wouldn’t have missed an excuse to do laundry. Tony was glad, no one else should be allowed in his kids room, it was his little man cave, his things...all the things he would have left behind if he...

Tony picked up the the T-shirt that said “when I heard oxygen and magnesium were dating I was like O Mg” with cartoon versions of the elements kissing and Tony laughed at the ridiculousness of the joke because of course Peter would wear that.
Looking at the creases in it Tony realised Peter must’ve worn already and it smelled like him; it didn’t smell of anything in particular, nothing that he could put his finger on anyway, but it was specific to his son; it was the kind of thing you didn’t notice until you’d been away from someone for a while, like when he came home from a mission and that bundle of curly hair would come running up to him for a hug. That was when it occurred to him that the faint smell on the boy’s t-shirt would’ve been all that was left of his son if Bruce hadn’t got to him in time. Now his kid smelled like blood and iodine and sterilised hospital gowns and it was all his fault.

It was an accident. An accident. But it was his fault. He was careless and angry and he let his kid go out in a half complete suit because he was preoccupied. Work had been so important to him, more important than remembering to keep the child safe. Peter almost died because of him. He couldn’t live with the guilt. Couldn’t function. How was he supposed to be there for the kid when he couldn’t even...He wanted a drink, he needed a drink but god knows no one would have let him touch a drop- but he needed something, anything to take the edge off. He wanted to feel numb again he didn’t want to feel the guilt anymore.

No. Come on, Tony you’re better than this. You’ve been better than this, you don’t need to abuse substances anymore you’ve got someone who depends on you. But that someone...you failed that someone. You let him get hurt, it’s all your fault. You hurt everyone around you, even Pepper left-no she didn’t. You pushed her away because you know you’re toxic. You knew you were toxic and you did the right thing, you got her out of the way before you could drag her down with you. You should have done the same thing with the kid, you let it go too far Tony. You should never have let the kid get so close to the poison you emit, it’s your fault he got hurt and yours alone. You didn’t protect him, you promised May you’d protect him-

He didn’t want to think anymore. He was trying, he had tried, he wanted to be strong but he couldn’t anymore. He just needed to switch off for a while- not forever. Just a couple hours. He needed a break for just a couple hours. If he slept he’d, he’d feel better. He just couldn’t sleep when he was looking at Peter lying there lifeless on a hospital bed-

So Tony did the only thing that made sense to his guilt ridden, recovering addict brain and he made his way back up to the Medbay, popped open the medicine cabinet with a key he’d stolen from Bruce’s desk (that had been hidden from him for this very reason, but Tony knew where all their hiding spots were it was his tower after all) and found a bottle of something. Hopefully said something would help him get some sleep but in all honesty he didn’t even check the label. He just took a handful knowing that whatever it was, if he took enough he’d definitely lose consciousness for a few hours. And he did, but unfortunately for him when his housemates found him knocked out with a bottle of pills in one hand slumped in the chair next to Peter’s bed they weren’t very happy.

When he woke up he wasn’t in Peter’s room anymore; he was on a couch at the other end of the medi bay and Clint and Steve were standing over him. “Aw, fuck.”
“Don’t you dare, curse right now.” Steve said coldly and continued staring at the man with his arms folded as he tried to drag himself upright. He snatched the bottle in Tony’s hand away from him and shook it. “How many of these did you take? What were you trying to do?”

Tony just sighed lazily, ignoring Steve’s questions all together. “Let me go back in with-“

But Steve cut him off. “No. Peter doesn’t need this right now Tony, he doesn’t deserve to have to deal with you like this. It’s not fair-“

“I know-“

“SHUT. UP. I’m talking it’s your turn to fucking listen. You know how much we understand, how much we’ve been through with you but understanding can only get us so far. We can’t deal with this right now, the first time things get hard you crack and you fall back into- into all this, but we’re not doing it again. Not right now, we can’t.” Steve said harshly but he had tears in his eyes and they were already red so Tony figured it wasn’t the first time he’d started crying over the situation. God he’d fucked up. “You need to be strong for Peter don’t make this about you- and I know you’re not doing it on purpose but if you can’t handle it right now you need to stay away from him. We’ll take care of him, but it'll break his heart and yours and all of ours if we have to do that but we will if we have to. We’re not having you relapse around him he’s seen enough and he needs his dad right now, not whatever this- this is.”

Tony nodded sullenly. Usually he would have argued, yelled back, snapped back with a sarcastic comment or dig of his own, but he didn’t have it in him. He agreed with everything Steve had just said. After a moment he spoke quietly, so quietly it was hard to hear him. “I...I’m sorry. I just wanted to sleep for a while.”

Steve’s face crumpled and he put his hands on Tony’s shoulders, like he wanted to hug him but he knew that would be too much for the fragile man to take. “I know Tony, I know. This isn’t your fault- none of it. We understand, really we do but- but how many times have we been here? I just, just please, this time, let us help. We can’t go through this again not right now, not after everything. Peter needs you. That has to count for something-“

“It counts for everything that’s the point, I fucking failed him he almost died because of me! Because I neglected him! I was mad and I was careless and I let him go out in that old suit and he almost died Steve! It’s all my fault he doesn’t deserve any of this! He doesn’t deserve to have me as a Dad he’d be better off if you did take him away from me so just fucking do it! Get it over with before I end up getting him killed-
That was when something very unexpected happened. Clint, who had been standing by silently with his arms crossed took it upon himself to lean over and smack Tony hard across the face. “Tony Shut the fuck up-“

Steve looked absolutely horrified and pushed Clint backwards, causing the man to stumble but he stood his ground. “Clint! What the hell are you-“

“You shut the fuck up too. We don’t have time for the nice shit, we’ve done that too many times before and it takes too long. For once we’re gonna try it the old fashioned way, I’m snapping you out of this Tony- you hear me?!’” Clint yelled directly into Tony’s face who barely reacted but at least he had his full attention.

“Clint this is not how you deal with a relapse!” Steve snapped, pulling Clint back again by his shoulder trying to get him to listen to him, but it didn’t work.

“Well we’ve tried everything else! We’ve done the talking, we’ve done the therapy we’ve done- fuck we’ve done everything! I’m not trivialising it Steve I’m not saying ‘suck it up buttercup get over it’! I understand addiction, I’m not a fucking idiot but right now all the understanding in the world isn’t gonna stop Peter getting hurt if we don’t do something proactive and nip the shit in the bud!” Clint yelled and surprisingly, Steve took a step back, allowing him to get back up in Tony’s face to continue his rant. He crouched down slightly, forcing Tony to look at him and continued barking. “Not doing this right now. Not yet. You’ll have to save your mental break down for after he’s better, you don’t have time to do this yet alright? And we don’t have the time or the energy to do this, I’m not about to take Pete’s dad away when god knows you’re the only one that’s going to make him feel better right now and I ain’t gonna let you do that either. If you love him and you feel as guilty as you say you do, just be there. Make up for it by being there- don’t you dare find some bullshit excuse to be away from him and don’t make it our responsibility to give you an out. You’re not leaving him-“

Tony huffed a laugh. “I don’t want to but that’s what’s best-“

“You ain’t in your right mind to make that decision right now but Peter needs his Dad. So fucking stand up, wash your face, get some coffee and get back in there and be with your son. Welcome to fatherhood pal, shit gets real rough sometimes.”

“Don’t patronise me-” Tony growled, starting to react and letting Clint know that antagonising him was working. Did Barton think it had all been sunshine and roses raising Peter thus far? Did he have any idea the shit he had to deal with, the shit they’d gone through in the past couple years?
“I ain’t patronising you son of a bitch I’m trying to comfort you and let you know you’re not the first guy who thinks he’s too weak to be a dad. Everytime something bad happened to one of my babies I felt like the worst guy in the world, that I put them in danger that anyone would be better at taking care of them than I am. They don’t deserve a dad like me- all that bullshit you’re spouting but guess what? Whether you like it or not you are his dad. That ain’t your decision to make anymore, there’s no backing out now- and I know damn well Peter ain’t gonna let you give up without a fight. But don’t make him fight, not right now. Like you said he’s been through enough, don’t make him fight anymore.”

“He’s right Tony, I know it’s hard but you can’t afford to crack right now. He needs you, all of you, not just the half zombie you.” Steve added sternly, though it was clear the blond was struggling not to crumble and tell Clint to back off. But Tony needed to hear what they had to say and it worked- at least to some extent. “We’re not saying you should bottle all this up again, far from it because we all know how that pans out. We’re saying you need to let us in, let us work through it with you this time. You’re not on your own, Pete’s not on his own we all need to pull together if we’re gonna cope and move on from this. And the bottom line is I am not, nor will I ever allow you to be around that little boy when you’re intoxicated. He’s seen enough. It’s not going to happen. We’re his family too and we’re going to protect him.”

Steve and Clint half expected a sarcastic response from Tony commenting on Steve’s ability to sound like a cheer leader with his ‘team spirit’ attitude but for once the real Tony made an appearance.

He nodded sullenly and said quietly, “You’re right. You’re both right. I’m sorry.”

“We know.” Clint smiled as both he and Steve held out their hands to help the man up which he took, but a split second later Clint found himself pushed up against the wall before Steve had a chance to stop him.

“If you dare ever lay a hand on me again, Barton I will fucking murder you.” Tony growled lowly, similarly to how he’d threatened Scott back at the compound.

Clint looked stoic for a moment before his face broke out into a wide smile. “There he is, there’s the Tony we know and love! Now does someone need a group hug?”

“I’d rather shit in my hands and clap.” The genius rolled his eyes and pushed himself away from the wall, though he had a very small smirk on his face.

“How about some coffee?” Steve substituted.
“Now that I would appreciate.” Tony sighed as he rubbed a hand over his face. Fuck, whatever he had taken really did do the trick he felt rested for sure, that post sleep haziness washing over him like a warm wave but he knew he couldn’t relish in the feeling for long. Clint and Steve were right he had to face reality. He had to be strong, he couldn’t run away from his responsibilities and he didn’t want to. For once in his life he wasn’t going to stay sober because he felt like he had to, he had a reason to; and that reason was in the other room probably wondering where his dad had run off to.

Except he wasn’t, because Peter was sitting upright giving Tony a sad, almost disappointed look. Aw fuck. “Did you hear all tha-”

“Yup.” Peter said simply, popping the P mirroring his dad a couple hours earlier. He yawned and patted the empty space on the bed next to him. “Can you just come here and gimme a hug ’cause I don’t have the energy to tell you you’re dumb right now. And it sounded like Steve and Clint already ripped you a new one.”

Tony blinked a couple times as it sunk in that Peter had just overheard his friends having to pull him out of an episode and he didn’t have the mental capacity to think about how that knowledge made him feel. “Yeah they did. I deserved it though pal don’t get mad at them.”

“I’m not I’m mad at you.” Peter said calmly making Tony cringe as he climbed into bed beside him, but Peter continued. “You’re the best dad ever and I ain’t letting anyone say otherwise- you included. I know you’re gonna be blaming yourself for a while j-just know that I don’t and even when I get better and you start pushing me away I’ll push right back.”

“I’ll try not to.” Tony said quietly as he started to mess with Peter’s hair. It was clean and unruly so he guess Peter had convinced someone to help him was it whilst he was asleep; probably Nat as she’d have been smart enough to find a way to do it without dragging Peter all the way into a shower. And it helped calm Tony in a weird way too- the kid smelled less sick and more like himself, his apple scented shampoo being much more familiar and comforting.

“Oh and-“ Peter said, pausing to yawn; “success isn’t linear. Relapses happen but they don’t undo all your progress. You should still be proud of everything you’ve achieved- It’s just a blip so don’t- don’t beat yourself up over it-“

Tony chuckled at the sleepy delivery of the boys words of wisdom, as comforting as there were. Man, that kid really had insight way above his years, how could he be so mature but so childish at the same time? It made Tony’s brain hurt trying to wrap his head around it. So he stopped trying and accepted Peter’s pep talk for what it was as he tucked the boy in; the teen could finish his
psychoanalysis after got some rest, lord knows he needed it. “Okay, Dr. Phil let’s take a nap huh?”

Peter yawned again and his eyes started closing, seemingly involuntarily but he did little to fight against it. “Mm, fine but do you need to pee first? ‘Cause I’m not letting you up, you’re too comfy.”

“I’m good bubbly.” Tony chuckled. “Do you need to?”

Peter shook his head then grumbled frustratedly into Tony’s shoulder. “Not that it would matter if I did since I’m wearing a fucking diaper-”

“Pete, don’t start and watch your mouth.” Tony chided gently. “It’s just for now while you’re on bedrest and you don’t have to use it-”

“I don’t intend to.” Peter snapped through gritted teeth as he burrowed angrily into Tony’s side as though he was trying to hide.

“When you’re awake I know, but you can’t help it when you’re asleep kid. Your body has bigger things to worry about than waking you up to go to the bathroom. You’re gonna sleep hard because it’s trying to repair itself and that’s easier to do when you’re asleep.” Tony said calmly, not rising to the anger that Peter was expressing instead doing his best to calm the boy down. He had one hand in his hair and the other arm tucked under him so he could run his hand up and down the teens back. “That and you’re on a metric fuckton of drugs right now.”

“So many drugs.” Peter agreed. “I told Bruce I don’t wanna have morphine anymore though.”

“Because of the puking?”

“Not so much that, that went away with the meloncentipede.”

Despite himself Tony couldn’t bite back the laugh that came out at the boy’s attempted pronunciation of metoclopramide- it wasn’t even close and he doubted the teen even remembered what the drug was called.
“Go ahead, laugh, I’m not even gonna try and say it properly. But the morphine made me all itchy and Bruce kept yelling at me to stop scratching.” Peter finished his sentence with a pout.

“Has he given you anything else for the pain?” Tony’s eyebrows knitted together in concern.

“He’s off cooking me up something now. I’m okay it doesn’t hurt so bad, I’m just tired.” Peter said bravely but Tony could tell the teen was lying. The boy’s eyes drifted shut again but he groaned. Trying to keep himself awake. “Gotta call May May..”

“You can get some rest bub, it’s alright. We’ll call her in just a bit she won’t mind.” Tony sighed softly. There wasn’t much he could do to help, Peter needed specifically concentrated drugs due to his metabolism, it wasn’t like he could just give the kid some tylenol, it wouldn’t touch it; that and he wasn’t about to interfere with whatever Bruce was giving him. He felt helpless...he couldn’t do anything but watch as his klid writhed in pain, pain that he’d caused-

‘No. That’s not true. I can’t take the pain away but I can comfort him. I can be here. That’s something.’ It seemed Clint’s violent but honest words had worked as Tony managed to catch himself before he started back off on the ‘I’m a god awful excuse for a father’ train.

Just as Peter drifted off, clinging to Tony’s shirt like a baby koala a certain god came rushing down the hallway and stuck his head around the doorway. “Natasha told me he has finally awoken!”

“Well actually you big blond bastard he just went back to sleep and if you wake my baby up I’ll skin you alive- so shut up!”
'I Lived Bitch'

Chapter Summary

Not too much happens in this one, at least compared to the other two- Peter gets high off of some superdrugs and him and Tony have some minor breakdowns once the gravity of the situation sets in.
The next chapter should be a little more exciting but I wanted to try and keep up this update schedule for a while longer so here we are XD.

Peter slept soundly for a few hours, comfortably nuzzled up against his father, managing to escape the pain in his sleep for a while. He slept like the dead not moving an inch the entire time (and it took a lot of Will power for Tony not to wake him up in fear he was dead). He only woke up when he felt the blanket covering him start to pull away and he grumbled.

“Shh, careful you’re gonna wake him up!”

“I’m trying my best, but I need to get to his hand so I can give him the pain relief Tony.”

“Just do it slowly. You know how grumpy he gets.”

The blanket started shifting again and Peter growled, tugging back with ferocity and curling further into Tony’s side. “Mine. Get your own blanket, Frodo.”

It was Tony howling with laughter that woke Peter up fully and he opened his eyes to see why his pillow thought it was okay to suddenly laugh hysterically in his ear. “Mm, whaaaat?”

“What did you just call Bruce?!?” Tony managed to say through fits of giggles. It seemed the emotionally burnt out man couldn’t contain himself at all even as Peter and Bruce scowled at him- albeit for different reasons.

“What did I say?” Peter asked innocently as he rubbed at his eyes. He was dreaming that he was going on an adventure to take the one ring to mount doom and it had been very rudely interrupted when Elijah Wood started trying to steal his blankets after Sean Austin ate all their bread.
Bruce shot another dirty look at Tony before he smiled at Peter. “Nothing. Sorry for disturbing you bud, I just came in to give you some different medicine.”

“Oh.” Peter said and squirmed a little; luckily for him Tony had regained his composure enough to notice.

“Give us a sec Bruce, I said he’d call May first thing and she’s going nuts. Can you come back in ten minutes?” Tony said, giving the doctor a pointed look which he understood. It was a blatantly obvious lie- giving Peter an injection wouldn’t take even a minute, it didn’t make sense to prolong the wait just for a phone call but Bruce knew what that look meant, they’d already discussed it.

“Sure thing, lemme know when you’re ready.” The Doctor nodded curtly and quickly headed back out of the room.

Tony wasted no time in standing up and grabbing a familiar plastic receptacle.

“No.” Peter whined grumpily, shoving a hand between his legs. “Bathroom.”

Tony sighed gently. “Pete-“

“Not using that. I wanna go to the bathroom.”

“You won’t make it that far even if I carry you.” Tony ignored Peter’s protests in favour of sitting the boy’s bed up slightly so he wasn’t horizontal anymore and shoving the medical urinal into his hands, leaving no room for argument. “Can you, you know, manage-“

“YES I CAN MANAGE!”

“Okay, okay!” Tony said defensively holding his hands up and backing away, resisting the urge to laugh as he knew Peter would bite his head off if he did. He turned his back to give the teen some semblance of privacy, but apparently that wasn’t enough. “And don’t yell at me-“

“Cover your ears!” Peter groaned through gritted teeth as he struggled to contain himself.
“Oh my god-“ Tony did as he was instructed but he continued talking. “Did you not hear what Bruce said about your kidneys? Just pee dammit-“

“IM TRYING!”

Tony just rolled his eyes and pretending he couldn’t hear the kid screaming since his ears were covered though of course he still could. In fact he could hear everything in great detail and it was incredibly awkward but he decided to push that feeling down, remaining still until Peter grumpily told him it was safe to turn around.

“Better?”

“Yes but I’m not using one of these stupid things again I wanna-“ The teen cut himself off in the middle of his angry rant, looking disturbedly at the bottle in his hands. “Uhh..”

“What’s wrong?”

“Uh- n-nothin!” The teen said shakily, instinctively hiding the bottle behind his back, or at least trying to; he couldn’t exactly maneuver himself in that direction without his stomach screaming at him so he ended up just shoving the bottle (which luckily had a cap or they would have gone through that whole ordeal for nothing) under the covers.

“Peter. I’m not playing games with you, what’s wrong?” Tony said sternly.

“Uhm. It’s red.”

“Your pee?” Tony asked cautiously. He assumed that’s what the boy was talking about but then again one could never be sure with Peter and for all he knew the kid had some other ailment he was hiding.

“Yes my pee! What else would I be talking about?!“ Peter cried indignantly and crossed his arms.
“Who knows with you. Show me.”

“Ew, gross no, I’ll show doctor Banner.”

“Peter.” Tony tried his best to be patient but the boy was being ridiculous. Even so he knew better than to push Peter when he was in a mood. “Fine, is it dark red or bright red?”

“Uh, bright I guess?”

“A lot or a little bit?”

“I don’t know, how much is a lot?”

“Ugh, boy just show me!” The older man snapped.

“Fine but I hope you know this is really, really weird.” Peter sighed and reluctantly held the bottle out for the man to inspect.

“Trust me I know.” Tony rolled his eyes at the obvious statement and gingerly took the plastic urinal with a tissue protected hand, viewing its contents which indeed was very red. “Yikes, okay that’s a lot of blood. More than there has been the last couple da-“

“LALALLALALA!”

“Peter we had to keep track of your urine output. You had an operation on your kidneys for Christ’s sake it had to be monitored.”

“CAN’T HEAR YOU STOP TALKING!”

“Good grief, Fine! Just stop yelling.” Tony shouted over the top of him rubbing his temples. He had a headache himself from the chemicals he’d forcefully shoved into his body a few hours before and he didn’t have the patience to deal with a screaming oversized toddler. “You hurting?”
Peter hesitated for a moment before slowly nodding. As much as he wanted to deny it to spare his dad's feelings, he was in absolute agony. Somehow in his sleep the pain had spread, now spanning the entirety of his lower abdomen and he figured some of it was down to the fact he’s used his bladder for the first time in days- the muscle now being sore and tired. He hated to admit it but he knew there was no point lying, not only because Tony could see right through him but if there was something that could be done there was zero sense suffering in silence.

“Ready for me to call Bruce back in so he can give you something for that?” Tony said gently, his tone softening considerably as he ran his hand through Peter’s hair affectionately. The teen nodded again in response to his question. “Okay.”

The man rose quickly and stuck his head out of the door, calling down the hallway. “Hey hobbit! Kiddo’s ready for ya!”

“Call me that again Tony, see what happens.” Bruce sighed under his breath as he rounded the corner, brandishing a syringe full of clear, green tinted liquid. “Hey Pete, ready to try this stuff out?”

Once again Peter nodded slowly but Tony didn’t fail to notice how the kid burrowed into his side a little more when Bruce approached him.

“It’s not gonna make me throw up though is it..?” He asked in a quiet voice that made him seem younger than his years. Tony found it rather endearing, how Peter could suffer broken ribs and being shot with minimal complaint but the prospect of vomiting scared him.

“Let’s hope not buddy just let me know if you do start feeling any kind of way.” Bruce said optimistically. “I’m only giving you a small dose to see how you’ll react to it, so it'll wear off in a couple hours. I dialed down the concentration compared to what I’d usually give you too, since your metabolism is working a little slower, so you might not feel it right away.”

“Okay, t-thank you.” Peter said quietly, looking away as the doctor injected the liquid into his IV port.

“Bruce.” Tony cleared his throat as he shook the pee bottle behind Peter’s back making the liquid slosh to get the doctors attention.
“Ugh- Dad don’t shake that thing around!” Peter snapped and attempted to grab it out of his hand but Tony stood up out of his chair and out of Peter’s reach.

“Why not? It’s like a demonic lava lamp.”

“Give me that.” Bruce rolled his eyes confiscating the bottle. “I need to run tests on it anyway- it looks worse than it is Pete, don’t freak out too much. You’ll probably be seeing blood for a couple days, but if it’s still there by Friday or it changes any let me know, okay?”

“Okay.” Peter nodded, his face burning. Of course of all the places he could get shot it would be somewhere where people would have to be privy to his bathroom habits. As soon as Bruce disappeared from view again Peter reached out to smack Tony’s arm. “You are so embarrassing!”

“It’s my job.” The man smirked as he dodged the hand. Peter’s reflexes were worse than usual thanks to the cocktail of meds’ he was on.

Peter just huffed and crossed his arms over his chest poutily. “Can I have my phone?”

“I was about to say, you’ve gotta call May remember?” Tony gently reminded as he whipped the device out of his pocket.

Peter’s face fell. “Oh yeah..”

“Best to get it over with huh?” Tony gripped his shoulder to show his support knowing full well how difficult the conversation was going to be.

“I guess.” Peter sighed.

Tony elected to step out of the room, standing just outside the doorway (where he could still see his son of course, lest he go insane with worry should the boy be out of his sight for more than a second) as it was obvious he didn’t feel up to facing the woman with him and the pair would likely want some privacy. Peter didn’t beat around the bush, knowing he’d left his aunt hanging for long enough and he called her immediately. She picked up the FaceTime call after the first ring. “Hi Ma-“
“Peter! Oh my god, are you alright?! Baby I’ve been so worried and they wouldn’t let me come and see you and oh my god it’s so good to see your stupid little face- what on earth were you doing wearing that old suit?! I understand that Tony forgot but you should have known better- I know how much you’re obsessed with those things you must’ve noticed and- oh my god I’m so glad you’re awake!” She rushed out all in one breath, somehow going through every emotion in such a short time frame; she went from excitement, to relief to anger (very very intense anger, the kind that made a slightly younger Peter scared to tell her when he’d broken the TV after trying to harvest some of the wiring for a project he was working on), back to relief again and ultimately she ended up crying.

Peter felt awful for having worried her so much and he wasn’t exactly sure what to say. Sorry didn’t seem appropriate for some reason, and it didn’t really feel like it would cut it- that and the woman didn’t seem to be looking for an apology she was just venting at him. He stayed silent for a moment whilst she regained her composure. “Yeah, me too…so! How was your weekend?”

He got her to chuckle, which he considered a win. If he couldn't hug her at least he could make her smile. She sniffed a laugh as she gave her sarcastic answer; “Awful, a certain young man stood me up for our lunch date.”

Peter gasped dramatically, feigning shock. “He did?! Who is he?! I’ll beat him up! No one stands my aunt up and gets away with it- let me at him!”

“God you’re such a goof.” May laughed again as she wiped the tears from her face with a shaky hand. “That bullet didn’t knock any sense into you then.”

“Nnnnnope! Well maybe it did, but it must’ve come out the other side. That’s the problem with bullets, they usually go straight through you.” Peter grinned at the stupidity of his own joke, only Tony didn’t look impressed, giving the boy a glare from his perch in the hallway. Peter paused for a moment waiting for a smile; When he didn’t get one he added. “Badum tssst.”

The pair chatted for a while, Peter asking how May was doing, then talking to Donna for a little bit, asking if Ned was okay given the news (which of course he wasn’t). Everything was calm for a while, Tony contently listening to the conversations whilst looking through his own phone and updating people on the boy’s progress but then Peter started...acting funny. It wasn’t too noticeable at first considering the kid was hyper and playing up his goofiness for his aunt to try and put her at ease, but it soon started escalating. He went from making crappy jokes to giggling intermittently for no discernible reason to asking really odd questions. Then he just..stopped making sense all together.

“Hey Maaaay?” The teen snickered which made all three adults currently in his audience give him an odd, suspicious glance.
“What is it sweetie?”

“You remember Hamlet?”

“The play or the hamster?”

“The hamster.” Peter said in a weird- was he trying to do a southern accent? It wasn't offensive it was just terrible, like if Bucky had never corrected his southern drawl and lost all of his teeth.

‘Of course his hamster was called Hamlet.’ Tony thought inwardly rolling his eyes though he was interested in seeing where this conversation was going.

“Yeah, what about him?” The woman asked hesitantly, wondering if he had finally figured out the fate of his furry friend. But Peter didn’t answer. “Honey?”

“Hm?” Peter hummed distractedly as he was fiddling with a loose string on his blanket as though it was the most interesting thing in the world.

“What about him?”

“Wha about who?” Peter said sluggishly, missing a few letters when he spoke. He tilted his head drearily and giggled again when May gave him an odd look. “Whatcha lookin’ at me like that for?”

“Petey are you feeling okay?”

Peter let out a low dirty laugh, the kind he usually reserved for when he was getting into something in the lab he knew he shouldn’t be touching. “I feel great~”

“Oh dear.” May said quietly, both concern and amusement filling her voice.

Tony took that as his cue to come back into the room just as the kid started swaying like he was
dancing to music no one else could hear. “Pete?”

“Heeeeeeey Mr. Tony Dad man!” Peter cheered before covering his mouth and laughing hysterically, perhaps at having called Tony dad in front of Mrs. Leeds or maybe just because everything was funny to him in that moment.

“Hi there bud, you doing alright in here?” Tony struggled not to crack a smile.

“Oh yeah jus’ great Mr Starky Iron something or the-“ Peter trailed off looking at the floor with an odd expression on his face, his eyes following something that Tony either couldn’t see or didn’t exist. Oh dear, indeed. “-oh hey Da have you met Donna?!”

Peter suddenly tried to shove his phone into Tony’s face narrowly avoiding dropping it thanks to his naturally grippy spider skin.

“I have Petey we met that night at the hospital remember?” Tony remained stoic, trying to act normal so the clearly high teen didn’t start freaking out.

“Oh yeaaaaah after I puked in the sink and she hit you with her purse!”

“Yeah that- I guess those pain meds are starting to kick in huh?”

“What pain meds?”

“Uh huh, okay, welp- I think it’s time to say goodbye now P-“

“Noooo! I didn’t even get to ask about carbonara yet!” Peter whined, clutching his phone tightly to his chest and making the angriest face he could muster; which looked about as threatening as a newborn kitten.

“We can talk pasta another day Pete!” May spluttered through the phone though her voice was muffled by Peter’s thumb over the speaker.
“Noooo not the pasta the movie!”

“Casablanca?” Donna provided helpfully in the background between fits of giggles.

“What about chewbacca?” Peter said drunkenly before he proceeded to do his impression of a Wookiee whilst simultaneously wrestling with Tony.

“Oh my god- boy give me your phone!” The two ladies on the other end of the phone couldn’t hear anything but a bunch of shuffling and yelling as Tony desperately tried to grapple a super strong teenager who was higher than a kite on industrial strength pain killers- trying not to let him injure himself or others in the process.

“TREASON!”

“Ow! Peter can you sto-“

“MINE!”

“Give me the phone before you drop i- Peter Benjamin don’t you dare bite me! Let go!” That was when the phone flew out of the teens hand and landed with a crash halfway across the room, ending the call prematurely.

“Ugh, see now look what you’ve- hey hey no it’s okay!” Tony turned to give Peter a lecture after retrieving the smashed device expecting the teen to continue being belligerent but instead he was on the verge of tears. “Bubby don’t cry it’s okay I can fix it-“

“You killed aunt May!” Peter suddenly sobbed and flopped backwards onto the bed so he was fully laying down and pulled the sheets over his face.

“What- I- Peter what are you-“

“She was trapped in the phone and now you’ve broken it and- Oh no Donna too! Ned’s never gonna forgive me!” The boy started crying harder and Tony was at a loss of what to do. What the hell had Bruce given him? Whatever it was it sounded like a fun time, just maybe not when you
were recovering from being shot. How the fuck was he meant to deal with this? He was usually on
the other side of a drug induced stupor- damn maybe this was another reason to stay sober-

“No, no, Pete look- they’re not dead- look!” Tony quickly pulled his own phone out and called
May back and the woman picked up instantly, both her and Donna still crying with laughter. “See?!
They’re okay!”

“Oh.” The teen popped his head out from under the covers and immediately stopped crying,
smiling again despite the tears running down his face. “Hey Auntie May!”

“Hi there cookie.” The woman managed to say between laughs.

Peter reached his hand out to grab Tony’s phone but the man held it out of his reach, shaking the
pointer finger on his other hand. “Uh uh. No touchy, just looky.”

Surprisingly Peter didn’t protest and started waving instead. “Okay- Hi Auntie May.”

“Hi sweetie.” May repeated softly trying her best to suppress giggles when Peter launched into a
monologue of why Ned was his best friend and how much he loved him.

The conversation continued from then on, only this time Tony held the camera and didn’t try to
argue about the lack of sense Peter was making. So long as they went along with the gibberish he
was speaking he remained relatively calm, though Tony did have to hold his hand for the duration
of the call after Peter took a sudden interest in his IV.

It was only when the teen announced that he had to pee, then immediately said nevermind, that
May and Tony decided it was time to end the call; both hoping in vain that Peter wouldn’t
remember how foolish he had acted under the influence of the cocktail of drugs Bruce had him on.
Fortunately, all the excitement had worn the boy out and he passed out not two minutes after
saying goodbye (four times then calling back once more for luck) to his aunt, leaving Tony trapped
beneath him.

Thor popped his head in again, having tried multiple times to see Peter but being rejected every
single time. “Tony is everything alright I heard screaming?”

“Get. Banner. Now.” Tony said through gritted teeth, so ferociously even Thor decided it would be
best not to ask questions and quickly scurried off to enact on the man’s request.

Bruce was back down in seconds. “What’s wrong I was testing his-“

“What the fuck did you give him?!“

“Hydromorphone, kind of anyway, that’s the base of it-“

“No more opioids. He went batshit for half an hour, started acting all kinds of crazy. Make something else.”

“Why what did he-“

“Watch the security footage, I’m not reliving that just- just make something else. And Jesus Christ I hope he never goes through an experimental phase in college because I’m this close to ripping out my hair.” Bruce chuckled at that and went to draw Peter’s blood which made Tony cringe and look away; his needle phobia had recently extended to his son by proxy, after having watched countless IV’s and tubes being shoved into him for the past four days. “On second thought, he’s not allowed to go to college. He’s not allowed to go anywhere, ever again.”

“Working through the trauma in a healthy way there, buddy?” Bruce quipped under his breath.

“Shut up Baggins.”

Once again Peter came to a couple hours later, groggy and clinging to Tony. “Mmmrgg.”

“Hey bubs, how you feeling?“

“Gross.” Peter grimaced as he tried to sit himself up unaided, but his stomach hurt too badly to do so and his arms went weak. Tony helped prop him up and Peter groaned again. “I was having this weird dream about you hoping around in a bunny costume for charity and this kid was hitting you with a
“The painkillers Bruce gave you had some side effects but don’t worry. They’re out of your system now.” Tony said quickly. It was obvious on the boy’s face that he remembered what happened before his little nap but he wasn’t about to tease him about it. Not yet anyway, he’d wait for the kid to stop being mortified about the ordeal then he’d pick at him for it, save it for when he was being a brat. But then Peter’s expression changed again to one Tony couldn’t quite read. “You alright?”

“Mhm..” Peter grimaced. “Uhm..can I um..”

“What’s wrong?” Tony said worriedly. That wasn’t an ‘I’m in pain’ face it was something else and it made him panic internally.

“Can I get changed..?” Peter whispered barely audible.

Tony breathed a sigh of relief once again as it was nothing serious. Awkward? Yes. Life threatening? No. Well, so long as he didn’t say anything to stress the kid out or draw attention to the situation because he was pretty sure Peter wouldn’t hesitate to strangle him. “Sure kid. Hold on one second.”

It was clear that the teen wanted to protest, but was too uncomfortable and embarrassed to do so. Tony didn’t make a thing of it, going into Dad mode and moving quickly to try and save what little pride Peter had left. Once they had him settled again the boy remained quiet for a short time and it was obvious he was ruminating over what he’d done and said when he was high on his prescribed medicine.

“You okay?” Tony asked gently after the silence started to become awkward.

“I’m...I’m uh, sorry I tried to bite you..”

The man tried to keep a straight face, he really did, but how could he not laugh when a fifteen year old was apologising, very earnestly, for attempting to bite him? “It’s..it’s okay-“

“Don’t laugh at me!” Peter cried half sounding like he was going to laugh too but simultaneously sounding on the verge of tears.
“I’m sorry, I’m sorry- let’s just forget it happened, okay? It’s not a big deal I won’t tell anyone.”

“Bullshit.”

“Hey.” Tony said warningly. “Language. And I won’t, scouts honour.”

“You weren’t a scout.” Peter sniffed but giggled a little all the same.

“Well you mock my pinky promises so-“

“Ugh, Fine.” The teen rolled his eyes but held out the littlest digit on his right hand.

Tony grinned and reciprocated the handshake. “I won’t tell anyone. But there is something you did that we do need to address.”

“What..?” Peter said apprehensively.

“You have to say sorry to Ned.”

“Ned? What, what did I do to Ned?”

Tony pulled out his phone and showing Peter a screenshot that his best friend had sent to him. “You must’ve done it when I was out of the room.”

It was a picture of Peter, holding up a middle finger and grinning with the caption ‘I lived bitch’ and nothing else, then a series of frantic texts that Ned had sent to him after; which received no reply since not soon after it was sent Peter smashed his phone. Peter started snickering and Tony raised his eyebrows.

“Oh you think that’s funny? Wait till you see what you said to MJ-“
Peter stopped laughing abruptly. “What? W-what did I say to MJ?”

“Eh, it doesn’t matter-“

“Yes it does! What did I say?!“

“I’ll show you when your new phone comes in, mines dying anyway.” Tony shrugged as he tucked his phone back into his pocket, smirking slyly and Peter gave him the best death glare he could muster.

“You’re evil.” Peter scowled

“Yup.” Tony popped the P and grinned when Peter stuck his tongue out at him childishly. Though the teen didn’t stay mad at him for long, another sure sign that he wasn’t feeling himself, as he yawned and patted the bed beside him; non verbally demanding Tony’s presence to which the man graciously obliged. He spared a thought as to how manipulative the teen must really be if he had turned Tony Stark into someone who enjoyed snuggles. He’d managed to deny it to himself thus far but after three days on being unable to cuddle the kid he realised that he actually missed it- Jesus Christ he really was becoming a dad fuuuu-

His minor existential crisis was interrupted when Peter yawned again and manually placed Tony’s hand on his head to mess with his hair, making the man smile. “You can go back to sleep kiddo, it’s not like you’ve got places to be.”

“I wanna stay awake for more than an hour.” Peter pouted. “Besides I’m not putting on one of those things again.”

“Pete-“

“I don’t want a discussion! I’m stating facts.” The teen snapped when he realised he’d just opened a dialogue that he really didn’t want to have.

Fortunately for him Tony got the hint and moved on quickly. “How’s the pain?”
“Not too bad.” The teen said as he shifted in an attempt to find a position that alleviated the strain on his abdomen. The drugs Bruce had given him had all but dissipated from his system and he could feel everything going on within his stomach. The ache was like a heavy weight was sitting on him, accompanied with deep, sharp pains coursing through him if he so much as breathed too deeply. He was doing his best to ignore it but once Tony drew his attention back to it he was feeling it full force.

“You’re a shitty liar.”

“Yeah well you ain’t taught me how to yet.” Peter grumbled and Tony gave him a pointed look for his sass. “What?”

“Don’t lie to me about this. If you’re hurting, tell me.”

“You can’t do anything about it anyway so why bother? All it’s gonna do is make you feel bad.”

The comment seemed to upset the man as he furrowed his brows slightly, making Peter realise he probably should have worded that better; no better way to comfort someone who feels responsible for your near fatal injury that there’s nothing they can do to help. Nice one Parker. “I can get Bruce to-“

“No. No more drugs. I ain’t taking any more-“

“Peter you can’t have zero pain relief, don’t be ridiculous-“

“I’m not, I just don’t want to puke, get itchy or hallucinate- is that so much to ask?”

Tony knew the kid had a point, he wouldn’t exactly be jumping at the opportunity to accept more medicine after what Peter had gone through in one day alone but he also knew that Bruce was a good doctor. He’d eventually find the right drug but they had to be patient. Then again try explaining that to a highly emotional teenager; a teenager that was a stubborn as Tony Stark himself when he wanted to be, now being one of those times. “Bub-“

“No. The pain is manageable. I’d rather this than..than any more of that. Please.” Peter said finally,
though there was a slight begging tone to his voice and Tony caved in. As much as he wanted to argue he just... couldn’t. Usually he would have ignored Peter’s attempts to persuade him, even when he did have a point, but after spending three days wondering whether or not he’d ever get to argue with the kid again- or if he’d ever even hear his voice again- he didn’t have the drive to do so.

“Aright, I’m not gonna fight you on it. It’s your body if you don’t want anything right now that’s fine, but you have to promise me if it gets too bad you’ll let me know?”

“Okay, I promise.” Peter nodded. It sounded fair and he was pretty sure it was impossible for it to hurt anymore than it did at that point.

“Good boy.” Tony said gently as he smoothed the boy’s hair out. “Christ what did Nat do to your hair?”

“Nat?” Peter tilted his head confusedly.

“Yeah, who washed your hair?”

“Not Nat. I haven’t seen her since the whole- well you know.” Peter cut himself off, not willing to repeat the events lest he see that guilty look on Tony’s face again. “Clint did it.”

“Clint Barton washed your hair?” Tony asked skeptically as he tried to imagine the scene.

“Yeah. Bruce and Steve tried to at first but they got soap in my eye.”

That was when Tony lost it. “What in the fuck-“

“Stop laughing you asshat it wasn’t funny! It burned!” But Peter was laughing at the memory too.

“Wow, you take one minor overdose and you miss the whole party-ow!” He was cut off by the teen smacking him in the arm a little too hard.
“That’s not funny, Tony.” Peter deadpanned.

“Uh uh, we don’t hit!” Tony said seriously before realising what came out of his mouth.

Peter gave him a blank stare. “You realise I’m fifteen not five right?”

“Well then you should know better.”

“I do know better and I also know better than to make jokes about people’s substance addictions—“

“Alright, okay, I’m sorry mom- I am.” Tony started saying sarcastically but changed his tune when Peter raised his arm threatening to elbow him in the ribs if he continued making light of it.

“You better be.” Peter said gruffly before settling back against the bed.

Bruce came in not a while later to check on Peter, going over his data and making adjustments to the machines he was hooked up to. When Tony stepped out to make a phone call (to Pepper by the sounds of it as Peter heard a woman’s voice that wasn’t his aunts and Tony’s own voice softened dramatically) Peter took it upon himself to ask some follow up questions about his condition; he still didn’t understand the severity of the injury to his kidney he just knew that it wasn’t good from the way Tony kept dancing around the subject. He knew Bruce would be frank with him as the doctor always made the effort to treat Peter as his equal when he was his patient. It was one of the many reasons the teen refused to see any other doctors.

“So what happens now? With my kidney I mean. Like, you said they’re not doing too great and because of my metabolism and stuff..?” The teen rambled out hesitantly. Peter’s brain was still a little foggy, from the post sleep haze but luckily Bruce understood the message he was trying to convey.

“You’re going to have to be really careful from now on if you wanna keep what’s left of it and don’t wanna end up on dialysis.” The doctor started. Bruce pretended to be checking something over on his tablet as he spoke, distracting himself with fiddling with a machine that was already well adjusted, just so he didn’t have to make eye contact with the boy; he wasn’t doing so out of rudeness, he just understood Peter felt more comfortable when the atmosphere in the room was kept at a casual, non confrontational level. If Bruce took the calm, level headed approach the boy was a lot more likely to absorb the information being given to him, as opposed to the man giving him the stern talking to he wanted to. Besides, he’d let Tony and Steve take over when it came to
giving Peter a harsh lecture, which they no doubt would in the near future. “I know you’re prone to bladder infections and you usually treat them yourself or wait for them to go away on their own, but you can’t do that anymore. You need to let me know as soon as one starts so I can get you on antibiotics straight away. Like I said, the remaining parts of your kidneys are under a lot of strain so an infection could be really dangerous.”

“What about a transplant? I know you said how my body would probably reject a donor but you can like, clone organs now right?”

“In theory yes, it wouldn’t be hard to replicate your tissue. But I wouldn’t feel comfortable doing that, I don’t know enough on the subject and to clone an entire organ would be risky at the best of times, let alone in someone with an immune system like yours. I struggled to get your own kidney to take once I put it back in, so making a new one and trying to get it to acclimate would carry a lot of risk- I don’t want to put you through another op unless it’s one hundred percent necessary, especially if there’s a chance it wouldn't work. If we can keep you healthy through some lifestyle changes and monitoring, I’d much rather do that than have to resort to medical intervention again.”

“Fair enough…” The teen sighed to himself. ‘There goes that idea then.’

“You have to start drinking more Peter.” Bruce stressed, actually looking the boy in the eyes for the first time since they started their conversation, breaking his own rule. As much as he wanted Peter to be comfortable around him, especially given the personal details the pair often exchanged since he’d basically become the boy’s general practitioner, he had to drill home how important it was. “I know it’s hard, especially at school but you could get really sick if you don’t start taking care of yourself properly. Do you drink anything during the day?”

“Uhm yeah, like, I don’t go all day without drinking. That would be impossible.” Peter said quietly.

“Well how much do you usually drink in a day? Walk me through it.” Bruce said gently as he resumed pretending to be preoccupied to try and take the pressure off of Peter; he knew it was difficult for the boy to talk about so he was trying his best to ease him into the conversation.

“Whatever I drink at breakfast..which is usually not much ‘cause I don’t wanna..you know, on my way to school.”

Of course Bruce knew what the boy was implying so he didn’t force him to clarify himself, instead he just went along with it. “Right and why would that be an issue? I understand you restricting your fluid intake at school because you don’t like asking to be excused, but you travel in alone,
“Y-Yeah, it’s not that. It’s just uhm, the public bathrooms on my route aren’t the nicest and I can’t always w-wait until I get to a nice one or Ned’s or to school..”

“Okay fair enough.” Bruce said casually though under the surface it concerned him. Tony had mentioned to the doctor in the past how Peter often seemed certain bathrooms ‘unsafe’ or ‘unusable’ and they put it down to the kid being a minor germaphobe but what Peter was describing seemed to be a bit more than an aversion. It’s one thing being a little picky when it comes to the cleanliness of a public bathroom and trying your best to avoid it but it’s another to just not drink so you won’t have to. As much as Bruce wanted to keep patient confidentiality, something that was important to him not only morally but also practically as he knew he had to keep Peter’s trust or the boy would withhold important information from him in the future; he knew he had to mention it to Tony or at the very least Peter’s councillor. As much as he didn’t want to, if Peter was having certain anxieties that were causing behaviours that could lead to affecting his physical health, he had a duty as a physician to intervene and prevent that. Maybe he could try and convince the boy to talk to his psychologist himself, though last time he tried that hadn’t gone down so well...he’d only just gained the boy’s trust back…

He continued questioning the boy whilst he had an internal debate. “So you don’t drink until you get to school. Then how much do you have?”

“I try and have like, one bottle of water before lunch b-but I can’t always stick to that if I have gym ‘cause coach always plays caps PSA on the importance of hydration.”

“Maybe you should listen to that.” Bruce chuckled but stopped when Peter frowned. “After lunch?”

“I might have a can of soda or something, depending on who’s class I’ve got.” The teen shrugged and it concerned Bruce that he stopped talking after that.

“And that’s it?” The boy nodded. “Until you get home?”

“Uh huh, then I’ll chug some water before I go down to the lab or whatever. And my back will ache for a lil’ while but it goes away after I pee a couple times.”

“Yeah, that’s all the toxins building up in your kidneys getting flushed out Pete. That’s- that’s right?”
really not healthy.” As much as he didn’t want to shame the kid or guilt trip him, there was no sugarcoating it. He was surprised the kid hadn’t had some severe problems sooner. “How long have you been doing that?”

“Uhh..I mean..a while.” By a while he meant once he started high school. “I’ve uh, never really liked going at school, you know, so- b-but I-I thought I was okay, like I wasn’t getting any UTI’s or anything so-“

“That doesn’t mean you weren’t hurting yourself, bud.” Bruce chided gently. He wasn’t about to launch an attack on the kid for something he couldn’t help but unfortunately someone else was there who was.

“You told me you’d stopped dehydrating yourself at school.” Tony said from the doorway making both Peter and Bruce jump slightly.

Peter’s eyes grew wide and he kicked himself for not realising his dad was there sooner. Stupid Spidey senses not working like the oughta- “I..I did..for a while b-but you know I hate asking to leave and-“

“That’s not an excuse, Peter.” The bearded man said flatly.

“It’s not an excuse, it’s an explanation.” Peter huffed, repeating Tony’s own words back at him. “And it’s not always on purpose either I just forget and I don’t get time and-“

“Well that stops now.” Tony cut him off and walked fully into the room, sitting himself in the seat opposite Peter’s bed as opposed to next to it and crossing his arms. “I’ll go to the school myself and tell the teachers you don’t need to ask to leave. If you need to, go you get up and walk out no questions asked and I’ll tell Ned to remind you to drink so you don’t ‘forget’.”

Peter shook his head quickly at the awful suggestion. “That’s embarrassing and people will stare at me more if I just start walking out and they’ll all know where I’m going and-“

“So? Everyone uses the bathroom and you have a medical condition. No one is judging you.” Tony shrugged. Of course he was playing devil’s advocate at that point because he understood Peter’s anxieties completely having lived with the kid for almost a year and known him twice as long; but he was trying to get the kid to see it from an outside perspective.
“How do you know that?” Peter said snappily, sounding like such a stereotypical teenager that Bruce had to bite back a laugh.

“Because I don’t have anxiety and a weird phobia of people knowing when I have to take a leak, take it from someone with a normal brain—nobody cares. They might think about it for a split second but then they’ll move on. It doesn’t matter.”

“It’s not weird and my brain is normal and it matters to me..” Peter said very quietly, casting his eyes away from the two men and wrapping his arms around himself.

“I didn’t mean it like that.” Tony said gently, changing his tactic quickly. He ought to have worded that a lot better. ‘Nice one Tony, give the boy even more of a complex about his anxiety— that’ll make him more likely to come to you with his problems for sure! Make him more self conscious why don’t ya? Why not belittle him for his stutter too, make this a real party!’

With the angel on his shoulder screaming in his ear Tony tried again. “Look think about it this way—when you hear someone else ask to go to the bathroom, what do you think?”

“Well, nothing.” Peter shrugged simply as if the answer was obvious.

“Exactly. So when you do it no one thinks twice—”

Peter sighed loudly and threw his head back. “I know that, I’m not stupid I just-I don’t know why it- ugh!”

“P come on, explain it to me.” He meant it genuinely, he just wanted to understand the teens though processes but before Bruce could interject that maybe now wasn’t the best time to try and psychoanalyse him Peter spoke up for himself.

“No because you won’t understand- I-I don’t even know, okay?! If I knew I would have done something about it and if it was logical it wouldn’t be an issue so j-just- just stop asking me!”

“Okay. Okay, I’m sorry, I’ll drop it.” Tony wanted to press the issue further but he didn’t have the heart to. He just wanted to avoid the teenager getting upset again because he’d seen enough tears to last a lifetime; he conceded that they’d approach the issue at a more opportune time, probably before Peter went back to school which would be a while away yet. If Tony even let him go back
to school, the idea of homeschooling became more and more appealing every time he saw the teen wince in pain.

“Thank you.” Peter said huffily but he visibly relaxed as the topic was dropped.

“Oh and Pete I forgot to mention.” Bruce hummed idly as he went to change Peter’s IV.

“What is it Dr. Banner?”

“You need to avoid salt, since sodium can raise your blood pressure and your kidneys would have to work harder, same with caffeine. Try and avoid potassium and phosphorous-“

“Wait-What?!”

Bruce didn’t even have to question what part the boy was objecting to, he already knew. Everyone in the tower was privy to the minor caffeine addiction Peter had developed in his mentors footsteps; not to mention his proclivity for consuming man vast quantities of carbonated beverages with Thor during their gaming binges. “I mean it. Nothing that will impact your kidneys, they’re working hard enough as it is.”

The teen didn’t bother to argue, not with Tony in the room. He just threw himself back on the bed groaning loudly, both in frustration and at the fact he just sent waves of pain rippling through his abdomen with the motion. “Ow.”

“That was a smart idea huh?” Tony rolled his eyes but made his way over to the other side of Peter’s bed anyway and held his hand while Bruce addressed changing the boy’s bandages.

“I’m sorry Pete, just try and lay still for me.” Bruce winced as he peeled back the gauze. Since the incident with the Kree where the man had to reopen Peter’s wound to counteract his body’s freakish natural healing process, the doctor had been working on developing a material that would help slow that process down. The gauze he made was lined with an enzyme that would break down Peter’s webbing as his body produces it, leaving the wound open longer; though initially that would sound like it would be detrimental it was actually incredibly important that Bruce was able to monitor and control the rate in which Peter’s body healed, so he could ensure that his muscles were joining together in the appropriate way, lest he have problems in the future. However the boy’s healing factor was starting to pick up again, Bruce hypothesised it was due to Peter being awake. When he was in a medically induced coma (even an accidental one) his body went into a
hibernation type state but now he was up and moving, albeit a lot more than he should be, it was as though his metabolism had kicked in again and started accelerating more rapidly than Bruce had expected.

“Hmm.” The doctor hummed under his breath subconsciously.

“What’s hm?” Tony asked trying but failing to keep his voice calm. He’d known Bruce for too long he knew what that noise meant. That was his ‘hmm I don’t know what the fuck is going on’ noise.

“Nothing to worry about, Papa Bear.”

“Ew.” Peter and Tony said in unison though Peter sounded a lot more amused by the pet name.

“Mm- hss- so uh- w-when can I get up and start walk-ING around?” Peter asked shakily, in an attempt to distract himself from the pain.

“Not yet.” Tony and Bruce said at the same time.

“C-care to be a little more specific there d- doc .” Peter stresses the last word giving Tony a pointed look. He knew if it was down to his father he’d be ok he’d rest for the next six years that’s why he hadn’t asked him.

“Pete, you’ve been awake for less than twelve hours. Give yourself some time.”

“It’s been almost four days-“ But as the words left his mouth he suddenly got this distant look on his face as though something had just clicked in his head.

“And two surgeries.” Bruce pointed out. “I’d say give it another day or so and we’ll try you walking-“

“Oh no!” Peter cried out suddenly and sat up, right as Bruce was redressing his wound.
“What?!" The doctor recoiled thinking he’d really hurt him or that something equally dramatic had happened.

“My research paper was due in on Monday!”

“Oh Peter for fuck sake you nearly gave me a heart attack.” Tony sighed and grabbed his chest. He wasn’t kidding he genuinely felt his arc zap him when the teen shouted. “You’re worried about a stupid essay right now?!”

“W-when it counts towards my final grade y-yes! That- oh my god that’s twenty percent- shit, shit, shit-“

The monitors Peter was strapped to started beeping, showing a spike in heart rate and blood pressure, which wasn’t good when Bruce had just reopened a cut in the boy’s stomach and he was already known for being a bleeder.

Tony grabbed one of the boy’s forearms to try and get his attention. “Hey, hey calm down. It’s okay bub, don’t freak out. The school knows what happened they’re not gonna bug you for missing an assignment-“

“But I didn’t miss it! I-it’s done I’ve had it done for weeks I just- I just had to hand it in and Mr. Powell said that anyone who misses the deadline with get an automatic zero-“

“Well Mr. Powell can kiss my ass if he thinks he’s giving my son a zero.” Tony said automatically. “He can make an exception. I’ll call him myself and Ned can hand it in for you. Don’t panic alright? No ones failing any classes buddy.”

“Okay.” Peter nodded, trying to take deep breaths. He wasn’t sure why he was panicking so much, these were definitely extenuating circumstances and to be honest he couldn’t give a rats ass about geography anyway- the class was easy. It was like his brain had waited for something small to happen so it could kick start a panic attack; the straw that broke the camels back- he had yet to face the reality of the situation he was in, how serious it was, how he’d almost died for the second time in as many years- third time if he counted the time he fell in the lake because lord knows he couldn’t swim.

And he was hurt. Bad. So bad, god it hurt. He’d been shot and yeah he would heal but- But Tony. God Tony was never going to forgive himself, nor would he ever let Peter out of his sight again.
Shit- he’d probably never let him out as Spider-Man again, at the very least not on his own. He was going to lose everything, there was no way Tony would let him be an agent anymore not after this- but he had entered a contract right? He wouldn’t get kicked out so easily? But then again Fury had made it obvious from the beginning he didn’t approve of a teenager working with them and he’d caused so many problems for the man and he’d made such a stupid mistake going out in that suit- fuck!

“Pete, look at me. You need to calm down, deep breaths in through your nose, come on do ‘em with me.” Tony spoke calmly, but internally he was panicking just as much as Peter was. He found dealing with the teens panic attacks difficult enough at the best of times but now, after everything that had happened, after almost seeing him die he- he couldn’t bare it. Once again he was powerless to help. All he could do was watch as his kid suffered and his face. He looked petrified. That’s probably how he looked after he got shot, after Tony let him get shot.

He had to try and get a handle on himself if he was going to try and talk Peter down from his own panic attack but his head was swimming and he didn’t know what to do, even though he’d done it countless times.

But Tony wasn’t alone, luckily Bruce was there and he managed to step in and calm the situation before it got dire like he always did. “T, go take five I’ve got him.”

Tony tried to protest. He’d promised he’d be there for the kid from now on he didn’t want to leave him when he was so upset. But then again he wasn’t being of much use. “I’m fi-“

“I wasn’t asking. Go.” Bruce said authoritatively and crouched next to Peter’s bed. “Don’t worry bud, he’s gonna go and talk to the school now, you’ve got nothing to worry about.”

Tony left the room quickly, listening to Bruce talk his son down as he walked away; something he should have been doing. It shouldn’t be down to his friends to deal with the hard stuff, it was his job. Peter was his kid, if he couldn’t handle a simple panic attack how was he meant to help the boy recover. And he was walking away when everything in his body was telling him to go back. It felt wrong, like something in his stomach was physically trying to pull him back in the other direction- the right direction. For fuck sake Tony how dare you walk away from your kid the second things get out of hand-

No. No that wasn’t fair. If he was gonna be there for Peter he needed to take care of himself too. Despite himself he heard a piece of advice Steve had given him months ago resound in his head ‘you can’t feed others from an empty bowl’.
‘Curse you Steve, get out of my head.’ The man thought grumpily, but the words of wisdom were right. He needed to get a handle on himself. It was just seeing Peter’s face..he never wanted to see his boy look so scared again. He didn’t want him to be afraid of anything because Tony himself was scared of everything right now- he’d nearly lost everything, so quickly. His whole life would have ended so fucking quickly, from a couple of moments and bad decisions. One argument, one suit and one bullet nearly ruined everything. And it was his fault.

God the urge to go out and buy a bottle of liquor was stronger than ever but for the first time in his life Tony was stronger. He wasn’t about to throw everything away because of a feeling. What was it he’d said to Peter that night before he left? “You’re old enough now to know that feelings don’t always equal reality”? Of course he regretted those words now and the context in which he said them in, but the sentiment still rang true. It might have felt like he couldn’t handle things but that didn’t make it true. Maybe Steve was right maybe it was time to cut himself some slack. He’d just watched his son almost die and he’d somehow managed not to completely lose his shit. Yes he’d come pretty close but he hadn’t.

‘It’s only a matter of time, Tony. You’re too weak.’

“Oh shut the fuck up Howard you dead bastard, no one asked you.” Tony said out loud as he stood in the hallway and lent his head against the wall, trying to take some deep breaths of his own. “You’re hardly one to dish out parental advice.”

The last thing he wanted right now was to hear his dad’s voice in his head. Hell he’d rather hear Steve’s and that was saying something. But he heard another voice and this one wasn’t imaginary.

“Hearing voices now are we, Stark?” It was Nat. When Tony opened his eyes and looked to the left of him his friend was leaning nonchalantly against the wall with her arms crossed, quirking an eyebrow up at him.

For once Tony couldn’t think of anything witty or clever to say. “Shut up.”

The assassin feigned offence and put a hand on her chest in mock horror. “Ouch! You took me right back to the first grade with that one, T.”

He just sighed in response and shut his eyes again, bouncing his forehead on the wall. “Can’t a guy have a mental break down in peace around here?”
The woman shrugged. “I would offer you a hug but-“

“Dear god no. Why does everyone suddenly think it’s acceptable to touch me? When have I ever made it obvious that I would appreciate a hug from anyone other than shortie in there?” Tony said in disgust, the comment giving him enough energy to push himself off of the wall and upright again.

“But I was going to say we’d both start burning like a sinner in church.” The woman smirked and Tony rolled his eyes. “God you’re like one of those wind up dolls. Just gotta crank you up with some sarcasm and you’re good to go.”

“Did you just call me a doll? Bruce will be very upset.”

“And I there we go, see? Now I wish I’d never come to comfort you, you’re back on your game already.” Nat held out her arm letting her palm slap against her leg as it fell in a failed ‘ta-dah!’ motion.

“You call that comfort?”

“Well it stopped you talking to the ghost of fucked childhood’s past didn’t it?”

“I’m gonna need a young priest and an old priest to exorcise that demon.” Tony yawned and rubbed his temples. “And maybe some Advil.”

“No pills for you.” Nat said, lightly slapping Tony’s wrist. “Feel the pain. Embrace it. Let it make you stronger-“

“Yes, thank you scary Russian mobster, I’ll settle for some coffee or some sleep. Preferably in a bed not a chair.” Tony chuckled as the pair took a very slow walk back towards Peter’s room. Tony hadn’t realised but in his panic he’d walked a considerable distance away from where the boy was being kept, man he had some deep rooted psychological issues to work through. Ugh, that meant therapy, ugh.

“You mean you’re actually gonna sleep in your room tonight?”
“No, I’m gonna bring a cot over now there’s room. Since Peter’s awake we got rid of the brain wave machine.” Tony yawned again. God he was exhausted but he doubted he’d get any sleep.

“Of course.” Nat said simply.

By the time they walked back Tony was feeling considerably calmer. Maybe there really was something to the whole ‘not bottling everything up until you explode’ thing. He did feel marginally better. Not by much but enough to the point where he felt he could face his son again without bursting into tears. It was like he’d released just a little bit of pressure from the emotion tank and that was enough to sustain him and he liked that analogy. It gave him the false sense that it was something he could control. Like he could pick and choose when to let off some steam- or had a mini break down, one of the two, toma to macho. It made things just a little bit easier. When they reentered the room Peter looked a lot more calm too though he immediately started apologising when Tony walked in.

“Tony I’m so sorry I freaked out over nothing I didn’t mean to like, trigger you or whatever that was, I’m really-“

“Stop talking, no more apologies please we have bigger things to worry about.” Tony held his hand up to stop the kid rambling himself into another panic attack and just continued walking; flopping down in the seat next to Peter, kissing the top of his head as he did so. “Oh and you have a visitor.”

“Nat!”

“Hey there poodle.” Nat grinned at him as she tousled his hair. The comparison to the curly dog wasn’t incorrect; the kid’s hair having been left to air dry was corkscrewed and sticking up in all directions, looking like a bad party store afro wig. “So how was your first time being shot?”

“You know it’s wasn’t as bad as I expected it to be.” Peter chuckled but Tony gave them both a death glare. “But I don’t intend to make a habit of it.”
Chapter Summary

Hi! Sorry for the lack of updates over the past couple days, life's been a little crazy! Not sure how I feel about this chapter, it's definitely one of the weaker ones but hey-ho I like the next one better :3
(((CW for diaper mentions in this chapter as well as I know it's not everyone's cup of tea. I won't be going into anymore extreme detail about the whole issue going forward but unfortunately it's a necessary evil when you're bedbound after a kidney op I'm afraid :p )))

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You mean to say everyone has been allowed to see the boy other than I?!”

Steve sighed gently trying to calm the situation before it turned into an all out war. “Thor it wasn’t intentional it just ended up that way-“

“Bloody balderdash and you know it!”

“Balderdash.” Nat snickered under her breath causing Thor to give her a glare.

“This is not a laughing matter! I care for Peter just as much as all of you so why aren’t I allowed to see the youngling?!”

“No one said you can’t!” Clint barked back having spent the last hour having the exact same debate with the god but he just refused to listen.

“Stark keeps kicking me out and so did Banner!”

“Yes, because Peter was sleeping. He needs to rest. None of us have been allowed up there when he’s asleep.” Steve sighed again. He was just trying to fill out an incident report, why did everything have to be dropped in his lap? He’d finally gotten five minutes to himself after spending
the last few days running from pillar to post trying to deal with the school, the media, all of Tony’s work arrangements, as well as trying to clean the entire common floor top to bottom (though in fairness he had inflicted that last one on himself as a form of catharsis)- he just wanted to fill out the report he’d been avoiding. The one about him witnessing what happened to Peter, the newest reason why he couldn’t sleep at night. Now Clint and Thor had run into his room screaming bloody murder at each other (which in itself wasn’t an uncommon occurrence) and Nat had come along for the ride. He was trying to keep his cool, but even the male reincarnation of Mother Theresa had his limits. “Can you please take this elsewhere?”

But at that point Clint and Thor had already moved on yelling at each other for something else and weren’t paying him any attention. “Guys.”

Again nothing, just raised voices, not even a look of recognition. “Guys!”

That’s it. “GUYS!”

Both men visibly jumped and turned to face Steve, looking like two school boys who’d just been caught fighting by their principal. It was shocking to hear Steve raise his voice above a reasonable level, especially given the fact that he had patience a mile long- but clearly not today and they both knew better than to push him. They promptly closed their mouths and the blond soldier felt a stab of guilt (embarrassment, even) at having lost his composure like that.

“Look, Thor, this isn’t some kind of conspiracy okay? At least not on Bruce’s end. Tony maybe, but in all honesty the things he’s had to go through the last couple days- if he’s being an unreasonable jerk, just cut him some slack for once-“

“Oh like he isn’t always an unreasonable jerk.” Nat huffed a laugh earning her disapproving looks from everyone else on the team.

“Nat that’s not helping. And Clint I’m kind of relying on you to help run the show here, you said you’d pick up dinner.” Steve said snappily in a tone that didn’t suit him.

“I did Steve. Three hours ago. You were off talking to the executor of Tivan.” Clint said gently, all anger leaving him as he looked concernedly at his friend, who was clearly running himself ragged again; as much as they jumped on Tony for doing it, Steve often did the same thing when he was stressed. He’d work himself to near exhaustion as though it would make up for whatever he felt guilty about. The last time he did so was after the kidnapping incident with the MV and the man ended up passing out on his desk every night for almost a month.
Steve shook his head distractedly. He’d forgotten all about that meeting as he’d immediately been whisked off to the next one. “Oh. Right. Sorry.”

“It’s cool you’ve got leftovers in the fridge-“ Clint started, trying to suggest that Steve take a break to go and eat but that wasn’t well received as Steve was more concerned about someone else.

“Did Tony eat?”

“What do you think?” Clint sighed.

Steve shook his head and started to stand up as he ran a hand through his hair, trying to tidy the stacks of paper that littered his desk. Maybe Tony was right, maybe he did need to start going digital because his office was a mess; even to him the prospect of having to sort through all the paper was a daunting task and he usually proved himself on his organisational skills- Dang it he hadn’t even scheduled people in to cover Peter’s patrol for the rest of the week; when one person was called out it messed up the whole system. He had so much rearranging to do and he’d forgotten. “Ugh, okay I’ll talk to him after I’m finished up here. Thank you. Nat who’s stationed in-“

“Hey! What about-“ Thor started to yell indignantly but Steve held up on hand to stop him as he wrote with the other.

“JARVIS?”

The AI sprang to life immediately. “Yes Captain Rogers, what can I help you with?”

“Could you let Thor know when Peter next wakes up and is in an appropriate state to see him, with Tony’s permission of course.” Steve stressed the latter part of that sentence whilst making direct eye contact with the god, letting him know that he couldn’t charge up there whenever he wanted; even if Peter was up and happy to see him at the end of the day he was Tony’s son and if Tony wanted to keep Thor away he was well within his rights to do so. The god often hyped the boy up beyond a reasonable level, and while Steve could see why a boost in moral might do Peter good he also needed to rest; so having his favourite playmate visit him may not be the best idea, especially when Thor gave bone crushing hugs.

“Certainly sir.” JARVIS said ‘happily’ with a chime indicating that he’d made a note.
“Thank you. There. Happy?” Steve looked back at Thor tiredly.

“Yes! Thank you!” Thor beamed and went to leave the room, barging past Clint and sneering at him, which the archer reciprocated. When they got like that Steve didn’t feel like Tony was the only one trying to parent a member of their team; trying to keep Thor and Clint from killing each other was like trying to herd cats. Then again everyone was emotional and volatile, so he gave them the benefit of the doubt that they weren’t being deliberately difficult- but for goodness sake he couldn’t do everything. It shouldn’t be down to him to handle their petty squabbles, even if it was mildly flattering that they respected him enough as an authority figure and he’d peacekeeper; he just wished he had his peacekeeping partner Bruce there to help him. They tended to work together to resolve arguments within the household but he was busy trying to concoct spider safe pain medicine so Steve was on his own. It was like everything had been left down to him in Tony’s absence, it was so much, but then again he felt he deserved it after what he let happen to Peter.

Shaking himself off a little Steve turned his attention back towards that week’s schedule. “Okay, Nat who’s stationed to cover the warehouses on the upper east side? It was meant to be Rhodey but now he’s covering over on sixty-four because—”

“It’s already been taken care of. I messed around with the router. Cloak kicked up a bit of a fuss but I told him to can it unless he wanted to end up on the shipyard with Jones.” Nat shrugged simply.

Steve turned around to give her a shocked look before he quickly typed in his passcode in his computer; sure enough she was right. The time stamp on the file showed that agent Natasha Romanov had rearranged it hours ago and everyone had agreed to the change in shifts. Well that was a relief. “Thank you Nat, gosh I’m sorry. I meant to figure it out earlier but I got distracted trying to set up a conference with DeltaCorp and, I can’t even remember the other one- Roxxon I think? There’s so many people to talk to... I don’t know how Tony does all this—”

“Well Tony doesn’t have to do all this and Captain America stuff.” Nat offered and Clint nodded his head in agreement but it did little to comfort the man.

“I haven’t even had time to make a dent in my work load, look at all this!” Steve gestured to the piles of paperwork scattered across the room; proposals for projects, trade agreements, meetings and accounts- piles of jumbled jargon that Steve could barely understand. He was just trying to hold down the fort, convince Tony’s associates to put projects on hold until Tony was ready to pick it back up again but everyone was so impatient. No wonder Tony was on the brink of a mental break down constantly and kicked up such a fuss when he had to take time off work- there wasn’t a pause button in his world, there was too much and too many people relying on him to make decisions. Where did the man find the time to do all of these things, let alone do paperwork on them? And still managing to balance being Iron Man and now a dad..there just weren’t enough
hours in the day no wonder the man survived on caffeine and sarcasm. Steve had to admit, he really had a newfound appreciation for his friend after getting a glimpse into his work life. Of course he had always admired his ability to multitask so fluently but this...this was something else.

Nat could see the panic rising in Steve’s chest and she was quick to offer her support in the form of a hand on his shoulder and a slightly rude but thoughtful comment. “Then let us help. I know you’re doing ol’ weird-beards job but you don’t have to turn into him. We can all do our part.”

“I know. I know you guys are willing to. I’m just-“

“You’re taking all this on because you feel responsible for what happened. Yeah. It’s obvious. But let’s cut the shit out alright? We’ve got one depressed asshole hanging out upstairs we don’t need you wallowing in guilt too.” Nat said blankly before Clint had a chance to stop her. She really wasn’t the most tactile person but then again, sometimes it was helpful to have someone put things bluntly rather than beat around the bush, especially in their household. Despite her often rough and stoic demeanour Nat was really insightful, especially in emotional matters. She’d sit back quietly and watch things unfold, only interjecting when things started to get out of hand, like they were with Steve and his self neglect, offering her words of wisdom as harsh as they may be. “Go try and get some sleep.”

Steve knew better than to argue with her when she was in such a mood, besides he knew she was right; but again, he was more concerned with someone other than himself. “I’m gonna go up and check on Tony first.”

Clint was the one to try and interject that time. “He’s a big boy Steve-“

“He’s a big baby and he can’t take care of himself.” The blond said coolly. “I’m just gonna make sure he eats something, I need to too, then I’ll leave them be I swear.”

Clint and Nat exchanged knowing glances, having a non verbal conversation that Steve wasn’t privy to; it was so irritating for the other team members when they did that. They had been friends for so long that they could practically read one another’s minds and when they got together on something they were a force to be reckoned with. Steve was not in the mood to deal with ‘the wonder twins’ (as Tony had so lovingly dubbed them).

Once their telepathic communication had come to a conclusion Nat leant over Steve’s chair, smoothed his hair back affectionately and whispered to him. “You better be in bed by ten at the latest Mr. Rogers. It’s a school night.”
It took Steve another hour to finally finish his report, which pained him greatly as he had to relive that night once again in great detail; highlighting how he had failed to detect a deadly weapon and also failed to warn Peter in time. That was the whole point in having the man in the chair, Steve had visuals that both Peter and Karen didn’t. It was his job to stay vigilant and warn him about possible dangers, but he’d been so enthralled in studying Peter’s fighting techniques that he’d failed to notice the assailant behind him with the gun. After such a slow night he’d let himself become distracted and it had ended in Peter almost getting killed. In his mind, Steve was just as much to blame as Tony- if not more.

Writing a detailed report also meant watching Karen’s footage over and over and over; like a never ending loop of the same sickening scene. He had to watch it from all angles, slowing it down, watching it in reverse, studying each frame and writing down time stamps. He had to highlight every point in which Peter could have done something differently, or where he could have intercepted the movements, basically critiquing the kid- like he wasn’t suffering from his mistake enough. Then he had to write about how a combination of technical failures and human error had led to the near fatal event. It was gruelling work and Steve kicked himself for not getting it over with sooner because having to rewatch it after seeing Peter awake, when he could see how much pain the kid was in, was nearly unbearable.

By the time he was done it was gone nine o’clock. He knew Nat had only been half joking when she told him to go to bed by a certain time. He changed quickly into comfier clothes, which he would later be grateful for, and headed up towards the sickbay with containers of leftover Thai food for him and a certain middle aged billionaire.

For some reason Steve felt rather hesitant about entering the room. Maybe it was the negative associations he’d built up with hospitals over the years or the fact that he didn’t want to see Peter hooked up to all those machines after spending his evening watching the incident that left him in there, he wasn’t sure (though it was more than likely the latter). But he took a deep breath and knocked against the open door gently to announce his presence.

Tony looked up from where he was sitting on a makeshift cot they’d assembled earlier next to Peter’s bed and Steve shook the containers of food at him. “Hey T, I brought provisions.”

Tony looked at him blankly for a moment, whilst his brain caught up with the fact that he should probably answer. He blinked a couple times as his mouth finally caught up with him, and in that time Steve had made his way across the room and handed him his bowl. “Thanks Cap.”

“You have to eat this one, you know that right?” Steve chuckled, gesturing to the other half eaten, picked at and unopened boxes of food that lined the trash can near Tony’s designated spot.
“Yeah.” Tony said flatly. Usually he would have quipped back or at the very least given a dirty look but he was too preoccupied with his own thoughts to give anything but short monotone responses. That was until his work brain started to kick in and he turned to ask Steve a question regarding a task he’d set the man that morning. “Did you manage to get ahold of-“

“Tony. I told you I’d handle it and that I wouldn’t be talking to you about work.” Steve said quickly, stopping the man before he got going on the ‘have you done x,y and z’ train.

“I know. I just need something to occupy my brain when he’s asleep or it starts wandering.” Tony said as he fiddled with the edge of Peter’s blanket. The kid had cocooned himself as he usually would so Steve could only see a tuft of hair sticking out from the mass of blankets from where he was sitting; though he imagined Tony could see his face, considering how much the man had been fussing over him. And he made fun of Steve for babying him, oh how the tables had turned.

“I understand but work stress shouldn’t be that distraction. Maybe you should get a hobby.” Steve said lightly. He was trying his best to goade Tony into some back and forth banter, something the pair did near constantly but the man just wasn’t interested. It was as though as soon as Peter went back to sleep the man went offline; the light leaving his eyes and he went on standby mode until his kid needed him. It was heartbreaking to see but Steve understood it was just a self defence mechanism. Anything was better than Tony trying to numb the pain through drugs and alcohol.

“All my hobbies are stuff I wanna do with him.” Tony said quietly as he gazed back at the boy sleeping soundly on the bed. It wasn’t a lie, his entire world revolved around Peter; he just wished he’d realised that sooner and not let work get in the way of things. Get in he way of the precious time he had left with him; near death experience aside, how stupid had he been to not appreciate a teenage boy wanting to spend time with him. Yeah he was his adopted dad, very newly adopted, but most fifteen year olds wouldn’t give their parents the time of day and here he had Peter- a kid who was willing to spend all of his free time and then some with him. He’d taken it all for granted and it took it almost getting ripped away from him to see that...he just wanted his boy back and better. “I’m trying Steve. I mean it this time.”

“I know.” Steve nodded, speaking gently. “I know.”

They were silent for a moment as both adults took their time in their own heads, and Steve watched Tony pick pitifully at his meal, barely eating a bite. Just as he was about to comment Tony seemed to give up, casting the container to the side with a sigh. “Food doesn’t even taste of anything.”

Steve pressed his lips into a thin line. He knew what Tony meant. Nothing felt right when Peter was like this, everything felt off. It felt wrong to do things, even normal things like go for a run or
‘You gotta try and get some sleep T. If you’re tired and you try and deal with fusspot over here it’s gonna make things ten times harder.” Steve said after a moment though he knew what the answer would be.

“I can’t. I’ve tried. It’s just not happening.”

“At least rest your eyes..or did you wanna talk?” As soon as the words left his mouth Steve finally saw a flash of the old Tony appear, when the genius turned his head to give him a dry look. “Don’t look at me like that.”

Tony adorned his signature sarcastic smirk and sat up properly, crossing one leg over the other trying his best to slip into his persona. “Well, what is it you would like to talk about Steven?”

“Tony come on, please? Please don’t be confrontational with me right now, neither of us need it. It’s just us, you can lower your defenses.” Steve begged. “It’s just me and you.”

“I’m sorry.” Tony sighed and closed his eyes. He sat back into a more relaxed position and stayed like that for a few moments, not opening his eyes again.

‘Wow,’ Steve thought. ‘An apology and he’s being quiet..Tony is definitely not okay.’

“The footage, is it..how much did you see?” Tony asked quietly, breaking the silence and swallowing thickly, as though the question made his stomach turn. It was obvious he’d been itching to ask about it; he’d already tried to convince Nat to let him watch the reel himself in the days before Peter woke up, hellbent on identifying the man who shot him and killing him personally. Of course she hadn’t let him, even JARVIS knew better than to let him see it.

Steve cast his eyes to the ground and a distant stare plastered across his face. “All of it. He didn’t even realise what had happened and for a minute I thought the suit malfunctioned. I saw the bullet come towards him and hit him, it flagged up on the system that he’d been hit and I panicked but he didn’t react. And- and for a moment I thought he was okay and I was so relieved ..but then he looked down and there was all the blood and I just..then when he was talking in the car with
Happy..”

Tony nodded slowly as Steve offloaded and smiled slightly when his bodyguard was mentioned. “Happy said he was more concerned about ruining his seats.”

Steve huffed a laugh through his nose. “God yeah- yeah he was. If that doesn’t sum Peter up I don’t know what does.”

The pair lost themselves in thought again for a moment, before Tony asked, “Are you okay Steve?”

“No.” The soldier said instantly and honestly because there was no point in lying, not when Tony already knew the answer.

“Is there anything I can do?”

“No.” Steve answered just as quickly. “Other than look after yourself.”

“I mean for you directly. I know I’ve left a lot on your shoulders.” Tony rolled his eyes and crossed his arms over his chest. “Come on you wanna help me, let me reciprocate-“

But Steve put his hand up, cutting Tony off. “You have yourself and mini-Stark to worry about, I’m fine. I can handle this, I’ve got my support circle.”

“I’m meant to be in that circle too.” The brunette frowned.

“You are but right now you’re in the centre of it instead of on the outside-“

“Steve I don’t have the mental capacity to deal with your AA meeting bullshit analogies right now.” Tony yawned and leaned himself against the wall, letting his eyes close.

For once Steve didn’t take offence, instead leaning back into his own seat and doing the same. It seemed Tony wasn’t the only one too tired for banter. “Yeah neither do I.”
“Speaking of AA- You already told Bruce not to give me something to help me sleep right?” Tony said though he kept his eyes closed.

“I didn’t actually.” Steve hummed glumly. He had planned to but he hadn’t gotten around to it, just like everything else.

“Huh.” Tony said simply as though the idea of Bruce having the willpower to say no to him alone was surprising. Then again after years of giving into him maybe the man had finally grown resistant to Tony’s manipulations, or maybe thanks to Peter, Tony had just lost his touch. “I guess he just knew from last time.”

“Yeah.”

“I need something to take the edge off.”

“I know you do. But you know why we can’t do that.”

“I know.”

“So why are we having this conversation?” Steve quirked his eyebrow in amusement. Tony wasn’t usually one for idle conversation.

“Because you said I had to talk about my feelings.” Tony sighed dramatically and flopped himself back onto the bed, kicking his feet up and resting them on the arm of Steve’s chair which the soldier didn’t protest against. He stared up at the ceiling as he sighed again, seeming to be thinking out loud as opposed to Steve. “I just wanna take it all back. Everything.”

“I know T.”

The pair sat in silence for a while and Steve knew he should leave and try to get some sleep himself but he didn’t want to. For once the silence between the two felt comfortable and safe. Neither of them had to pretend to be okay. Steve had been giving fake smiles all day and he was exhausted and Tony..well Tony lived his life in fake smiles, especially now, in front of Peter. He had to pretend to be stronger than he felt for the kids sake so it was a relief for them both to be able
to drop the bravado for a while; they were able to relax and show their grief knowing the other felt
the same, without fear of feeling weak or judged. Pretending to be okay was exhausting. It was
comforting for both of them to know they weren’t the only ones carrying the emotional burden and
part of Steve was so happy that Tony had finally, after years and years, let him in. In spite of what
the genius thought of himself at the time, he’d come such a long way and the blond couldn’t be
prouder of him. Thanks to Peter the man had actually learned to let people in, to let them help him.
They had Peter to thank for a lot of things and that’s what made the whole thing worse but
twistedly, poetically beautiful at the same time. He just hoped they’d be able to repay the favour.

Steve wasn’t sure what time he fell asleep. He didn’t even remember falling asleep at all, but when
he opened his eyes he was glad to see Tony had finally passed out as well; in a very uncomfortable
looking position. He was kind of half slumped between his bed and Peter’s, like he’d passed out
halfway whilst tucking the boy in. It gave Steve a crick in his neck just looking at him. Sighing to
himself the blond decided it would be better to try and move the man, despite the risk of waking
him up, if he wanted to give him a fighting chance of not developing a trapped nerve. He rose from
his chair and just as he was about to pry Tony’s hand away from the rail on Peter’s bed Steve felt
his own hand getting grabbed.

“You’re gonna wake him up.” Peter said in a hushed whisper, looking up at Steve wide eyed
making the soldier jump slightly. He hadn’t realised the boy was awake.

“What are you doing up kiddo?” Steve said quietly, pulling his chair a little closer then sitting back
down. He silently conceded to let Tony sleep, making a mental note to ask Bruce to give him some
Tylenol in the morning for the back pain he was undoubtedly going to have.

“I woke up like an hour ago because you guys were having a snoring contest.” The teen grinned
and Steve smirked back at him, deciding to let the kid have that one even though he
knew he didn’t
snore. Bucky would have told him.

“Hardy-har. How are you feeling?”

“Not too bad, how’re you?” Peter answered automatically after having spent all day trying to
convince his dad the same thing.

“Not too bad either.” Steve smiled.

“You sure..?” Peter pushed and the way he said it made Steve suspicious. He had a feeling a
certain someone had eavesdropped on his and Tony’s private conversation.
“Yeah, bud. It’s just been a difficult few days.” The teen nodded understandingly and he opened his mouth only to shut it again. “You were gonna say you’re sorry weren’t you?”

“It’s instinctive I can’t help it.” The teen smiled sheepishly. “And I am sorry.”

“It’s not the worst character trait to have but you really don’t need to apologise. Did Bruce manage to cook you up a better painkiller yet?”

Peter shook his head and grimaced slightly. “Tried me on this other one last night but it made my tongue go numb and I got all itchy again.”

“You’re not an easy patient, huh?” Steve smiled sympathetically.

“Apparently not but hey, at least I didn’t try and rip out my IV’s.” Peter laughed, referencing what Tony had been like as a patient and his bad behaviour paled in comparison.

“No you just tried to bite people.” Steve chuckled and Peter’s eyes went wide in horror.

“He said he wouldn’t tell anyone!”

“Shh-shh!” Steve shushed the kid between laughs looking over at Tony only to see the genius was still fast asleep. “He didn’t. Bruce did.”

The teens mouth dropped open in shock at the betrayal. “Ugh! That little-“

“P shh, sleeping beauty needs his rest.” Steve snickered again.

Peter covered his mouth when Tony stirred slightly, shifting his head into what looked like an even less comfortable position that made the two conscious males cringe. Whilst he was still adjusting himself Peter gently but quickly leant over to push Tony into a more natural and less slouched position, so he was no longer hunched over. For a second it looked like the man was about to wake up and both Steve and Peter held their breath but Tony quickly started snoring again with
newfound ferocity and they were both able to relax.

“Nice tactic.” Steve commented, impressed how Peter managed to avoid waking the sleeping dragon.

“Mm, yeah but that was a bad idea, tummy didn’t like that very much.” Peter whispered in a strained voice and Steve eyes snapped up to see him doubled over in pain, clutching his abdomen.

“Oh crap Peter are you-“

“I’m good.” Peter held up a hand to stop Steve rushing forward to help him as he slowly lowered himself back against the bed, trying to take deep breaths as he did so. He stayed very still for a moment with his eyes squeezed shut as he tried to compose himself. When his eyes finally opened he looked straight at Steve with an amused, if not still pained, expression. “Did you just say the c word again?”

“Hush it mister I don’t feel like dealing with your sass.” Steve said ‘threateningly’ waggling his finger at the child. He was definitely going to be putting more than a few quarters in the swear jar that day.

“Sorry, I know you have enough to deal with right now.” Peter said as he winced through a particularly bad wave.

“Don’t you worry your little curly head about that.”

“My hair ain’t that curly!” Peter rolled his eyes.

Steve tried to suppress a smile. He wasn’t one for teasing people, especially Peter, but his hair was on another level of crazy. “Have you not seen it?”

“No...” Peter said as he gingerly placed a hand on top of his head feeling hair long before he was anywhere near it. Damn. He quickly tried to change to discussion away from his afro. “Anyway- Do I have to stay in here? Like, can’t I move to my own room or something?”
Steve smiled sadly. “Afraid not bud, too many machines hooked up to you and if something happens Bruce has everything he needs already here. A couple more days and we’ll get you back downstairs.”

“M’kay.” Peter nodded understandingly. He figured that would be the answer but it was worth a shot.

“Is there anything I can do to make you more comfortable?” Despite Peter understanding his reasoning the blond still had a guilty look on his face for having to say no.

“No I’m okay, sorry. I-I’m just being whiny.”

“I think you’ve earned the right to be a little whiny, don’t you?” Steve said as he ran a hand through Peter’s wild hair. He didn’t fail to notice the boy’s stutter either. “What’s going on up here?”

“Worried about Tony.” The teen sighed at his own admission and started gnawing nervously at his thumb nail.

Steve’s smile grew even sadder. “Me too. But he’s doing okay, all things considered. It was just a little slip.”

“I know. I don’t mean the pills part I just mean in general. He’s never gonna forgive himself.” Peter said quietly sparing a look at the man who was currently blissfully unaware of his surroundings as he slept. The teen wished he would stay that way, content and free from guilt but he knew he wouldn’t last. He knew that as soon as Tony’s eyes opened he’d see the realisation hit him again, when his brain caught up to his surroundings and he realised why he was in the medibay; Peter would have to watch as the situation they were in hit him all over again and he just wished he could take that away. He’d get shot ten more times if it meant Tony wouldn’t have to feel the guilt anymore and Jesus Christ it had only been a few days. They still had such a long way to go and it all felt so impossible.

“Probably not. But he’s gonna learn from it and he’s gonna learn to live with that guilt, turn it into something constructive. Build off of it instead of letting it tear things down.” Steve rambled, having his speech all ready to go from all the seminars and talks he’d done on addiction.

“I hope so. He’s been through enough.” Peter mumbled looking over at Tony and sighing.
“So have you and it’s not your job to worry about him.”

“I’m his kid it’s in the job description.” Peter said dryly, adorning his best Tony Stark impression.

Steve sat back for a moment considering the right thing to say. He knew there was no way he could convince Peter not to worry, it was in the boy’s nature and it would be impossible for most adults to do- he certainly couldn’t do so himself. Part of the reason he hadn’t been able to sleep wasn’t only his own guilt and worry in regards to the accident, it was the sickening fear that Tony would do something to himself or that he’d end up losing two people he cared dearly for in one way or another. Now that Peter was awake and recovering, slower than they had hoped for but still recovering nonetheless, part of that fear had been alleviated but not by much; at least not where Tony was concerned. If anything their road to recovery with Tony was only just beginning. “You know the best thing you can do for him kid?”

“What’s that?”

“Get better. Let him help. Focus on you for once, that’s what he wants. If you’re hurting, tell him. If you need a hug, tell him. He-he wants to make it up to you somehow, he just doesn’t know how-“

“He doesn’t need to make it up to me. I don’t blame him, it wasn’t his fault.” Peter said defensively, though he wasn’t exactly directing that towards Steve he just hated the concept that his dad should be to blame for what happened.

“I know that, deep down somewhere he knows that too but right now he just feels powerless. He needs to feel- needed I guess is the right word. Like he can help he wants so desperately to help and I think if he can, even if it’s just little things, it’ll make him feel better.”

“I..I get that. I’m the same way with May..” when Steve said it like that he finally understood what he needed to do and it made sense. But now he could also see why May wouldn’t let him help her; being on the other side wasn’t much fun either. “I just- I just feel so guilty when I let on that it hurts because he gets this look on his face-“

“I know. I know, and it’s hard to tell people the truth when it might upset them but trust me from experience I’ve learned that honesty is the best policy. As cheesy as that sounds especially with your dad. If you’re upfront with him now it’ll save a lot of hurt in the long run. Too much bad comes from trying to hide stuff and sweeping it under the rug Pete.”
Peter has his fair share of experience in that department too and he cringed when he thought back on all the arguments that could have been avoided if he’d just told his dad something sooner. “I guess so..I just wanna get better as quickly as possible so he can feel better.”

“You’ll get there. Heck, less than a day and a half ago we were still convinced you were going to die but now you’re already back to arguing and trying to bite people-“

“Steeeve!” The teen whined when the man mentioned his intoxicated stupor again and it made him reconsider all the times he had teased Ned after the Kool-Aid incident. Maybe he’d let that one go and stop calling Ned Tinkerbell now.

“I’m just pulling your leg kiddo.” God Steve can’t you even pretend to not be an old man? When he used phrases like that it really reminded Peter that the man wasn’t as young as he looked. “You’re not going back to sleep are you?”

The teen shook his head shyly. It wasn’t like he hadn’t tried but he just couldn’t get comfortable, between the pain and the overstimulation from all the noises.

“You wanna watch a movie?” Steve suggested.

“You don’t have to stay up with me, I know you’ve got a lot to do-“

“Peter remember what I said about letting your dad help? Well that extends to all of us. I wouldn’t offer if I minded.” Steve said lightly as he pulled out Peter’s laptop for him since the kid could barely move by that point. He really hoped that Bruce would find the appropriate cocktail of chemicals for him, he could only imagine how much pain the kid was in. Steve was rather proud of himself that he managed to work the computer with only minimal guiding from his teenage counterpart. “Any requests?”

The teen shook his head and spoke quietly. “Uh uh, pick something off of your list.”

“My list or Peter’s recommendations list?” Steve quirked an eyebrow.

“Pfft, my recommendation list is the only one that really matters. All you need to understand pop
culture is on there.” The prospect of forcing Steve to watch movies that suited the boy’s specific taste in media definitely seemed to perk him up a little bit so Steve was more than happy to deprive himself of some sleep to do so.

“Hey, I think I’m doing pretty good.”

“A lot better but you didn’t know who Inigo Montoya was and my reference was totally wasted on you.”

“I still don’t.”

“Exactly! So put on The Princess Bride or prepare to die!”

Steve found himself really enjoying the movie. It wasn’t like most of the ones Peter had him watch; it wasn’t overly visually stimulating, there weren’t back to back fight scenes or crazy special effects and it wasn’t sci-fi. It also wasn’t rip roaringly funny from start to finish, which the man liked, it had some good bits in there as well as a few jokes that went over his head (or most likely had lead to references or ‘memes’ that Steve didn’t understand); but the storyline in itself was very entertaining. It wasn’t until around half way through the film when Peter started acting oddly in a way that made Steve concerned. The kid got very quiet, especially considering he’d spent half the time jabbering about facts he knew the production or the cast, and he seemed to be even more uncomfortable than he was before. Even more restless.

“You alright, Sport?” Steve asked gently when the child made a particularly weird face.

Peter jumped slightly, obviously having not realised that Steve was looking at him as opposed to the screen and nodded quickly, a blush rising to his cheeks.

“Do you need anything?”

Rather than responding verbally the boy just shook his head and pulled the covers up until they were almost covering his chin; which worried Steve slightly but he chalked it up to the boy getting tired. He hoped that the movie would help lull the boy to sleep but that didn’t happen. Peter just seemed to be getting more and more uneasy as time went on.

And Peter was getting uneasy, very uneasy. It was manageable at first, at least for a minute or so,
but after that it started to get irritating. After days comatose his bladder wasn’t used to holding it for extended periods of time so the urge went from a twinge to uncomfortable very quickly. Since he’d had a hissy fit over using the medical urinal he’d managed to convince Tony to help him to and from the bathroom; the man had protested at first but it’s only took some crocodile tears for him to cave since he was so hellbent on keeping Peter happy in his current state and Peter took full advantage of that.

The system only worked however, if Peter told Tony as soon as he felt the slightest urge since it took awhile for them to get him to the bathroom, even though it was less than forty steps away. After a day of doing it, the pair had it down to a science; Peter speaks up as soon as possible, they get him up immediately and take a painfully slow walk to the bathroom just in time for Peter to not wet himself (though admittedly they were cutting it fine each time); then they take a break for the kid to get his breath back before the equally slow trek back to bed. It was a process but it had worked thus far and Peter had avoided any major accident or injury. But now Tony was asleep and Peter didn’t wanna ask Steve to do that. Not only was it embarrassing to admit it also took a lot of effort and Peter was worried Steve would just refuse to help him up anyway; for once Steve wasn’t as much of a pushover as Tony, before it had always been the other way around. Bruce had explicitly said not to let Peter get up under any circumstances and he knew that Steve was likely to be a lot more militant about that rule. He didn’t want to force himself to speak up, which was difficult enough, only to be embarrassed and told to go in the bottle anyway.

He shifted on the bed trying to ease the pressure as he mulled those thoughts over, but all he succeeded in doing was sending a stabbing pain through his body as his stomach protested against the sudden movement. He settled for crossing his legs instead.

No he could hold it, right? He couldn’t wake Tony up just for that, he wouldn’t. The man was exhausted he was not about to wake him up just because he had to pee- something he could fix himself if he wasn’t so stupid. Christ maybe Tony and Bruce were right, maybe he did have to sort his pee shyness out. He’d convinced himself that it wasn’t that bad, he’d managed up until that point without any major issues because of it but then again that wasn’t entirely true as he’d found out from Bruce.. He’d lived with Steve for over a year now, spending a lot of time alone with the man and he still couldn’t admit that he had to go directly to him. In fact he couldn’t with anyone other than Tony, May and Ned. Okay..maybe he did have a problem..

If he couldn’t man up and tell Steve he needed help or at the very least some privacy, he would have to just hold it like an adult. He could wait until Tony woke up to go himself. The man usually got up at least once in the night so Peter would just wait til he woke up naturally. Then again he wasn’t sure how long he’d been asleep and he hadn’t seen him eat or drink anything so there was no telling when he’d wake up..

He knew he should just tell Steve but the words wouldn’t come out. Tony had deliberately left a urinal within arm’s reach, maybe he could just convince the soldier to leave the room for a minute long enough for him to go...God the urge wasn’t just annoying it was damn right painful to hold it and he started to feel a pounding in his lower back which was freaking him out; he really didn’t
want to face Tony if he ended up killing what was left of his kidney because he held it too long. Stupid IV fluids going through him too quickly..

“Peter are you sure you’re okay?” Steve asked hesitantly, snapping Peter out of his internal panic when he realised that the man was still watching him.

‘Tell him P, this is your chance.’ Instead of nodding Peter hesitated. “Uhm..I uh..”

“What’s wrong?”

“I-uh w-what time is it?” To him the question was logical. If it was reasonably late in the morning he could ask Steve to check and see if Bruce had made him some better pain killers. He’d given up on the idea of waking Tony up to help him go he knew he wouldn’t make it that far, he just wanted Steve out of the room so he could use the stupid bottle.

“Four thirty eight? What does that matter?” The blond’s eyebrows knitted together in confusion. Was the kid due medicine at a certain time? “Peter what’s wrong?”

Crap no that was way too early even for Bruce, damn. What was he going to do now? His bladder was contracting violently and he knew he didn’t have much time before he ended up going, whether that was in an appropriate vessel or not. Then again he was still wearing the thing, so no one would know if he did but he didn’t even want to think about that. That was not an option. He had to hold it until he could use something. But he couldn’t, not for much longer. ‘Peter just ask him to step out for a minute- he won’t ask questions just say it!’

But he couldn’t. “N-Nothing Mr. Rogers I-I’m Fine.”

Mr Rogers? That was not a good sign, the kid hadn’t called him that in ages. Not since Tony and Clint had pointed out the cultural reference. “Kid what’s going on you look like you’re gonna be sick?”

“I-I’m n-n-n-” Peter was stammering so bad he couldn’t even finish out the lie. He was so desperate he could barely think straight and he was seconds away from losing it, even talking was making him feel like he was going over the edge. But surely he’s gone too far now to speak up, if he said he just had to pee now not only would he look like a complete idiot, but Steve probably wouldn’t believe him. Not now he was wincing in pain and even worse if he did believe him he’d get in trouble for holding it so long. Oh god what was he supposed to do now-
Steve seemed to have the answer; if Peter wasn’t going to tell him what was going on he’d ask someone who would. “JARVI-

“No no! P-please d-d-Don’t-“ Peter yelled suddenly accidentally waking up his father.

“Bub? What’s wrong?” Tony said as he sat up quicker than humanly possible; but the second he laid eyes on the kid he knew exactly what was wrong and he was seriously surprised Steve didn’t. It was painfully obvious. “Steve get out for a minute.”

“Uhh, okay-“ it was clear the blond wanted to protest but from Tony’s body language he could tell that he understood was happening so he trusted the man’s judgement. That and the fact that he seemed more frustrated than scared let him know that it wasn’t an emergency situation and that was when it clicked in the soldiers head what was going on. Ah.

Steve quickly left the room and Tony wasted no time getting up from his side of the room, walking round the bed, grabbing the urinal and shoving it into Peter’s hands as the boy mumbled apologies.

“I’m sorry, I know I’m dumb I should have just said but the words wouldn’t come o-out and I-“

“Shh, it’s okay bubby. Don’t worry about it right now. Go on.” Tony sighed as he assumed the position, turning away with his ears covered lest he make Peter wait even longer to relieve himself when his paruresis kicked in. Luckily that didn’t seem to be an issue as the boy was too desperate to care.

After he was finished and Tony was able to unplug his ears Peter sniffed sadly. “I’m such an idiot.”

Tony turned around and put a hand on the kids shoulder. “No you’re not. We’re gonna work on it, remember? I know you couldn’t tell Steve but you could have woken me up-“

Peter shook his head vigorously as soon as Tony suggested he should have woken him. “No ’cause you haven’t been sleepin’ and-“

“Peter.” Tony sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose to let the kid know he was both getting
frustrated and was still too tired to have a long drawn out talk about his pee shyness. “Just wake me up next time. I don’t care what else is going on, if you need me to get people out of the room just say so, okay?”

Peter wanted to protest but then what Steve said about letting his dad help rang through in his mind. That and he really wanted the conversation to be over. “...Okay.”

“Thank you.”

“M’sorry I woke you up like that..?” Peter said guilty. Technically he wasn’t apologising for waking the man up in general so Tony couldn’t be mad at him, but he did feel bad for startling him awake. No one wants to be woken up by someone yelling like that.

“Don’t be. You did me a favour.” Tony said under his breath. Little did Peter know he’d been in the midst of an awful nightmare.

“Uhh is everything okay now..?” Came a quiet voice from the doorway as Steve popped his head around it. As soon as the blond was in view Peter hung his head in shame again and sniffled, prompting Steve to reenter the room and try and comfort him. “Oh no, hey Pete don’t worry about it. No harm done.”

“I’m sorry.. I should’ve just-“

Steve decided it would be best to just skip over the entire event rather than draw more attention to it as much as he wanted to address the issue; it could be done at another time when they were all better rested. “It’s okay, Sport. Let’s just forget it happened. Come on I wanna see if Westley gets to Buttercup in time.”

Peter ended up falling asleep before the movie was over but Steve finished watching it anyway (he wasn’t just trying to distract Peter when he said he wanted to see the end). Tony didn’t go back to sleep, instead he busied himself answering a few emails, lightening Steve workload ever so slightly- at least as much as the blond would let him. It came as a welcome distraction though in the back of his mind Tony began to worry about the shit show he’d be walking into when he did go back to work. He didn’t want to go back to work, he suddenly hated work. He just wanted to spend time with his kid and not worry about anyone else, but he knew that wasn’t realistic. Best to prepare for it instead of living out a fantasy where he could just quit being Iron Man and Tony Stark andante everything- leave it all behind and take Peter to live in a remote cabin somewhere
away from it all. Who knows maybe take Pepper along for the ride too.. Tony didn’t often let himself daydream but it was a nice mental picture to fall back on when times got tough. Maybe one day.

The rest of the early morning hours passed by quickly, Steve having to dart off to deal with his work duties and Tony resigned himself to another shitty day of sitting by and watching his kid suffer. Bruce came in to announce he’d made adjustments to the first painkiller he developed, hopefully reducing the psychedelic side effects—though Tony was apprehensive. Not from his point of view because he trusted Bruce knew what he was doing, but he knew Peter would be skeptical and would likely refuse to take it; the pair considered administering it whilst he was unconscious but they ultimately decided that that was unethical. Not only was giving the boy drugs he when couldn’t consent immoral but they also wanted him awake and aware so they could monitor the results; they waited until the kid woke up and he could decide for himself.

Peter didn’t end up rising until gone eleven o’clock and when he did Tony was in the midst of arguing with Steve.

“Tony I’m sorry but Clark Anderson is being really instinant that he’ll only talk to you personally—”

“Ugh! That guy is such a fucking pain in my ass- tell him no! I’ve got more important shit to deal with!” First Steve wouldn’t let him anywhere near his business stuff and now he was trying to force him into talking to one of the most asinine imbeciles he’d ever encountered. The idiot couldn’t be trusted with his own wallet let alone an entire fucking company and Tony loathed the man. He made it abundantly clear too, whenever he was in the vicinity but even then he didn’t get the hint; god he was such a moron, one of those trust fund babies who had inherited their fortune but didn’t have the brains, business or even social skills to do anything with it and he rang Tony about everything.

“I did. I have been. For five days but he won’t quit. He’s filling up my answer machine before I get a chance to answer any of them—”

“First you fight me on answering a few fucking emails and now you want me to take a call with- with that—” Tony let out a frustrated noise before his face fell completely calm and he put on his fake friendly ‘customer service’ voice. “How about this then Steveo, send him a video of me personally telling him to shove his corporate bullshit up his di—“

“Enough! Child present!” Bruce interjected before Tony could finish his very not PG friendly threat and the other two adults promptly closed their mouths.
Peter just rolled his eyes. “Dad you need to go take care of whatever that is.”

“No I need to take care of you.” Tony said shortly, not even looking over at Peter as he scrolled angrily through his phone.

“I’m fine right now, I’ve got my laptop I’m happy. I’ll be fine for a little while, while you go and take care of it-”

“No because one thing will turn into another and I’ll end up getting dragged into all the business bullshit that I couldn't care less about right now-”

“Then don’t let yourself.” Peter shrugged simply. “But if you do it’s fine, you need a break from this room.”

Tony gave Peter a dirty look as he knew what he was really implying. “You mean from you and no I do not-“

“You do dad. I know how you get, you’re just as bad as me. Go do something stimulating before you go stir crazy. If I could get up and do something else I would so if one of us can catch a break go for it.” What Peter would give to be able to get up and go to one of Tony’s boring meetings just for a change of scenery. Hell he’d sit in on one of Steve’s PSA’s on the importance of good handwriting if it meant he could put on a pair of pants and some socks. Man he missed socks. Wait, that was easily fixable maybe he should ask for some socks- “Besides, you’re making me anxious and all the yelling is giving me a headache. It’s depressing enough in here.”

Tony’s expression flickered when Peter admitted to the atmosphere being less than good for his recovery; he crossed his arms over his chest poutily. “I don’t want to.”

“But you need to. Come on be a big boy and do your chores-“

“Watch it.” Tony said waringly, he was not in the mood for any cheekiness. He was having anxiety of his own at the idea of leaving Peter for more than a couple minutes and it scared him a little. How was he going to cope if he’d become so codependent in such a short amount of time? He’d have to let Peter out of his sight at some point he knew he should just get it over with, but that was easier said than done. Besides, why push himself so soon? The kid couldn’t even walk unaided it wasn’t like he was being unreasonable, of course he should be anxious. Especially when the kid had trouble communicating when he needed something; he wouldn’t tell anyone but Tony if he was
in pain or needed the bathroom— as they’d found out that morning. He couldn’t leave him when he was basically his translator. He didn’t want to leave him. Fuck, how was he ever going to deal with Peter being Spider-Man again?

“Go on. I’ll be fine for a couple hours.” Peter said flippantly in hopes that if he acted nonchalant about the whole affair it would lower Tony’s defences but his choice of time frame was apparently insulting.

“I’m not gonna leave you for hours, I won’t be that long— I certainly won’t deal with Mr Anderson for that long that fucking—”

“Language!” Steve chimed in, earning him a death glare from the brunette.

“Don’t censor me G.I. Iceberg I’m stressed and I haven’t even spoken to anyone yet!” Tony barked making Steve sigh frustratedly and turn away, lest he snap back at the man. Once Steve stepped out of the room Tony leant in close to whisper to Peter before following him. “No trying to get up to pee by yourself okay? Wait for me or go in the bottle just don’t try and get up—”

“I won’t.” Peter said quickly, a blush rising to his cheeks.

“Good. And let Bruce know if you wanna try some of that pain medicine or if you need anything else. Promise?” Tony held up his pinky and Peter didn’t even bother to react to the childish gesture, he was so used to it by now the absurdity of Tony Stark offering a pinky promise didn’t even register anymore.

He looped his finger with his dad’s and shook his hand. “I promise. Can Thor come and hang out with me now since you’ll be out of the room?”

Tony threw his head back and groaned loudly like a teenager who’d been asked to take out the trash. “Ugh I don’t wanna have to deal with him as well—”

“Dad don’t be mean—”

“Fine! But if he does anything to piss me off he’s out—“
“Deal. Have fun with Mr. Anderson!” Peter called cheerily as Tony sulked off.

“I won’t!” Tony yelled back in a mocking sing song voice.

Thor was actually able to contain himself for once even though he was more than excited to see Peter after such an extended period of time. He’d only been allowed to see him once when he was unconscious and then he hadn’t been allowed anywhere near the bed as Tony was convinced if Thor so much as touched him his condition would worsen. The god took great offence to that but he wasn’t about to mess with the angry father. He did however, manage to make himself a little more reserved, lowering his energy slightly as he’d been warned not to get Peter over excited; he even managed to only crush the teen *a teensy bit* when he hugged him.

True to his word Tony wasn’t even gone an hour and when he came back Thor hadn’t caused any major destruction (though he had broken one of the buttons on the remote for Peter’s bed when they’d been messing around with it- but they had thrown it under the bed so they would get caught lest Thor be banned from visiting him again). The pair were entertaining themselves playing a game of hangman but Thor kept cheating.

“That’s not a real word!” Peter pouted and scowled at the blond.

But Thor was all smiles. “Yes it is! Varúlfr- it means werewolf-“

“How am I supposed to know that?! Besides were meant to be playing in *English*!”

Thor held a hand as he pointed out the teens mistake. “Ah, no, you never said that youngling! Come now don’t be a sore loser-“

“But you cheated! How was I ever supposed to guess that?!“

“You obviously haven’t read the guide to Common Creatures Encountered on Midgard I gave you-“

“Because it’s in Norse! How am I- Wait Midgard? I thought it was about Muspelheim?” Peter cut himself off and tilted his head. Thor had gifted the old book to him months ago but he’d never got around to deciphering more than the first page. In fairness not only was the book written in another language it was also incredibly old and worn; the cover was in tatters as Thor admitted he’d taken
it from his brother when they were children and allowed one of their dogs to chew it—so all that
could be made out of the last word was the letter M. Thor had taught Peter about the nine realms
and how earth was decidedly the most boring, with a distinct lack of supernatural fun so he had
assumed it was based off of the other world. But that didn’t matter, it was just a kids story book; a
story book that he couldn’t even read he just valued it because it was a gift from his friend, very
old and the illustrations were fun to look at accept one..one of the pictures had kept Peter up at
night it was so creepy..

“Why would I give you that? I wanted you to be prepared for what you might find out there my
boy!” Thor said with a hearty laugh as he clapped a hand on Peter’s shoulder. “The wilderness is
still crawling with all kinds of old world wonders though a lot of them remain hidden thanks to—“

The teens eyes widened. “Wait- they’re real? Like all the things in that book, they’re not just
stories?”

“Not at all I’ve met a fair few of them in my day. But that was before man started to drive them
into the forests though a few species have fully integrated now.”

“What like lizard people? Are the illuminati real?!” Tony struggled to suppress a laugh from where
he stood surveying the scene in the doorway. Of course Peter would immediately jump to lizard
people. The kid had watched one too many Shane Dawson videos and freaked himself out; he’d
spent an entire afternoon a few weeks ago trying to convince Peter that Area 51 was just a pop
culture thing designed to keep the general public occupied and to sell t-shirts, though the kid had
made him promise to take him there one day.

“That term is outdated and offensive. They much prefer Nidhoggorians. And I don’t know what the
illuminati is.” Thor said cheerily.

Peter looked decidedly terrified. “S-so Werewolves are real..?”

Thor rolled his eyes and sighed as though he’d explained that a thousand times. “Yes, Peter. Really
boy for such a well read person I would have expected you to have picked up on that by now given
you’re practically a Werespider-“

That was when Tony decided to step in. He was all for education but he wasn’t about to let Thor
make the child even more paranoid than he already was. There were plenty of things to be scared
of in this world before you had to worry about werewolves; guns for instance. “Hammer head get
your ass out of here before I kick it. The last thing he needs is you giving him nightmares.”
“But I was just-” The god tried to defend himself but he was struck down before he had the chance.

“Out.” Tony growled.

Despite the look of disdain Thor rose from his seat and started to leave but Peter called after him. “W-wait! Can you read some of that book to me later? J-just so I can, you know, prepare if I meet-“

Thor opened his mouth to confirm that he would aid the boy in his research but Tony was quicker. “Discount He-Man! Out!”

The god knew when to give up but he gave Peter a wink as he exited the room. Tony sighed and sat back down next to the teens bed, rubbing his temples to show his stress.

“You don’t always gotta be so mean to him.” Peter yawned, giving Tony a dirty look as he did so.

“Jesus, see what a bad influence he is on you? You spend forty five minutes with him and you’ve forgotten how to speak English.” Tony smirked, commenting on the teens grammar; Peter responded by mocking Tony in a childish voice before he yawned again. “And you’re exhausted. Nap time?”

“Uh uh m’not tired. How did it go with mister Pandason?” The boy mumbled through yet another involuntary yawn but he shook himself awake, blinking furiously.

Tony raised his eyebrows but answered the question. “I don’t know about him but Mr. Anderson was fine after I told him where to file his tax returns.”

“I’m guessing it wasn’t in a filing cabinet?” Peter snickered.

“That’s not what I’d call it no.” Tony smirked but his face fell when Peter winced. “You tried out your new super drugs yet?”
“Uh uh wanted to wait for you.” The teen said in a small voice.

“How come bubs?”

“In case I get sick again..”

“Fair enough.” Tony sighed softly. As much as he wished the boy hadn’t waited on his account he wasn’t about to make a thing of it. He didn’t want Peter to feel embarrassed for admitting he wanted his dad’s comfort and it was an understandable fear. Tony himself would probably want his dad there if he threw up as violently as Peter did and he detested his dad so that was saying something. The admission actually made part of him feel better too, like he was actually able to be of some use; no he couldn’t stop him from getting sick but at least he could comfort him. “Want me to ask for them now?”

Peter nodded shyly but before Tony had the chance to even stand up he stopped him. “But uhm Dad?”

“Hm?”

“Can you help me to the bathroom first?” Peter asked sheepishly with a wiggle for added effect.

“Sure bud.” Tony said gently, moving forward to help the teen stand.

After the laborious process of getting Peter to and from the bathroom Tony deposited the breathless boy back onto the bed, where he laid in a crumpled heap for a solid minute before he even attempted to move. For some reason that trip had been especially exhausting for him, even more so than usual and this time is was accompanied by a sickening dizziness that he hadn’t encountered before. Every time he moved his head he had a sudden wave of nausea that made him second guess trying anymore pain meds. “Uhh actually..I don’t think I want any more medicine yet..”

Tony didn’t like the sound of that. Peter hadn’t had any pain relief in almost fourteen hours which was a long time to grin and bear the pain from a gunshot wound and he would know. He didn’t want the boy to suffer any more, especially when there was no need for him to. “Pete I know how much pain you’re in-“
“I know it’s not that I just..I’m not ready to feel all gross again..can we just wait for a bit?” Peter begged as he had to swallow back a gag after moving his head too quickly.

“I think Bruce wants you to try it sooner rather than later bud so he’ll know if he needs to try again but..okay. Wanna give it another hour?” Tony relented, having sat down on the edge of the boy’s bed to brush his hair from his face. Peter was curled in a ball clutching his stomach but as much as he wanted to Tony couldn’t force him to take medicine if he didn’t want to. Luckily the boy nodded so at least that was something; he wasn’t out right refusing anymore. “Okay, that’ll give him some time to take care of himself.”

“You’re all pretty bad at that huh? It’s a wonder you’ve all made it this far.” Peter quipped though it didn’t have the impact he wanted it to thanks to his shaky voice when he had to swallow again to keep from puking.

“Well look who’s talking.” Tony muttered under his breath. He didn’t have the heart to make a comment back, it was too easy and there was no fun in winding Peter up when he was sick. “You wanna watch a movie or something?”

The teen just shrugged and curled into a tighter ball. Something felt weird. He was still in a lot of pain but somehow it was different now. Ever since he stood up and got that familiar rush to his head as his blood pressure spiked the ache in his abdomen became even more intense; before it had been dull, like a deep bruise that throbbed every so often but now it was like a red hot knife was being twisted in his gut. He knew he should mention the change in pain but he chalked it down to having over exerted himself; if he admitted to Tony that they had over done it by walking to and from the bathroom the man wouldn’t let him do it again and he didn’t want that. No, he was fine. The pain was manageable and besides it was slowly going away again. Very slowly but still. He managed to convince himself that he was fine, if he laid still for a while he’d recover. Despite those weird bandages Bruce had wrapped him in his healing was still way faster than most people so he bargained with himself if he was doing any damage by walking, so long as he rested after he’d balance it out, right? Sure. That’s totally how it works.

Except that's not how it worked at all and he was slowly but surely making himself worse, but how was he to know that? Oh right because his body was telling him- screaming at him, he just chose not to listen out of convenience. It wouldn’t be convenient much longer as he was about to find out.

“Petey are you sure you don’t wanna just try some medicine now? If you already feel sick it’s not gonna do any harm.”

“I’m fine. Just wanna lay down.” Peter said snappily through gritted teeth. He didn’t mean to be short with his dad, especially when he was just trying to help make him more comfortable but it
was hard to keep the bite out of his voice when the invisible knife in his stomach twisted again.

“Okay..” Luckily Tony understood and didn’t take it personally, though he was worried about stressing the kid out even more. “We’ll give it an hour, let’s at least get you laying flat, yeah? Sitting all hunched over like that isn’t gonna make it any better.”

Peter found a semi comfortable position, well, one that didn’t make him want to die so that was something- and the pair settled in to watch a couple episodes of Stranger Things. Peter was busy asking questions about the science behind the upside down despite the fact Tony continuously said it was fictional so he couldn’t give any real answers, when the timer went off. It had been an hour, so Tony got up to go hassle Bruce about super kid drugs but Peter stopped him.

“Uhhh, Dad?”

“What is it, bub?” Tony sighed expecting another reason why the teen wanted to prolong the inevitable. It was getting to the point where he was considering having Steve pin Peter down while they gave him the meds anyway; he could understand being scared of puking or getting involuntarily high but he couldn’t understand the kid putting himself through unnecessary pain- pain that seemed to he getting progressively worse for some reason. Tony couldn’t bare to watch it anymore so he was losing his patience.

“I have to pee again..” Peter smiled sheepishly.

The genius rolled his eyes, assuming that Peter was just stalling again until he saw him bite his lip. “Can’t you just wear the diapers and make my life a little easi-“

“Say that again and I will punch you in the throat.” Peter growled and he looked positively murderous which to Tony was hysterical; how the kid could go from shy as anything to ‘threatening’ in the blink of an eye was impressive, though he had to give himself some credit for the reaction. He’d spent years training to be that level of irritating. It was a fine skill and he prides himself on being able to piss anyone off in under a minute- his record being four seconds.

“You can’t reach from down there.” Tony shrugged, offering a hand for Peter to pull himself up which he took albeit begrudgingly.

“I’ll punch you in the balls then.” The teen said matter-of-factly and Tony had to try his best not to
“Well someone’s feeling better! You can punch me after I get you to the potty huh?” Tony assumed the usual position, waiting beside the bed for Peter to gather the strength to kick his legs over the side of it. Then he looped his arm under the boy’s shoulder and around his back, prepared to support most of his weight as he stood up. “Ready?”

Peter nodded and Tony gently elevated the boy off of the bed, hovering him slightly whilst he got his balance and his legs stabilized. They started their wobbly trek towards the bathroom, which wasn’t too far but far enough for Peter when it took fifteen seconds per step.

“I was kidding about the diapers but seriously Pete, there’s no shame in you using a portable urinal—”

“Not gonna happen.” The teen said breathlessly. Of course Tony would pick *now* to have this conversation, when Peter could barely breathe let alone talk. Asshole. “Emergencies only.”

“I know how you feel about it, I’m not diminishing that but look at yourself. You need to be resting.”

“I can walk this far to the bathroom it helps stop my legs from cramping u- ah!” Out of nowhere Peter ripped himself away from his dad and doubled over in pain, clutching his stomach. Tony barely had time to catch him before his knees gave way.

“Peter! Peter are you—”

“Don’t touch me! Please don’t— ahh, fu-ow! Mm god! Don’t move me please don’t move me I- fuck!” Peter begged between cries of agony. That feeling in his stomach that had appeared after their last trip to the bathroom suddenly increased tenfold; going from a hot knife to a flaming chainsaw. The pain was excruciating— even more painful than Peter remembered the bullet being. It felt like his entire stomach was being ripped open from the inside— like something was crawling to get out and the corners of his vision were starting to go black. He could feel Tony’s arms under his supporting him but that was it— it was like he was suspended in midair, he couldn’t feel his feet on the ground or anything— just the searing, blinding pain that numbed all of his senses. Fuck he was gonna pass out—

“What’s happening?!!”
“I don’t know, it’s never hurt like this before! Mmm- maybe if I just c-close my eyes and breathe for a sec i-it’ll go away-“ He tried that. It didn't work. “Well FUCK!”

“Okay let’s get you back to laying down can you-“ Tony started pulling him back towards to bed but Peter wouldn’t let him. Despite the pain the kid was still unbelievably strong and the man was no match when Peter froze dead in his tracks and pulled away from him once again, this time physically pushing him away.

“Oh my god.” Peters voice changed. He was no longer almost screaming now he was speaking at a barely audible level which to Tony was even more petrifying.

Oh shit had Tony hurt him more? He stopped trying to guide him but he kept his hands firm under the boy’s arms. “What? Did I-“

“Get off me. Oh my god.” The teens tone changed again as he shoved Tony away from him again, back to yelling though this time it was cold and angry. But not at Tony.

“Peter what- oh.” It didn’t take a second for the man to realise what was happening when he followed the teens gaze down to his feet. There had been a reason they got him out of bed in the first place after all.

“I’m sorry- I’m so, so sorry I can’t- Oh my god I can’t stop I- Oh my god-“

“Peter.” Tony said calmly as he stepped towards the teen again; now that he didn’t have Tony supporting him he was swaying precariously. He didn’t want to scare Peter into jerking away and falling over but if he didn’t intervene he was going to end up collapsing anyway.

“I can’t- I didn’t- I just- Oh my god-“ Peter cut himself off with a sob and he doubled over again, clutching his stomach with both hands and he felt that it wasn’t only his lower half getting wet. He’d started bleeding through the bandages but he was too embarrassed and in too much pain to care.

“It’s okay, bubby it’s okay. It’s just an accident you couldn’t help it.” Tony continued talking gently but was quick to grab Peter whilst he was off guard just in time to catch him when his feet slipped out from under him.
“Don’t! You’re gonna step in it- oh my god-” Peter tried to rip himself away again but this time Tony held him firm, losing his cool and yelling back, raising his voice at the boy for the first time since he woke up.

“Peter forget the piss I’m more worried about you tearing your stitches or whatever the fuck is happening- now come here!” Peter was too stunned at Tony’s sudden attitude change (that and he physically couldn’t move because every time he did he lost his parts of his vision) to stop the man as he dragged him back over to the bed, throwing him down just as he lost consciousness completely. By the time that happened Bruce had already skidded into the room after barrelling down the hallway when he heard Peter screaming. The doctor didn’t get a chance to ask what was going on before Tony asked the same thing.

“Bruce! What the fuck is happening?!”

The doctor didn’t answer, instead rushing over and immediately cutting away at Peters bandages along with pulling over a scanner and a heart monitor. “JARVIS pull up the internal- ah shit!”

“What?! What is it?!”

“Part of his abdominal wall has split- shit I thought this would happen- why did you let him get up?!”

“He barely took two steps!”

“You’ve had him up and walking before haven’t you?” Bruce said accusingly making Tony look away in guilt.

“Just to the bathroom and back I thought he’d be okay, I’ve been basically carrying him..” The man said quietly as he gripped Peter’s limp hand.

“I said no movement for a reason Tony, the enzyme I developed to keep his webs from forming have leaked into the surrounding tissue weakening it significantly. That’s why they tore with such little pressure-“
Tony’s eyes snapped up and he suddenly looked furious. “You mean you’ve been slowly drip feeding my son poison? The whole point of it was-”

“No Tony I don’t mean that! You know why it was so important to slow his healing- it gave him the best chance of keeping his kidney so don’t give me any shit! I don’t know if you’ve noticed but it’s kind of a trial and error thing here- there isn’t exactly a medical journal on how to treat Spider-People! And last time I checked you’re not a fucking doctor! I’m doing my best I didn’t think I had to explain that to you for you to trust me and fucking listen to my advice!” Bruce yelled, losing all semblance of composure; he’d spent so much time and effort developing and testing medications for Peter specifically and Tony knew that, so to have it thrown back in his face during a fit of anger was a real kick in the teeth; under normal circumstances, the usually level headed doctor would have been able to remain calm as he knew Tony was only reacting out of fear but after four days of barely sleeping Bruce had zero patience. He did however manage to calm himself just enough to stop screaming because he could feel a familiar surge of adrenaline that let him know Hulk was more than happy to deal with Tony’s insolence for him. “Hand me that.”

Tony handed Bruce the relevant tool he was pointing at as his hands were busy trying to vacuum the blood that was slowly pouring out of Peter’s stomach- blood the child couldn’t afford to lose. “I’m sorry.”

“I know. Just sit down and shut up for five minutes, you freaking out isn’t helping any.” Bruce said flippantly. He was too preoccupied with the task at hand and keeping his own emotions in check to comfort Tony too. He needed to try and focus. “He’ll be fine.”

Tony tried to calm himself once Bruce said that but he couldn't. His body was pumping adrenaline through his system and he was pretty sure if he didn’t chatter anxiously he’d physically explode. He had to know what was going on he had to be involved or included somehow because all he could do was observe- so he had to know what he was observing at least. “What are you doing?”

“Giving him an intramuscular injection with a concentrated strain of the part his DNA that causes his accelerated healing, it’ll make the broken tissue form webs at an even quicker rate than usual temporarily, basically gluing the muscles back together.” Bruce said through gritted teeth as Peter’s body tried to reject the new stitches he was putting in. After removing the bandages his healing factor was kicking in and it was giving him problems.

“Won’t that undo all the work you’ve done to keep it open-“

“No because I’m not an idiot. I know what I’m doing.” Bruce snapped before he could catch himself. “It’ll only work locally. I’ve tested it.”
“How? And when?”

“You wanna keep question me right now? Is it not obvious that I’m close to losing it!?” Bruce barked and if fact Tony could see how close he was to losing it as the veins in his neck and forehead started to tinge a familiar shade of radioactive green.

“Okay, alright, I’ll shut up.” Tony held his hands up.

“Give me- give me a minute alright. I’m sorry just..give me a minute.” Bruce closed his eyes for a second and took a few deep breaths, the green hue to his skin dissipating as he did so. When he opened his eyes again, his eyes were met by big brown bleary ones. Peter had come to again though it looked like he was barely able to stay conscious. “Peter are you alright?”

“Mhmm.” The teen hummed, keeping his jaw clenched.

“Kid you don’t need to keep your mouth shut just your dad does.” Bruce said lightly in case Peter thought his threats towards Tony had extended to him.

“Can’t. Talk.”

“Well have my expressed permission to curse as much as you like for the next forty seconds if that sweetens the deal.” Bruce said quietly as out of Peter’s line of sight he readied a syringe full of the serum he’d described to Tony.

“Why only the next- AH JESUS FUCKING SHIT BISCUITS YOU TAP DANCING WHORE!” Peter sat bolt upright suddenly fully awake and screaming his lungs out as Bruce plunged the four inch needle full of what felt like scalding hot liquid into his abdomen. “FUCK YOU BRUCE-SHIT!”

“There we go, easy does it.” Bruce said calmly with a smile as he pulled his hand away and pushed Peter back down onto the bed so he was laying flat. No sooner than he did so the molten lava that had pooled in the teens stomach cooled rapidly and made way for a weird fizzing feeling; like a bath bomb had been placed under his skin. There was still a lot of heat but it didn’t burn anymore in fact all of his pain went away- well all of the new pain that had come along with tearing the of his muscles, the incisions on the surface of his skin and the holes beneath the still hurt but they felt like nothing compared to what he was experiencing only seconds before; besides, it was difficult to focus on pain when there was such a weird distracting sensation happening at the same time.
In his relief Peter realised what he had said in his allotted forty seconds of no censorship and he immediately started to apologise. “Dr. Banner I am so sorry I did not mean—”

Bruce just smiled, both because he was happy that Peter’s pain had improved enough for the boy to think clearly and the internal scans JARVIS was running showed him that the injection was working; Peter’s muscles were fusing back together in the appropriate places, preventing any of his organs from shifting out of alignment with one another. “It’s quite alright. I’ve been called a lot worse.”

“Frodo for instance.” Tony supplied helpfully but Peter still looked mortified.

“I’m so sorry- So- ohh woah that feels funny.” Peter went to sit up slightly but as he did the strange feeling in his stomach grew even more intense; like it was warning him not to move yet. He wasn’t sure if it was his Spidey-senses or if Bruce had injected him with tiny sentient robots but whatever the voice saying ‘Dude. Stop.’ was, he finally listened to it and stopped moving.

“Yeah? It doesn’t hurt?” Bruce smiled at the odd look of confusion on the teenagers face.

“No it’s all like, warm. Super warm and ah- that feels so weird!”

Bruce grinned again. “Well as long as it’s not hurting I guess we’re in good territory.”

“Is this gonna make the hole close up?” Peter asked hopefully. “Since you took the bandages off I mean. Like am I gonna heal quicker now?”

“No bud, if anything we’ve taken a couple steps back.” Bruce didn’t offer any more of an explanation, most likely so he wouldn’t give any information for Peter to argue with and he was going to have a conversation with Tony about his condition later in private; if Peter knew what was going on, as he had shown before, he’d find a way to use that knowledge against an emotionally vulnerable Tony. It would be a lot harder to manipulate the man if he didn’t know what he was talking about so Bruce made the executive decision to be less forthright or at least less detailed in what he told Peter moving forward.

“Awesome.” The teen sighed. “So how long is it gonna be ‘til I can do stuff now?”
“We’ll have to wait and see. But it’s gonna take a hell of a lot longer if you don’t start listening to me.” Bruce said in an authoritative tone that Peter wasn’t used to hearing from the man. “No more getting up. Period. Understood? Both of you?”

Tony nodded gravely, with that guilty look on his face that Peter hated. Oh great, another thing for his dad to blame himself over. It was his own fault, Peter had convinced him to help him. He shouldn’t have been such a brat, Bruce was right, he had to start listening to him. It wasn’t right to make Tony do his dirty work when he was so hellbent on keeping him comfortable. He had been wrong to take advantage of Tony’s good intentions when he was too downtrodden to say no to him.

“It wasn’t Dad’s fault. I made him help me-” Peter said quickly in hopes that he could stop Tony’s brain from beating up on him anymore but it was too late.

“Peter I knew better than to-“

“Shut up you were just trying to keep me happy it was an accident, it’s not a big deal, I’m fine-“

“But you’re not fine! None of this is fine! I got you hurt- again!” Tony yelled suddenly making Peter flinch a little.

“Dad-“

“No Peter just- no.” Tony cut himself off. He wasn’t about to argue with a teenager. He’d let Peter get away with too much because he’d been too weak to say no to him and as a result he’d ended up letting the kid hurt himself; he’d let the kid convince him he’d be okay to walk even though Bruce had told him no. He’d actually believed a fifteen year old over a doctor he trusted with his life. Well no more, he wasn’t about to listen to any more of Peter’s sweet talk. If he had to take on the bad guy role so be it, it wasn’t like he hadn’t done it before. As much as it would pain him considering the argument that lead them to get into this mess, if he had to be harsh to keep the boy from damaging himself further he would. No more Mr. Nice Stark. “You’re not getting out of this bed again until Bruce gives you the all clear and no tears or tantrums are going to change that. Bitch about it as much as you want, you’re peeing in those damn bottles from now on.”

“Okay..” Peter said quietly. He knew when not to argue with his dad, even if he could get around him with the puppy dog eyes. “B-But can I at least shower..?”
“Really? Do you not understand the severity of what just happened?” Tony and Bruce both stared at the teen incredulously.

“I do! I do- but I’m kinda covered in blood and pee right now and it’s starting to get itchy.” Peter wrinkled his nose as he admitted with a blush. “Besides I haven’t showered in almost a week, literally. I don’t even wanna know how bad my face is breaking out right now-“

“You just herniated your abdominal wall and you’re concerned about how you look.” Tony said flatly, with no inflection of a question as he pinched the bridge of his nose.

“No I just feel disgusting!”

“There’s no way you can get your stomach wet right now and I don’t want you standing up in the shower, Pete.” Bruce chimed in.

“Can’t I sit in the bath then?”

Tony’s eyes snapped open and he started to get irritated. “Did you not hear the first part-“

“Well what do you want me to do then, Tony?! Douse myself in Axe body spray?!” Peter was getting irritated too. He was uncomfortable and he didn’t think a shower was an unreasonable request, Tony was making it sound like he’d asked him to assist him in killing his first born child.

“Isn’t that what teenage boys do anyway?” Tony said dryly.

“Not this teenage boy and you gave yourself emphysema so using aerosol isn’t an option! C-can’t we just, like, saran wrap my stomach or something? Please I feel so gross right now.” Though he’d started angry towards the latter part of his rant his chin started wobbling precariously, and he shot a begging look towards Bruce.

The doctor shuffled on his feet uncomfortably before he undermined Tony completely. “I’ll see what I can do, we might be able to waterproof you somehow, but you’re not going near a drop of water until I’m happy okay? And you’re not allowed to walk or stand, we can get a bench in the shower.”
Peter was gonna take what he could get and he’d happily stay off his feet if that meant he could get a shower. “M’kay.”

It didn’t take long for Tony and Bruce to figure out a solution to their problem; they’d already had a developing fabric in the works, similar to what their suits were made up of just on a smaller scale, that would shrink and expand as it was needed. The hardest part was making sure it didn’t apply too much pressure to the sensitive areas on Peter’s stomach but once they were able to counteract that it was smooth sailing. Bruce even took note of the design for them to develop further as they figured waterproof pressure patches would likely come in handy as a quick fix for a wound when they were out in the field. Once they were content that Peter was fully waterproofed Bruce went about fixing a bench in the bathroom at the right height to where Peter wouldn’t sit in a way that would compromise the knitting together of his muscles.

Bruce left them to it once he was happy with everything, letting Peter know that he’d give him his new and improved pain medicine after he got out of the shower because he was not risking the kid having another acid trip on a slippery wet surface; they’d had more than enough excitement for one day.

“Alright, come on kiddo let’s get you cleaned up.” Tony said as he helped Peter pull himself up into a sitting position at a snail’s pace. “Slowly, hey easy does it, gotta take it slow, okay? You alright?”

“I’m okay, it doesn’t hurt so bad now I promise.” Peter said though the breaths he drew were shaky as the pain was starting to come back full force. The serum Bruce had injected with was still working to give him that weird warm tingly feeling but it was starting to fall into the background making way for the pain to take centre stage again and he wanted to hurry up and shower before he was in too much agony to move.

After waiting for Peter to get his breath back Tony ran a hand through the boy’s hair and cupped his cheek lovingly, in a very affectionate way that he usually only saved for moments when Peter was likely to forget they ever happened; such as when he was tired or overly emotional, times where Tony could deny it or chalk it up to the kid being incapacitated in some way. Not when Peter was fully awake and (somewhat) alert. “I’m sorry for snapping at you. I was just freaked out.”

Peter shook his head feeling incredibly guilty about the entire thing. He’d been the one to cause the new injury and it was his fault for pushing Tony into yelling in the first place. “Dad that was nothing, you barely raised your voice at me.”

“I don’t wanna do that ever again.” The man said earnestly in a way that made Peter seriously worry that he’d somehow broken Tony Stark. Their relationship had been founded on harsh words
and raised voices, he couldn’t imagine a world where Tony didn’t yell at him at least once a day. Hell he needed it, he was constantly doing dumb shit. If Tony didn’t yell at him who would? The world would surely dissolve into chaos.

“This is depressed guilty Tony talking. You’ll be screaming at me again in no time. Wait until the next time I fuck up the code for your-“

“Language.” Tony chided, though his tone was flat and there was no real inflection that he was actually chastising Peter’s colourful vocabulary.

No, Peter had to snap him out of it. So he did it the only way he knew how; a tactic he’d learned from the man himself. Annoy the shit out of him until he bites back and if Peter knew his dad, that wouldn’t take long.

“My point still stands and you knooooow it-“ Peter drew out a few of the syllables in a high pitched sing song voice that he knew Tony detested and added fuel to the flame by poking the man in the face.

“Quit it.” Tony deadpanned as though it didn’t bother him but he slapped Peter’s hand away.

Of course that didn’t stop him. “Whyyyyyy-“

Tony let out a grunt of frustration and grabbed the boy’s hand, pinning it to his side. “Because you’re-“

Peter smirked and brought is other hand up instead and repeating the motion, enjoying how Tony’s mask began to crack and the corner of his eye twitched showing how angry he was getting. “Am I annoooooying-“

“Peter!” Tony barked, sounding much more like his old self and it was obvious by his expression that he’d caught on to what Peter was trying to do, but couldn’t stop himself from rising to it. “Put a sock in it.”

“Told ya’.“ Peter grinned triumphantly. “You know you can’t stay not -mad at me.”
Tony rolled his eyes because he was not about to let the bratty fifteen year old know that he’d just won. Instead he resumed his stoic demeanour and set about their cleanup operation, hooking an arm underneath his legs preparing to pick him up. “Yeah yeah, come on pissy pants-“

“Hey don’t call me- hey what do you think you’re doing?” Peter flinched suddenly when Tony touched him, making the man step back.

“Lifting you up? No walking remember?”

“Yeah but I figured you’d get a wheelchair or something.” Peter said wide eyed as he shifted uncomfortably.

“P I have to change these clothes anyway if that’s what you’re worried about-“ Tony tried to soothe, assuming Peter was worried about dirtying his clothes even more not that it mattered anyway. He was already covered in bodily fluids.

“That’s not it. Well, that too but..”

“But what?” Tony asked cautiously as he was starting to worry that something else might be wrong, something Peter hadn’t mentioned before.

“You can’t pick me up. I’m too heavy, you’ll throw your back out or something.”

“Really?” Tony said dryly.

Peter’s face cracked into a small smile. “What? You’re old! I’ve seen what you can lift in the gym I’d like to see you try and deadlift me- AH! T-that doesn’t mean-“

Tony sighed. For someone who was so adamant about wanting a shower Peter was really making the process more difficult. “I’ve carried you plenty of times.”

“Yeah, in the suit.”
“No. Remember when you cut your arm on the ship? And when you fell asleep in the car?”

Peter blushed a little. “I thought that second one was Steve…”

“Nope.” Tony popped the p and moved forward again but Peter squirmed away and he was forced to let go.

“You can’t dad you’re gonna hurt yourself-“

“Fine if you wanna sit there in your own piss go right ahead, keep fighting me.” Tony snapped and stood back with his arms crossed. Like the situation wasn’t difficult enough without Peter causing a fuss about getting picked up. Besides, he was rather insulted that Peter insinuated he couldn’t carry him. He was more than in shape for his age thank you very much. The teen shut his mouth when Tony threatened to leave him in his current filthy state and went red in the face, essentially giving Tony an answer. “No? Doesn’t sound fun? Well shut up then.”

Peter pouted slightly but stopped arguing. He did, however, still look pretty uncomfortable with the idea of being carried and he wasn’t sure how to go about it. As a fifteen year old boy it’s not everyday when someone offers to carry you. “How do you want me to…”

“Arms around my neck, let me handle the rest.” Tony sighed. It wasn’t rocket science and he didn’t understand why his son insisted on constantly over complicating things. He helped guide Peter into a comfortable position and braced himself before asking if the kid was ready also. “Ready?”

Peter nodded letting out a squeak when Tony picked him up. He was surprised how effortlessly the man was able to do it he at least expected him to make some kind of noise of exertion but he didn’t. In fact Tony chuckled at the shocked look on Peter’s face. “See? You really aren’t heavy, kid. You should try eating more.”

Tony walked quickly as not to prolong the period of time in which Peter would be scrunched up in his arms; Bruce had been pretty clear about keeping the boy’s stomach flat to ensure his muscles healed appropriately. Once he set Peter down on the lid of the toilet seat he set about helping him get changed, in between getting the water running in the shower.

Peter squirmed uncomfortably, from the itchiness on his legs but also because he was starting to panic internally at the idea of having someone else help him shower. He was starting to wish Bruce
had let him have his painkiller before so they could have lowered his inhibitions a bit. “Can you..you know..close your eyes when you-“

“Yes Peter. I’ll close my eyes.” Tony said quietly, hoping that the kid would leave it there but of course he didn’t.

The teen continued to ramble. “Thanks..sorry I know I’m being a little bitc- baby about it it’s just-it’s bad enough knowing you’ve seen everything when I was knocked out anyway and-“

“I get it. Stop talking you’re making it more awkward.” Tony said shortly though there was a blush on his cheeks as well.

“Okay.” Peter nodded. He was happy with that. No more words were exchanged as Tony finished stripping Peter’s wet clothes off of him (with his eyes shut as he’d promised) and helped him walk the short distance between the toilet and the shower. Once Peter was comfortably inside and sitting on the bench they both relaxed; Peter because he was now suitably covered by the shower screen and the hot water felt absolutely heavenly and Tony because he could open his eyes and stop panicking about the kid falling and hurting himself.

“Just let me know if you need help.” Tony said quietly as he went about gathering Peter’s wet things, including the wet sheets on his bed and cleaning the puddle in the middle of the medibay. He also spent the time preparing himself for the explosive argument he was no doubt about to have with an indignant teenager as soon as he told him he had to go back to wearing more absorbent underwear.

Peter took a while in the shower which Tony didn’t blame him for. It must’ve felt nice to wash off four days of blood and grime and it also must’ve been difficult for him to wash himself given his limited mobility. He would have offered his help but the teen was too modest and he didn’t want to stress him out anymore, not when he was about to have the diaper argument again. Once Peter announced he was done, Tony helped the towel-burritoed kid out, having to fully pick him up again as he was too exhausted to stand.

After setting him down and taking a deep breaths Tony decided the best way to break the news was to be as nonchalant about it as possible in the hope that Peter would be too exhausted to kick up a fuss. “I’m not gonna bother trying to wrestle you into pants. Just put this on and we’ll throw a bathrobe on you-“

But of course Peter immediately tensed up when Tony held out the white medical undergarment for him to take. “I’m not wearing that.”
Tony took another deep, trying to keep his composure and tried again. “Peter please-“

“I’m not. Wearing that.” Great, now the kid had his arms crossed and was speaking through gritted teeth. Tony really didn’t want to have to deal with another meltdown.

“Yes you are. I’m not fighting with you. You can’t get out of bed for the next couple of days and look what happened this morning when you wouldn’t tell Steve you needed to use the bottle. You need them to sleep anyway and this way if something happens we don’t have to drag you all the way to the shower. Two days. You’re wearing them, get over it. We’ve all done it before, no one is judging you.” Tony said firmly and turned his back for Peter to situate himself, letting the boy know he was sticking with his decision and he wasn’t about to be swayed like last time. He’d gotten the type that were pull on rather than the ones that relied on tapes so at least they’d be easier for Peter to deal with himself. “It’s not a big deal, kid.”

“I hate them.” Peter muttered under his breath.

“Would you have preferred the ones with the Iron-Man print?” Tony said with a smirk from where he was facing the wall but he could the teens eyes boring angrily into his back.

Peter growled angrily and Tony regretted opening his mouth. “Shut the fu-“

“Don’t even think about cursing at me, boy.” Tony snapped before Peter had a chance to finish. “I’m sorry, I won’t make anymore jokes I promise. But hey at least these ones you can change yourself, with minimal help at least.”

“I guess..” Peter sniffled. Tony heard the lack of movement behind him and deemed it safe for him to turn around and continue helping the boy get dressed. Peter looked so small and sad wrapped up in a towel and it melted Tony’s heart. He felt a stab of guilt for making jokes in the first place.

“We don’t have to say another word about it.” Tony said under his breath as he set about trying to dry the kids hair some Peter couldn’t reach his arms up high enough to do it in that moment.

“It’s just...no one else knows right? J-just you and Bruce?” Peter bit his lip as he spoke, his cheeks going impossibly red.
“And Happy. Because I made him go out and buy them.” Tony said lightly trying to make the teen laugh but he changed his tone when he saw that Peter’s eyes were shining brightly with embarrassed tears. “No Pete, just us three and it’ll stay that way. Not that anyone else would think any less of you if they did know. You’re sick, it’s no different than having a cast on your arm. We’re just managing a symptom that’s all it is.”

“What about...the bit that I can’t control- is that- is that gonna go away..?”

“You mean when you’re asleep?” Tony asked for clarification and Peter nodded casting his eyes to the ground ashamedly, making Tony sigh softly. “I don’t know buddy. I think you’re just sleeping really hard right now because of the meds you’re on.”

“But what if..”

“Hey, look, don’t worry about that right now, okay? We’ll cross that bridge when it comes to it. Either way we’ll deal, don’t worry yourself sick about it.” Tony said with a smile, trying to put Peter somewhat at ease. Trust Peter to be more concerned about the possibility of wetting the bed in the future when he’d been shot for crying out loud. “Ready to get back to bed?”

Peter nodded so Tony moved to pick him up again but as he did so the teen grabbed his arm suddenly making the man jump back. “W-Wait!”

“What’s wrong?!” Tony’s eyes grew wide as he started to panic, wondering if somehow they’d managed to tear the boy’s stomach again or if something equally dramatic was happening.

“Can I brush my teeth first..?” Peter smiled apologetically for having startled the man and Tony gave him a look of disdain. “Don’t look at me like that! No one thought to brush my teeth whilst I was out?!?”

“No because we were more concerned about keeping your airways open with a ventilator, you idiot.” Tony said dryly; it was true, they could hardly brush his teeth when he was unconscious unless they wanted to suffocate the kid with toothpaste. That’s hardly a heroic way to die and he was pretty sure Peter would have haunted him for the rest of his life if that’s how he went.

“Well oral hygiene is important.” Peter pouted and crossed his arms, showing Tony that he wasn’t going to move until his demands were met.
“More important that your respiratory system? You’re a weird kid.” Tony shook his head. He supposed it wasn’t an unreasonable demand but he was worried about leaving Peter unattended for more than thirty seconds given his proclivity for getting himself into mischief. “Wait here I’ll run and grab your toothbrush- don’t even think about getting up? You understand me?”

Peter nodded earnestly but just for good measure Tony decided to get back up. “JARVIS you let me know if he puts one foot on the ground.”

“Yes Sir.” The AI chimes overhead.

“Tattle tale.” Peter muttered grumpily.

“Brat.” JARVIS retorted out of nowhere making both Tony and Peter look up at the ceiling in shock.

“HEY!”

Tony was quick retrieving a bunch of stuff from Peter’s room to save him having to go back down there again over the next few days. The teen was happy once his teeth were brushed and he’d managed to convince Tony to help him into some pants (his fluffy Iron Man ones that Tony had purchased as a joke but they were insanely soft so Peter had refused to part with them) so he was content for the time being which Tony was grateful for. He didn’t have it in him to handle another tantrum without the possibility of suffocating the kid with a pillow- not to kill him just enough to make him go unconscious for awhile so Tony could have a couple hours of peace.

The teen was back to yawning and wanting snuggles as opposed to yelling and dishing out dirty looks so he and Tony settled in to watch a movie to help lull the kid to sleep. Peter had suggested watching Hitman but immediately changed his mind when Tony gave him a look and he realised that maybe gun movies weren’t the best idea. They settled on watching Hocus Pocus instead for it’s distinct lack of firearms.

Just as Peter was drifting off Bruce popped his head in the room startling him awake. “Sorry, bud. You ready to try that new painkiller now?”

“Mhm..” Peter nodded apprehensively but instinctively pulled closer into Tony’s side as Bruce approached him with yet another vial of medicine.
“Don’t worry Pete, I think I’ve got it down now.”

“You said that la- sorry..sorry I know it’s..sorry.” Peter cut himself off, recalling how Bruce hadn’t taken it well when his work was questioned by Tony earlier, that and he didn’t want to be rude. Not after the man had been working day and night just to try and make him more comfortable. He was just scared, but that was no reason to take it out on Bruce.

“It’s okay. And you know if you don’t like how it makes you feel I’ll try again.” The doctor smiled kindly, understanding the child’s trepidation considering his recent experiences.

Peter shook his head at the offer. “I’m not gonna make you do that, you’ve been working hard enough. As long as it makes the pain go away I’ll just deal with the side effects.”

“Peter there’s no point being a martyr–“

“No I know but right now I don’t care if this stuff has me puking or if it makes me think I’m Elvis or something- I’ll deal. I just want this pain to go away.” Peter admitted shakily. After getting out of the shower it had gone back to being nearly unbearable.

“Okay. Well if this doesn’t work I do have one last thing to tide you over while I work on something else but you won’t like it.”

“It’s another injection isn’t it?” Peter asked with a grimace and Bruce nodded. “Yeah, no thanks, I’ll pass. Gimme the crazy juice.”

Bruce obliged, inserting the needle into the cannula in the back of Peter’s hand and administering the drug.

Not soon after it was obvious Peter was starting to feel the effects and now it was Tony who was nervous. He wasn’t sure he’d be able to handle another encounter with high Peter. “How are you feeling?”

“Not...super crazy. A little, floaty..” Peter said quietly as he studied the back of his hands before
flipping them and studying the other side. His vision was slightly fuzzy and his head felt incredibly light; he found it difficult to keep himself looking straight but he still had all his bearings. Well, mostly. It was still freaking him out slightly but he was doing his best not to panic and luckily for him his dad was there to help calm his nerves. “My tummy doesn’t hurt so bad anymore.”

Tony breathed a sigh of relief and gently started running a hand through Peter’s hair. “Yeah? That ain’t so bad huh? Think we found a winner here?”

Peter nodded in response to all three questions and looked over at Tony, the conversation he’d had earlier that day with Steve playing in his mind. “Hey dad?”

“Yeah?”

“Can I have a hug?” Peter blinked innocently and Tony was pretty sure his heart stopped for a second because holy shit he was so cute. How could he ever say no to that face?

“Sure bub.” Tony smiled, climbing into bed beside the kid and manuvering him in a way that he hoped put the least strain on his abdomen. “Comfy?”

“Mhm.” Peter sighed contently and laid his head on Tony’s chest. They sat in silence for a while, Tony gently rubbing the teens back trying to encourage him to get some sleep. After few minutes the kids breathing evened out and Tony thought his rocking had worked but out of nowhere the teen whispered in a teary voice; “I’m sorry I got shot.”

The words had come without warning so in turn Tony wasn’t able to shield himself emotionally from them and they cut him to the core; hearing Peter talk so openly about what had happened, something Tony was trying adamantly to pretend hadn’t happened, was jarring and he couldn’t keep the sadness out of his voice. “I’m sorry too.”

“Stupid guns. Stupid argument- we’re not allowed to argue anymore, mkay?” Peter slurred and Tony wasn’t sure if it was the drugs or the sleep taking over him but either way he definitely wholeheartedly agreed with the sentiment.

“Okay. No more arguments.” Tony said shakily as he tried to swallow the lump that had formed in his throat. Fortunately Peter didn’t notice how choked up he was getting.
“Hey, y-you know how you did my room all up and everything before I- before I moved here?”

“Yeah?” Okay, maybe the drugs were making him a little more than ‘floaty’ after all if the kid was already going back to asking random questions. But hey he wasn’t trying to bite him so Tony considered that a win.

“Who bought all that stuff? Like the T-shirt’s and stuff?’”

“I did.” Tony said simply as though it was obvious. “We’d been working together for a while and I’d been in your room at May’s. I knew what you liked. You’re a pretty open book kiddo.”

“B-But there was stuff in there I liked I never told you about! Like books and stuff.”

“I tried to think about the things I would’ve liked if I had let myself be a kid when I was your age.”

“Oh.” Peter said softly seeming content with that answer.

Tony chuckled lightly as he continued running his hand through the teens hair. “You can let yourself sleep buddy, it’s been a big day for you.”

Peter sighed softly and leaned into Tony’s touch, letting his eyes close as his hair was played with. “I’m just happy I got to shower.”

“Yeah you were getting kind of ripe.” Tony chuckled again when Peter looked up to give him a dirty look. “I’m kidding I’m kidding. I just wish it had been out of choice rather than necessity. I should never have let you talk me into helping you walk.”

“It’s not your fault I’m a manipulative lil’ shit.” Peter shrugged and yawned.

“ Took the words right out of my mouth and it kind of is my fault, I’m too good of a mentor. Get some sleep.”

“Can I go pee first?” Peter asked genuinely which made Tony laugh. As if he was going to say no.
Once he got Peter set up and he’d taken care of nature’s call Tony removed the bottle and deposited it in the appropriate receptacle; he then went to make his way to use the bathroom himself which apparently was not okay in Peter’s book.

“Nooo come back!” The teen whined as though Tony was planning on permanently abandoning him. Not that Tony minded, sleepy, clingy Peter was a lot more palatable than angsty, independent Peter.

“Can I go pee first? Or do you want my kidneys to go bust on me too?” Tony chuckled. Peter just pouted and crossed his arms in ways of a response. “Jar was right you really are a brat.”

“I can’t believe you programmed him to say that!”

“That’s the thing. I didn’t.”

Chapter End Notes

Formatting is a little weird when I upload from my mobile using rich text so I apologise for that. If it ends up being all janky I’ll edit it when I next have access to my laptop :p
And JESUS CHRIST these chapters keep getting hella long but they don’t feel like it when I’m writing them (only when I try and proof read lol hence why there's always so many errors- shoutout to Swedish_short_snout for helping me out there) so like uhh lemme know if you guys would prefer if I broke them up more because they kinda drag :/
No Spoilers

Chapter Summary

Sorry for the long break, I suck this chapter sucks and I don't really know what else to say lmao- other than Tony has a pretty dark conversation with Nat but Peter gets to move back downstairs-so yup. Enjoy this crappy rushed filler chapter ma dudes

“Tony you need to get some sleep too.” Nat said firmly.

It was three in the morning. Peter’s condition had improved significantly from the earlier incident where he tore his abdominal wall but he was still in considerable amounts of pain and the older man hadn’t left his side the entire time. That night Tony had long since detangled himself from Peter after the boy fell asleep, as was their new nightly routine, and had been sitting in al chair beside his bed just watching him; feeling as though if he took his eyes off of him for even a minute something bad would happen. Even though he knew the idea was erratic he couldn’t help himself and he’s already expressed his concern over the worrying developing behaviour to Bruce which was another reason Nat decided to check up on him. She had just gotten back from patrol so she was too buzzed to sleep herself and had gone up to confront the man after JARVIS informed her he had yet to sleep a wink all night.

“I can’t.” He said quietly. Tony didn’t even bother to look up at her.

Nat sighed and entered the room, pulling up a chair to sit beside him. The two sat in silence for a prolonged period of time, long enough to be awkward for anyone else, as Nat studied the man sitting before her. Finally she broke the silence, trying in vain to delicately broach a sensitive subject. “Talk to me. Tell me what’s going on in your head.”

“You don’t want that.” Tony huffed a joyless laugh.

“Actually yes I do. We finally got you eating and leaving him long enough to shower and attend a couple meetings- What is it about sleeping that’s so bad?”

For the first time since she’d appeared Tony looked up at her, making eye contact; he looked right through her with cold dark eyes and sighed. “Do you really wanna know?
Despite the bone chilling stare Nat didn’t waver. “Yes or I wouldn’t have asked.”

Tony sat back in his chair and sighed. “Because every time I close my eyes I’m scared I’m going to wake up and he’s not there gonna be there. If I go to sleep, I’m gonna wake up and this- all this will all be a dream. Like right now I’m asleep and I’m dreaming that he made it out okay because that’s what I want but I’m not that lucky. I’m dreaming that he didn’t die from getting shot at point blank range because I can’t admit it to myself that he did. I’ve fabricated this reality because I can’t handle the truth. There’s no way he made it, he lost too much blood. Happy didn’t get him back in time and he died and when he did I took a bunch of pills and now I’m on life support and this is limbo. I’m not gonna wake up until I face the truth and now that I’ve figured it out if I sleep I’m gonna wake up back in that reality. And I’m not doing that. I wanna stay here.” Tony said flatly, relaying the horrible details of the delusional scenario his brain had concocted to torture him in his waking moments; whenever he was left with nothing to do, whenever he was alone or when he let his mind wander that thought is what would fill his head. It was intrusive and though he was doing his best to tell himself how ridiculous it was, how illogical it was, he couldn’t get his brain to cooperate and it fucking terrified him. He’d always been a man of reason not a man of emotion, so to be in such a vulnerable situation where he couldn’t talk himself out of something was so unfamiliar and so scary he was pretty sure he was losing his mind; and he couldn’t afford to do that, he had to take care of Peter. Just saying it out loud helped confirm that he was still at least somewhat sane, sane enough to know reality from whatever kind of fucked up fever dream he kept having- but from the horrified expression on Nat’s face he realised that maybe it was time to give his therapist a call if he was managing to freak her out. He’d do that in the morning. Sure.

“Fucking hell T. Do I need to get Clint to come and slap you again?” Nat said breathily, shaking her head side to side. “That's some of the darkest shit I've ever heard.”

“Yep. That’s why I can’t sleep.” Tony shrugged nonchalantly and leant forward to mess with Peter’s hair. A few loose curls had fallen onto the boy’s forehead and it was bugging him; though maybe that was just an excuse for him to touch Peter and make sure he was really still there and wasn’t about to disintegrate into dust, like that recurrent nightmare he’d been having. “I told you you didn’t wanna know.”

Nat stayed silent for a moment, looking Tony up and down as she carefully considered what to say. Tony wasn’t an emotional person and neither was she, that’s why the pair tended to talk to one another about things that they found particularly emotive or thought provoking since they had a similar thought process about such matters; but even she didn’t know what to say. “Your brain is trying to protect itself. Trying to cope with trauma so it’s made a detailed worst case scenario...The intrusive thoughts and the delusional ones, they’re there for a reason. It’s just a case of listening to the logical side of your brain as opposed to the emotional one.”

“Yeah I know, that’s what I spend half my time telling Peter but it ain’t that easy. I’m trying but compartmentalising my emotions isn’t as easy as it used to be.” Tony ran a hand over his face tiredly but regretted doing so immediately because the second he closed his eyes gruesome pictures started relaying in his mind once again.
There was another period of silence as Tony attempted to compose himself but his resolve was quickly unravelling. He’d really lost his touch when it came to emotionally blocking everyone out he’d become way too open lately and that frightened him. Tony had always had a knack for being impossible to read but he’d become an open book in recent months and the vulnerability combined with the guilt and everything else he was dealing with was starting to weigh on him.

“I can’t help it- I’m so scared Nat. I’ve never been this scared in my life. Even though he’s okay now and nothing is actually happening I just- the feeling won’t go away. Nothing helps it’s just this constant level of fear and I don’t know what to do about it. Nothing makes it better. It keeps building up and building up and I- fuck.” Tony suddenly cut himself off from his rant and looked at his friend dead in the face. His expression was off, it went from wild and frantic to calm and almost- amused?

“What?” Nat asked hesitantly, wondering whether Tony had come to some kind of epiphany or was just having the mental break they’d all been anticipating

“I uh, I think I’m having a panic attack.” Tony laughed, literally laughed. The idea that he was having a panic attack after everything he’d been through in his life-

This was it. This was the thing that was finishing him off. It was laughable, to him at least, Natasha didn’t find it nearly as entertaining. She looked more panicked herself.

“Oh.” Nat said simply before realising she should probably offer a bit more of a response than that. “Oh shit. Uhm, what can I do?”

Tony laughed again. “Nothing. I’m alright I guess it’s just- It’s just, it’s weird to be on the other side of it. Wow Uhm, hey well at least it’s something I can understand right? I guess I’ve got a name for what’s happening now so- fuck this sucks-“

The man leant forward and clutched his chest, noting how once he became aware of what was happening his breath quickened more rapidly than he was able to control it and the sudden urge to laugh hysterically at the absurdity of what was happening wasn’t helping matters. Holy shit he really was going crazy.

Nat placed a hand on his back and started rubbing soothing circles, breathing slowly and loudly as though she was trying to encourage him to do the same; she hadn’t thought about what she was doing her body had acted instinctively which she was grateful for because how the fuck are you meant to comfort Tony Stark when he was having a panic attack? This was uncharted territory. “Do you need your inhaler?”
“I need a fifth of whiskey.” Tony chuckled which made Nat stop rubbing circles and smack him instead.

“Say that again and you’re getting a black eye.” She said threateningly as she sprang spryly from her seat and dived over the man to retrieve his inhaler from the table beside him, before shoving it into his hands. “Here.”

“Jesus Christ, is this how Peter feels every time he has one of these? Fuck. Maybe I’ll let him get a pet after all.” Tony thankfully used the inhaler without argument (the usual fight being “I’m Iron Man I don’t need a fucking inhaler Steve, fuck off!”) and it did help to slow his breathing; whether it was the medication or the action of taking slow deep breaths that helped he wasn’t sure but he didn’t much care. He was just happy to have that pressure that had been building in his chest slowly dissipate. “I gotta get my shit together. I feel like a fucking idiot.”

“You are a fucking idiot but that has nothing to do with developing anxiety.” Nat said sweetly and resumed giving him a half hug; despite neither of them being tactile people Tony would be lying if he said it didn’t make him feel better. “You watched the video of him getting shot didn’t you?”

“Yes. Repeatedly. In slow motion. In B.A.R.F.” Tony nodded honestly. After Peter had fallen asleep Tony had taken himself downstairs, disabled JARVIS and plugged in a remote archive he kept of all of Karen’s footage on into the simulation machine. He’d kept a remote back up system for this very purpose, as he knew Peter had figured out how to wipe data from his suit and the terminals S.H.I.E.L.D had; so he had all of Karen’s surveillance files and data sent directly to him where he could store and access things as and when he needed- he’d just never expected to have to use the system for something so macabre. At most he expected to catch Peter stealing parts from the lab or using his suit to get up to mischief behind his back.

He watched Peter dancing around his bedroom doing stupid poses for a while before he bit the bullet and- well watched the bullet bite his son. Once he got to the fight part he immediately regretted it but he couldn’t stop himself from watching.

“Did you not learn from watching HYDRA kill your parents?” It was an unspoken rule in the household after the team discovered who had murdered Tony’s parents, to refer to the assailant as the organisation itself as opposed to the individual; they no longer referred to Bucky as being the culprit because they knew it wasn’t his of his own freewill. It was only ever mentioned during particularly nasty fights between the two opposing heads of the household.

“Guess not. I just wanted to see the guys face.” Tony said quietly but it was obvious that hadn’t been the only reason.
“You’re torturing yourself, T.”

“Yeah well I deserve it. Look at how much he’s suffering for my mistake, why shouldn’t I hurt a little too? Besides self destruction is what I do best.” Tony said dryly as he reached forwards to mess with Peter’s hair again. “I hurt him again today.”

“No you didn’t. Bruce told me what happened, it was an accident. Yeah, you should have listened to Bruce and not Pete but you were trying to keep him happy-“

“And look what that did.” Tony laughed through his nose. “Even when I try and do the right thing for him I fuck it up. God it’s a good think I’ve got a super kid because if he was normal I would have broken him by now.”

“You made a mistake.” Nat said lightly but Tony was just getting started.

“I keep making mistakes. Big ones. And he’s the one who pays for them. I keep fucking things up that’s all I do-“

“Because you’re human. We’re all just human, that’s kind of the point. We’re the sum of our experiences, good and bad. If you never made mistakes you’d never learn anything and Christ you’re one of the smartest people I know. Dad stuff is something you’re very new to, you’re not used to having someone else depend and rely on you- at least not at this deep of an emotional level. And you find that scary so you’re trying to back out of it, trying to distance yourself so you can sit back and observe; take your time before making decisions. That’s what you’re used to but that’s not always how it works. This isn’t chess, you can’t plan ahead all the time, sometimes you have to roll with the punches. Deal with what happens when it happens and if that means mistakes are made along the way at least that means you’re trying. That’s more than what ol’ Howie did ain’t it?”

Once Nat was finished with her speech Tony sat back in his chair silently for a moment, looking at the floor in front of him and nodding. For a minute Nat was worried she’d gone a little too far, bringing the man’s father up again but before she could ask if he was okay Tony snapped his head up and looked at her.

“Nat?”
“Hmm?”

“Thank you.”

The woman quirked an eyebrow at him. “For?”

“Putting up with my shit and always being the voice of reason.” It’s true she was. Whenever they had one of their heart to hearts like that Nat always managed to word things in a way that resonated with him, in a way that made sense. She always managed to make him feel better without dressing it up or trying to sugarcoat things, her straight shooting way of thinking helped him make sense of all the mess of emotions that he didn’t understand.

“You’re very welcome. And thank you.”

“For?” Tony said mirroring the simplicity of Nat’s question.

“Talking to me. Letting me know what’s going on in that big brain of yours instead of raiding Bruce’s pharmacy again or running out and buying a bottle of bourbon. You’re getting there poindexter, slowly but surely you’re getting there. I’m proud of you.” The woman smiled as she jokingly punched the man’s shoulder.

“Can we stop being sappy now? I have to save up the emotion I’ve got left for when Spider-Baby needs me.” Tony allowed himself to smile slightly in return. Having once again let off some steam he felt a weight being lifted off of him and the burden he was carrying seemed to be a little bit more manageable. Maybe Nat was right maybe he really was ‘getting there.’ All he could do was try and lord knows he was trying, in more ways than one.

“That depends are you still panicking?”

“Yes. Constantly. I have a pet teenager. My life is a constant state of panic and worry.” Tony deadpanned.

“Welcome to my world!” Peter cheered merrily, sticking his arms straight up in the air out from under the blankets, almost smacking Tony in the face.
After both jumping in surprise at the sudden interruption from the teenager they assumed was asleep, Nat and Tony laughed as the watched Peter try and crawl out from under the blankets; it took Tony reaching over and helping him for Peter to finally free himself. “Hey there.”

“I have to pee!” Peter cheered again, letting Tony know he was still high on painkillers since there was no way he’d ever say that in front of Nat otherwise.

“Let’s take care of that huh?” Tony chuckled nodding a goodbye to Nat as she took that as her cue to leave.

The next morning, Peter woke up feeling slightly better than he had the night before but considerably less merry; the pain in his stomach had settled, though he still had to be careful which was he moved lest he cause it to flare up again. Tony kept giving him dirty looks if he so much as sat himself up as though Peter was planning to make a break for it and try and walk again (which he was but he wasn’t dumb enough to do that when his dad was around).

Not long after Peter woke up Bruce appeared to check up on him. “Mornin’ Pete.”

“Morning Dr. Banner.”

“And how are we feeling today?” The doctor smiled as he took a seat on a stool next to the teen bed and started messing around with his bandages.

Peter laid back and relaxed, being used to the process by then, staring up at the ceiling as they continued their casual conversation. “Pretty good, the drugs you gave me last night really worked.”

“Yeah? No itching or puking?” Bruce asked hopefully and he looked relieved when Peter shook his head no. They’d finally found the ideal dose and strength after so many days of him messing with the drug. He almost wanted to cry. “That’s great. And you didn’t go too crazy this time? No biting or broken phones?”

Bruce continued examining Peter, this time being more extensive than he had been previously given that he’d allowed the teen’s accelerated healing to reach its full potential. He took several scans as well as some blood draws, which Tony left the room for. “Well your muscles are already completely fused back together so that’s good- they’re still gonna be pretty weak for a while so that means no walking for at least another day, don’t go getting any ideas just because it’s good
Bruce gave Peter and Tony a serious look with that last part, pausing for a moment before continuing; looking over the information JARVIS was printing as he spoke. “Your kidneys functioning at thirty five percent capacity, that’s good considering…blood pressure is still very low but improving- when you were walking, were you getting dizzy?”

Peter nodded sheepishly, both because he didn’t want to talk about going against Bruce’s orders to the doctor himself and because he was wary of admitting it in front of Tony; knowing the man would feel even more guilty and likely be angry at him for lying. Every time Tony got him up Peter always told him he felt fine so that the man wouldn’t refuse to continue helping him.

Bruce could sense Peter’s hesitation but he needed to know what symptoms he was displaying and the severity of them. “How dizzy?”

“Uhm, for a couple seconds it felt like I would pass out b-but then it went away again.” Peter mumbled, avoiding eye contact with both of the adults in the room.

“Mhm..okay well you might get that for a while, your body is taking its sweet time replenishing your blood supply. I’ve been looking into methods of cleaning donor blood so we could give you a transfusion but I just don’t think it’s worth the risk..” Bruce said distractedly as he looked over the results from Peter’s blood tests.

“What about an iron infusion?” Tony chimed in.

“That might be a better option..I’ll look into it..” Bruce muttered again but he didn’t look up from what he was reading. It seemed there was more that he wasn’t saying, or there was something perplexing him as he was decidedly more distracted than Tony had seen him in a long time which worried him slightly. But he knew better than to question Bruce about it in front of Peter, deciding to raise his concerns later in private. If there was something he wasn’t saying there was likely a good reason for it. “Being dehydrated won’t help your blood pressure either, Pete, remember that.”

“So when can he start eating?” Tony asked, trying to change the subject and hopefully get Bruce’s attention.

The doctor shook himself out of whatever thought his was in and looked up. “I was gonna suggest we start trying that today. Everything looks good on my end. There was minimal trauma to your
upper GI tract so there’s no reason not to start you back on oral supplementation now. I’d suggest just trying clear fluids at first, see how you take that.”

“I’m good, for now.” Peter grimaced and hugged a pillow to his chest, curling in on himself. Food was the last thing he wanted, just the mere mention made his stomach lurch in protest. He knew that it was probably psychosomatic but that didn’t help when there was bile creeping up the back of his throat at the very thought of putting anything in his mouth.

“Well so long as you try and eat something by the end of the day. I’ll be happy if we just get you back to taking fluids orally.” Bruce smiled, understanding Peter’s hesitation. He left not soon after to run more tests on Peter’s blood work.

“Come on, you must be hungry.” Tony asked concernedly once Bruce was out of earshot and couldn’t reprimand him for pestering the teen. “You scared you’re gonna get sick?”

The teen nodded slightly but didn’t offer a more in depth explanation, hoping in vain that his dad would drop the subject but of course he didn’t. “You can’t let that stop you from eating, P.”

“It’s not just that I’m genuinely not hungry..” Peter mumbled quietly, making it painfully obvious that he was not in the slightest bit interested in food or the conversation.

“Can you at least try and drink something?” Tony suggested in hopes once the boy got something into his stomach he’d realise that he was in fact hungry. Though it had only been a matter of days he was sure that Peter looked smaller; not just due to his frail state but his cheeks looked a lot less rounded, aging him slightly and he looked pale, though that was more likely due to the blood loss. Either way, Tony really didn’t want Peter to get into the habit of not eating again, they already had their work cut out for them getting him to drink more; that and Steve would never forgive any of them if Peter started missing meals again, they’d only just gotten him back onto a normal eating schedule. “For me?”

“Mm..fine..” Peter agreed reluctantly. He really didn’t want to but he wanted to ease his dad’s mind a little bit and he wanted him to shut up about it. The payoff was immediate as Tony smiled slightly as soon as he agreed which made him feel better about his decision; after all, he had to try at some point. “You got anymore work stuff to do today?”

The day before Peter had managed to convince Tony to leave for a couple hours and take care of some pressing work issues. The teen had slept during that time so he wasn’t privy to the amount of panic and stress Tony had endured being forced away from the injured boy for so long. He had coped, not well, but he had; he hadn’t fired anyone in anger at least, though he did bite off one
“A couple things. Fury wants a meeting.” Tony said but immediately regretted it as he saw Peter’s expression change. He hadn’t meant to say that last part, shit. “Don’t worry about it kid-“

“I’m not getting kicked out am I?” Peter asked anxiously before he could stop himself.

“No. You’re not.” As much as he may hate it, Peter was still an agent; though had he been excommunicated Tony knew he’d have a whole other set of problems trying to stop the kid from going out and fighting crime anyway. He just didn’t like how pushy the agency was being. Okay, well not pushy but they were expecting constant updates which really pissed Tony off; it was like they only cared about Peter as an asset, an investment, they only cared about his ability to fight not his well being. Again he knew that wasn’t true certainly not in Fury’s case anyway but still, he just wanted some privacy. Some time for Peter to heal not only physically but mentally. But it seemed he wasn’t going to get it; Nick had been asking to talk to Peter since the moment he found out he’d regained consciousness and Tony didn’t have the emotional capacity to be understanding to anyone but his son. So despite Nick’s good intentions, Tony was fully intent on giving the man a mouthful of abuse during their meeting, which was another reason he didn’t want to go into details with Peter.

The teenager looked relieved at the news at least, visibly relaxing. “Phew, good. Am I in trouble?”

“No. You think I’d let anyone say a bad word to you after what you’ve been through?” Tony said through gritted teeth. He was trying his best to keep his cool but he really didn’t want to be having a conversation about the whole affair. He wanted to put Peter in a bubble, where he could focus on getting better and, well, normal things; like his friends and family and even school. He wanted him to be a kid for a while so that Tony could handle the S.H.I.E.L.D side of things but he should have known that wouldn’t happen.

“No, I know you wouldn’t, but you can’t exactly control it-“

“Wrong. I can.” Tony snapped menacingly before dialling back his tone when he saw Peter jump slightly at the bite in his voice. “You’re not in any trouble.”

The affirmation that the meeting wasn’t going to lead to him getting kicked out or pulled for his mistake Peter felt confident in pressing the man for more information. “Then what’s the meeting about?”
“What do you think, Peter?” Tony sighed at the question. He wasn’t a stupid kid and Tony always became irritated whenever he asked questions the man deemed to be beneath him. That and he really didn’t want to talk about it. He didn’t even want to talk to Nick about it let alone his teenage son.

“I don’t know, that’s why I’m asking!” The teen huffed. Of course he knew it was about him but if it wasn’t discussing his state in the company what were they talking about that couldn’t be said over the phone or an email? “I know it’s about me getting shot and stuff but is it about S.H.I.E.L.D saying when I can go back or suspending me or—”

“I’m suspending you. I’m saying when you can go back. Me. I’m your dad and your boss, it’s my choice when you go back out there and I’ve made that abundantly clear. I don’t care if Bruce gives you the all clear physically in a couple weeks or if Fury wants you on a mission next month, until I’m satisfied that you’re ready, you’re not going out. Understand? I shouldn’t even be having to have this conversation with you!” Tony finished angrily giving Peter a disgruntled glare for having pushed him.

“Okay, fine, jeez.” Peter said defensively, pouting slightly for having been yelled at. “I was just asking..”

Tony paused for a moment before continuing. He didn’t want to snap at the kid anymore but god Peter knew how to push his buttons and he did not have the patience for it today. Still he wanted to try again, if only to confirm in Peter’s mind that he wasn’t angry at him specifically, just the situation. “I know you’re anxious about the whole thing, just.. Just don’t worry about S.H.I.E.L.D stuff. I’ll handle it.”

“But if Fury doesn’t wanna suspend me what is the meeting-“

“I said I’ll handle it. That means let the grown ups do their thing you sit quietly and play with your Lego’s.” Tony rolled his eyes and rubbed his temples. Maybe he could convince Bruce to give Peter a little more sedatives with his next round of pain meds.

Whilst Tony was considering drugging him Peter suddenly realised something, having been prompted by Tony’s snide remark. “Oh shitballs!”

“What?” The man looked up, the boy’s tone and his colourful choice of language having snapped him out of his sleep deprived fantasies of an unconscious, non combative teenager.
“Me and Ned were meant to finish off our deathstar in time for the con next week.” Peter said sadly, checking and confirming the date on his phone.

“What?” Tony deadpanned. Really? That’s what the fuss was about? “It’s a prepackaged design what’s so interesting about-“

“No we said we’d get in done for Carl the comic book guy to use as a prop in his booth.” Peter spat indignantly. Tony often mocked him for following such rudimentary designs that came within Lego instructions, having no respect for the engineers that had to come up with said design. He could never appreciate how therapeutic it was for Peter to work on something so simple in concept but complex in the number of pieces. Besides he and Ned liked spending time together doing something constructive so it pissed him off whenever Tony would make fun of them. “We were almost done. Ned’s never gonna finish it on his own in time.”

“Should I send Happy over to help him?” Tony chuckled, shaking his head. It concerned him slightly that his son was hanging out with some shady character called ‘Carl the Comic book guy’ he’d never heard of (he’d have to update Happy on the intel) but hey, the kid had his own interests. Interests that were very important to him and Tony realised that maybe he shouldn’t have made a joke. Peter looked really upset. He softened his tone slightly. “There’ll be other conventions for you guys to show off your Lego.”

“Yeah I know. It’s not a big deal.” Peter said quietly. He wasn’t upset so much about the Lego just the fact that he hadn't seen Ned in so long and they’re plans had been disrupted of him. Plus he didn’t really feel like being emotionally open with his dad after he’d just yelled at him and made fun of his hobby.

Tony could tell that it was a big deal to the kid but he didn’t say anything, knowing that Peter would just shut down on him. However it did give the man an idea of how to make it up to the boy as soon as he was moved back downstairs; though that wouldn’t be happening any time soon if he didn’t start drinking and eating.

“I’ve gotta go to this meeting bud, you gonna be okay in your own for a while?”

“Uh huh.” Peter said quietly. He actually felt rather relieved to have some time to himself for a while. As much as he appreciated his dad putting everything on hold to be with him, and he really did appreciate it, his constant presence was starting to get annoying. Tony was bored which led to him being aggravating and trying to push Peter’s buttons to goad him into reacting; and when he wasn’t deliberately trying to wind Peter up he was busy being all guilty and depressed. So as much as Peter adored his dad he was looking forward to having him out of his hair for a while.
“You sure? Don’t need anything before I go?” Tony said, biting his lip anxiously. When Peter shook his head the man stood around for a moment longer. “Okay, well I’ll be quick. Just yell if you need me and by yell I mean JARVIS-“

“Okay dad, I know the drill.” Peter rolled his eyes but chuckled to himself.

Tony admittedly felt a little flustered when Peter caught on to his growing separation anxiety. In turn he tried his best to remain stoic and aloof, adorning his usual no nonsense tone and blank expression as he shook the untouched bottle of juice on Peter’s bedside table. “I want you to finish this before I get back.”

After Tony left, Peter set about doing some light reading in preparation for the next school year. He came to the realisation that he only had two weeks of school left before they broke up for summer vacation; he doubted Tony would be letting him go back to school to finish out the semester which upset him greatly but he knew there wasn’t much he could do. He doubted he’d be out of Tony’s sight in the next two weeks, let alone allowed to leave for nine hours a day. Whereas before he’d been looking forward to his summer vacation his prospects were suddenly looking very bleak. He had planned to dedicate his time to upgrading his suit and testing out new fighting techniques- a bunch of Spider-Man stuff but now he’d be lucky if Tony even let him look at his suit let alone touch it. Would the man even let him out of the house to see his friends? There was an AD club trip planned in mid July that he’d signed up for- that had taken a lot of convincing for the man to let him go on to begin with even though it was only a day trip. And all the other plans he had for the summer...It was one thing not being able to patrol when he had school as a distraction during the day but it was another to spend an entire three month break with nothing to do. As much as he loved Tony the idea of spending that amount of time in the lab without anything to break it up sounded like torture especially given how depressed and overprotective he knew the man would be.

Peter had just started reading ‘Calculus: Early Transcendentals’ when said overprotective father figure stormed back into the room looking positively murderous. The teens stomach dropped, he hadn’t seen Tony look so angry since- well less than a week ago when he said f you to him, but before that- well when he confronted Scott at the compound...wow Peter got the man angry a lot huh.? Anyway he looked pissed.

Surely that was not a good sign. Had Peter been kicked out after all? No that didn’t make sense, Tony would have been happy if that had happened then why did the man look like someone had peed in his cornflakes? “What’s wrong with you?”

“Shut it. I’m not in the mood.” Tony said shortly as he slammed himself down into the seat beside the teen typing furiously on his phone. Peter dared to peak at the screen making out a couple words
before Tony glared at him for doing so. All the teen could make out was that Tony was texting Pepper about ‘Captain Hook’ and a string of cuss words.

“Fine.” Peter sighed and relaxed back against the bed, picking his book back up.

“You didn’t drink your juice like I asked.” Tony said equally snappily though he didn’t raise his eyes from his phone which ticked Peter off more than being told to shut up.

“I didn’t get a chance to before you came barrelling in here slamming chairs around-”

“Just drink it.” Tony cut him off.

“I will.”

“Good.”

“Fine.”

The older man’s head snapped towards his ward. “Don’t start-“

“I’m not you are-“

“Peter-“

“Tony-“ Peter raised his eyebrows sassily and Tony was about to give him a verbal lashing but they were interrupted.

“Why are we arguing now?” Saved by the bell so to speak, Bruce walked calmly into the room brandishing the usual small hostess trolley full of Spidey-Drugs.

“He started it.” Peter grumbled, though both he and Tony promptly stopped sniping at each other
as soon as the doctor walked in.

“How about I finish it so we can get some medicine in you?” Bruce chuckled.

“I-I don’t need any pain meds right now, I’m fine.” Peter said shakily, sitting himself upright and subconsciously shying away from the man. Despite the less hallucinogenic effects of the most recent remake of the pain medicine, the teen still wasn’t a fan of how they made him feel. They got rid of the pain but he hated that wobbly, light feeling his head got every time he took them, like he was dreaming. “Can’t I just take those strong ones before bed?”

“Hmm, okay but you still need your antibiotics and such.” Bruce hummed as he set about messing with the teens IV’s. “I need another blood draw too.”

“I thought I was low on blood, I’m never gonna make more of you keep taking it.” Peter pouted childishly but willingly held out his arm.

“Sorry pal, it’s a necessary evil I’m afraid. Have you managed to eat anything yet?”

“No not yet..” Peter mumbled quietly.

“He hasn’t even drank anything.” Tony chimed in and Peter gave him a dirty look, which the older man ignored.

“Why you gotta call me out like that man?” Peter muttered but his disdain was ultimately ignored by both adults.

The doctor stood back, looking slightly alarmed for a moment but his face soon softened, as though an idea struck him. “If you finish that bottle by six I’ll see if we can get you moved downstairs.”

“What really?!” Peter said in disbelief. That certainly got his attention, he was under the impression it would be a while yet before they’d actually get around to moving him and he wanted nothing more than to sleep somewhere more familiar.

“Yep. Your BP is improving there’s no need to keep you up here, taking your IV’s downstairs
won’t be an issue. But only if you finish it.”

Getting over his initial shock at the bargaining chip, Peter caught on to the patronising look both Bruce and Tony were giving him and it left a sour taste in his mouth. He wasn’t a little kid, he didn’t much appreciate being bribed with ice cream if he finished all his vegetables (though at this point he was pretty sure Tony would be over the moon if he ate anything, even ice cream). “You can’t put conditions on if I eat or not that’s how eating disorders start-”

“Don’t even go there.” Tony snapped before Peter could finish the thought. “Drink your juice or the deals off the table.”

Peter managed to finish the bottle within the allotted time period, though his stomach protested the entire time and the liquid went through him quicker than he thought possible. His metabolism had definitely kicked in full force at least on the digestion side of things which was another reason he didn’t want to eat until he could walk around by himself. Seeing him drink put Tony in a better mood and so did three cups of coffee but he was still pushing him to try and eat something.

“Come on. Anything. It doesn’t have to be big, you can eat candy for all I care.”

“I don’t want anything.” Peter said grumpily, tiring of the back and forth conversation after half an hour. As stubborn as Tony was even he would have usually given up by then but apparently enough caffeine to give a small horse a heart attack and filled the man with unbridled determination to bully his son into masticating some calories. “I finished the bottle before six, I get to move downstairs.”

“Yes but now we’re determining whether or not you get pants privileges-“

“Argh-“ Peter cut the man off by ripping a pillow out from underneath him, preparing to strike Tony with it but the man held his hands up to call a truce.

“It was a joke! It was a joke.” Tony said quickly but he couldn’t wipe the smirk off his face. “No one wants to see your underwear anyway- ow!”

Peter was especially sore about the comment considering he wasn’t wearing his normal underwear in that moment, so he showed no remorse for having pimp slapped his mentor with the pillow at maximum velocity. “You deserved that you asshole!”
“I think you dislocated my jaw.” The man said awkwardly as he sat up clutching the affected body part.

Peter simply huffed somewhat proudly and folded his arms across his chest. “Good then maybe you’ll shut up for five minutes.”

“I’ll shut up when you eat something.” Tony said smoothly, having recovered remarkably quickly from his ‘dislocated jaw’ and bringing the conversation back around to his original point.

“Stop talking in circles!”

“What shape would you prefer?”

“Shut up.”

“Don’t make me get Steve up here-“

“No Steve!” Peter cried out his eyes going impossibly wide causing Tony to snicker. “I don’t feel like listening to a TedTalk about nutrition.”

“Then what do you wanna eat?” Tony then began listing all of Peter’s favourite junk foods in one long, drawn out list despite the child trying to interrupt him several times. Had he not been so irritated Peter would have been rather impressed, he wasn’t sure even he knew all of his go to foods off by heart like that. Then again, Tony was pretty observant when he wanted to be- Wait a minute, no, he was meant to be mad at him, he was not about to give him compliments even if they were in his own head.

“Oh my god will you- you know what fine. I’ll eat something but I have one condition.” If Tony wasn’t going to back down Peter surmised he might as well try and get something out of it. “I’ll eat if I can get a dog.”

Tony paused for a moment before answering and for a split second Peter thought he was actually considering his demands. “I mean, I thought you’d ask for some chicken nuggets or something but if you insist I’m sure dog can be arranged-“
“THAT'S NOT EVEN FUNNY TONY!”

So after another half hour of bickering Tony finally gave in, thanks to Bruce’s prompting, deciding they could try food the next day instead; after all, Bruce pointed out that Peter had held up how side of the bargain so they were obliged to keep their promise of moving him back down to the common floor. After getting the teen very unceremoniously into a wheelchair (which he protested against but Tony threatened to either restrain him to the bed and take him down that way or not moving at all so he quickly accepted his fate) and out of that stark white room he’d been trapped in for a week, Peter took a silent moment to appreciate the decor in the tower. He even allowed himself to enjoy the trip in the elevator that he usually hated due to the noise and the confined space, it was just so nice to finally be out of that room.

“We’ll get you set up in the living room for the evening and you can decide if you wanna sleep in your room a little later on, alright?” Tony asked as he wheeled Peter into the living room. The teen nodded.

“So does this mean I can walk to and from the bathroom now? And like to my room and stuff?” Peter asked hopefully making sure to adorn his infamous puppy dog eyes when making eye contact with the doctor walking along beside him.

It was only logical. It wasn’t as though they could expect Peter to use urinals or a wheelchair constantly, not in the living room. Without a stomach injury Bruce seriously doubted the teen would be able to maneuver himself around furniture without breaking something (or himself); but in his current state such use of his arms would put too much strain on his core so that wasn’t an option. The kid was just too clumsy. “Yes- **but** only with someone’s help. Don’t be an idiot and try and get up on your own like your father.”

“Exactly- Hey!” Tony scowled once his brain caught up to the inflection, but it made Peter giggle.

After Tony plopped him down on the couch and Bruce set about hooking up his IV’s Peter closed his eyes and relaxed against the cushions. “God I’ve missed this couch.”

Tony rolled his eyes as he sat down beside him. “And you say I’m dramatic. You’re acting like you’ve been in prison or something.”

Peter ignored the comment, leaning against the man; both because he was now comfortable and content but also because the transition from the wheelchair to sofa had made him incredibly dizzy
and he wanted to close his eyes lest he puke. Luckily the vertigo passed quickly but despite having barely moved he was suddenly exhausted, as though he could fall asleep right there. But of course he couldn’t, not when there was a sudden weight dropping down next to him on his other side. He opened his eyes to see who the weight belonged to and it was Steve, who was positively beaming.

“Hey Steve.” Peter smiled and shifted so he was now leaning on the blond man instead.

“Hiya sport! Finally out of quarantine, huh?” Steve asked rhetorically, wrapping his arm around the boy to hug him, noting Tony pouting slightly. “Hey you’ve been getting hugs ever since he woke up, I don’t wanna hear it.”

The rest of the assorted house members all flooded into the living room, greeting Peter warmly and taking their respective seats on the couches, other than Thor who decided he wanted to sit on the floor instead. It seemed that they’d all come to the same conclusion that Peter’s return to the common floor was cause for an impromptu movie night as they’d all dropped their other responsibilities and taken the evening off.

“How’d the meeting go with Fury?” Nat asked Tony but immediately recoiled when he shot a death glare around the room, holding her hands up defensively. “Ohhkay then, nevermind.”

“That good huh?” Steve smirked, having grown resistant to Tony’s dirty looks by that point.

“What’re we watchin’?” Clint asked looking expectantly to the teenager who shrugged.

“I don’t mind.” Peter said tiredly, burrowing closet into Steve’s side and curling his feet up on Tony’s lap.

“The Grudge 2?” Nat chimed in earning herself a dirty look from everyone other than Thor who seemed to like the suggestion.

“Ha ha.” Peter said sarcastically. “So funny I forgot to laugh.”

“But you did ‘laugh’.” Clint pointed out.
“Dang it.” Peter muttered making the rest of the room chortle.

“Come on kid it’s your pick.” Tony encouraged.

Nat joined in. “So what’ll it be, sci-fi or some dumb animated crap?”

“Hey I don’t always- oh wait!” The teen eagerly grabbed the remote, forgetting the indignant rant he was about to go on as Nat’s remark had given him an idea. Since he’d made a sick Tony binge watch the Toy Story trilogy with him (and promise to go to the movies with him to see the fourth) the kid had been on a Pixar kick and had yet to show the man his favourite one.

“Really.” Tony said dryly, though he wasn’t surprised at all.

“Oh Nate loves this movie.” Clint smiled and settled back to enjoy the familiar opening scene of Monsters Inc.

That comment seemed to jog Bruce’s memory and he pointed to the screen accusingly, asking through a mouthful of popcorn; “Is this the one with the doors and the little girl-“

“SHH!” Thor hissed angrily. “No soiling!”

“Spoilers Thor, it’s spoilers .” Steve corrected him.

“None of those either!”

As they all quietened down to watch the movie, the quiet and Peter’s over familiarity with the film lead his mind to wander; namely to the pain in his stomach he’d been trying so hard to ignore. He knew he had to be patient with his body, but he wasn’t used to being in pain anymore- not for that long. Usually his healing would have quickened the process or at the very least it would have gotten better but it hadn’t. The pain was just as bad as when he first woke up, which he knew was down to his own actions having worsened the injury but he couldn’t help but feel just a little sorry for himself. Though the meds were working the pain was still there, niggling constantly and it was driving him insane. Nothing he did would alleviate it, no position was comfortable he was being reminded every time he breathed that he had a gaping hole in his stomach that was slowly closing. Laying there in the calm stillness on the couch watching one of his favourite movies surrounded by
the group of adults he’d come to call his family, something he usually would have relished in-reminded him even more. He should have been happy and comfortable but instead he was ripped away from the unusual serene moment by his stupid stomach ache...

Thor was the most enthralled by the film, continuously exclaiming how much he liked all the bright colours and how soft the monsters fur looked, making everyone chuckle but they were all watching attentively. Peter was snuggled into Tony’s side, having switched positions when Steve went to collect snacks much to the blond’s displeasure.

“I get up for two seconds and you steal him?” Steve frowned sitting back down and pulling Peter’s legs into his lap automatically.

Tony simply shrugged but he looked pretty smug as he did so.

Tony himself felt a warm sense of calm having washed over him as soon as he saw his son back in his usual environment. For the first time in days he’d allowed himself to relax, the visual differences between the two spaces, the hospital room and the living room, as well as the change in Peter demeanour finally confirming in his subconscious that things would be okay. Seeing the teen finally look more comfortable instantly made the man feel more at ease; being so close to him also allowed him to he notice whenever Peter winced or shifted or his breath hitched. That was why it was so surprising to the man when he happened to glance down at Peter’s face and saw that it was wet with tears. He hadn’t heard any sniffling or felt any shift in movements, but silent tears running down the boy’s face as he continued watching the movie, not reacting at all just blinking and letting them fall.

The sight definitely shocked the man slightly, making him worry he’d let himself fall into a false sense of security. He gently jostled the teen and whispered to him; “P, what’s the matter?”

Peter looked up, smiling slightly and shook his head furiously blinking as though Tony hadn’t already seen the tears. “I’m fine.”

“You’re crying. What’s wrong?”

The teen hesitated before he answered and reached up to wipe his face. He didn’t want to admit what was wrong, both because he didn’t want to sound Whitney and because he didn’t want to upset Tony but if he’d learnt anything from their most recent brush with tragedy he’d learned it was best to just be upfront with his dad. Steve was right, honesty is the best policy. “I just...it really hurts. I don’t wanna make a big deal out of it- I’m just tired and I want it to go away.”
It had been such a long time since he’d hurt that badly for that long. Since the bite he usually injuries went away pretty soon after they came so to have that level of pain for an extended period of time was wearing him down emotionally; and he was tired. Everything was worse when he was tired, being known for being especially fragile when he needed sleep.

Tony frowned sadly at the admission, though part of him was happy that Peter was honest with him it didn’t stop his heart from breaking. He hugged the boy a little closer and rested his chin on the boy’s head so that Peter wouldn’t see the pain in his own eyes. “Oh bubs. Do you need some more medicine?”

“Oh uh, I swear. It’s not excruciating it’s just frustrating. Nothing I do makes it any better, m’so uncomfy.” Peter mumbled into the man’s chest, leaning into the hug fully ignoring the concerned side glances they were getting from the other adults around the room.

“I wish I could make it go away.” Tony whispered shakily, squeezing the boy a little tighter and closing his eyes.

Peter smiled a little again and tried his best to comfort his dad in return. “I know you do. That’s enough. I’m just being whiny.”

“You’re not and even if you are it’s okay, bub. You don’t have to pretend with me.” Tony kissed the top of his head and pulled him in closer, to the point where Peter was almost in his lap. Any other time they both would have felt ridiculous cuddling so closely in front of the rest of their housemates but given recent events they were both way past caring and no one batted an eye at the affectionate display. “It’s okay. I’ve got you.”

After lingering in the tight hug for a moment longer Peter sat himself up with a sniff. “Okay. Quit being cutesy or I really will start crying.”

“Wait until the little girl dies before you start blubbing.” Tony smirked gesturing at the TV screen.

“BOO DIES?!” Thor bellowed whipping his eyes away from the screen to gawk at the man in horror.

“No! No she doesn’t Thor I promise!” Peter quickly assured the god before giving Tony a filthy look. “Dad that was mean! Say sorry!”
But Tony was too busy laughing maniacally.
Chapter Summary

Chapter 50 wowwee I never expected this story to go on for this long, lmao.

Peter and Tony both ended up staying in the living room that night, Peter passing out before the movie was over and Tony spending another sleepless night watching over him. In the early hours of the morning Tony took it upon himself to deliver Peter to his room, figuring he’d have a better night’s sleep in his own bed though he seemed perfectly content on the couch. It was somewhat difficult for Tony to then leave the boy in there, a niggling chorus of worrisome voices popping up in the back of his head;

‘What if he needs me? What if he wakes up and gets scared because I’m not there, or he tries to get up and hurts himself? And if he hurts himself what if I don’t get there in time and-‘

Tony did his best to drown out these voices because he really did not want to have another panic attack, one was bad enough. He knew it was better for both of their sakes for him to nip the unhealthy codependency in the bud, especially when it came to their sleeping arrangements. After all he couldn’t expect Peter to sleep in the same room as him forever, the notion was ridiculous and he was one hundred percent sure neither of them wanted that. Besides, they’d been through a similar process before after Peter’s night terrors started so he felt confident in dealing with the issue early.

So even if he did want to vomit from anxiety at the idea of having a closed door or two between them whilst the boy continued to sleep, Tony persevered. He had some arranging to do for his plan to cheer Peter up anyway, needing to file a few stacks of paperwork and contact a few people. Of course he had JARVIS on high alert to tell him if the teen so much as flinched in his sleep (which he did near constantly the twitchy fuck) and he stayed in the living room or around that area; close enough to where he could get to Peter’s room in under thirty seconds should need be.

Fortunately for Tony’s weak heart though, Peter didn’t wake up suddenly or for any bad reason. In fact he didn’t wake up on his own at all. It was ten thirty and the boy had yet to stir, which was odd but he’d been in to check on him and sure enough he wasn’t dead. He had Bruce in there to confirm it as well as JARVIS, all his vital signs were normal he was just sleeping. The doctor managed to convince Tony not to wake him up ‘just to make sure’ and he only woke the boy up when it was actually necessary.

“Rise and shine princess.” The man called loudly from the doorway at twelve in the afternoon.
“You can’t sleep all day.”

“Mmrf..why not?” Peter groaned, burrowing deeper under the blanket. “Tired.”

“No you’re not you’ve slept for fourteen hours.” Tony chuckled.

That got Peter’s attention and the boy’s eyes opened fully. “Wait, seriously? What time is it?”

“Twelve o’ four, so come on. Up and at ‘em. We gotta get some food in you today remember.” Tony muttered as he offered a hand to help the boy sit upright. As he did so Peter leaned dangerously to one side as though he was about to topple over. “Easy does it. Dizzy?”

“Uh huh.” Peter groaned again, gripping his head. It was pounding and his mouth was unbelievably dry, even worse than it had been after he woke up from his coma- the kind of thirst where you wake up at three am and chug an entire bottle of water, dry mouth. Man he’d slept hard, he didn’t remember waking up at all in the whole fourteen hours he’d apparently been asleep. He chalked it up to finally being in his own bed. His bed that he didn’t remember getting into the night before but he was more than happy to see after spending a week in the medibay. His bed that wasn’t quite as comfortable as it had been only moments before. It went from being warm and comfortable to kind of cold and itchy.. “Ah, shit.”

“You okay?” Tony asked concernedly, crouching slightly so he was more at eye level with the teen but Peter’s eyes stayed closed.

“Yeah, yeah I’m fine I just..” Peter started quickly but trailed off.

“Are you gonna pass out?”

“No I’m- I just..uhm.” Come on Tony figure it out already, it’s too awkward to say out loud. “I..I need to sh-shower..”

“Oh.” The man said quietly, being sure not to show any kind of reaction on his face. “No big deal, bubs. I figured you’d want one anyway.”
Peter nodded but kept his eyes shut, feeling his face flood scarlet when Tony peeled the sheets back to help him climb out of bed, exposing the dark patch on the mattress. What was the point in him wearing those stupid things if he was gonna wake up covered in his own piss anyway? Though he figured that there wasn’t an incontinence product in the world that could handle fourteen hours of urine and he felt his face getting even redder at the thought. God he couldn’t wait for that aspect of his recovery to be over.

Fortunately the man didn’t comment on his complexion or anything else, rather remaining silent as he helped him stand and make his way into the bathroom. Having learned the best way to go about the process from the last time, Tony had Peter in the shower quickly and efficiently whilst he took care of the bed and retrieved more clothes for the boy.

The teen spent a while washing the shame away, being thankful that Tony had chosen for once in his life to keep his mouth shut. When he was finished the pair made quick work of getting him dressed, Peter opting to leave his shirt off due to the stiffness in his muscles; he was still struggling to lift his arms above a certain point which was frustrating, but at last he was able to stand mostly unaided, that was a significant improvement (though of course Tony hovered behind him the entire time should his legs fail him).

For the first time since he came to, with Tony’s help propping him up against the bathroom counter, Peter was finally able to see the extent of the incisions in his abdomen. He had two small crescent shaped scars, about an inch long each on his right side, presumably from where Bruce had used keyhole style surgery to remove bullet fragments, which he hadn’t noticed before. They were practically healed over, leaving slightly raised purple bumps in their wake that he knew would also disappear in a matter of days like the cut on his arm had; only a thin, flat silvery line was left trailing down his bicep from his earlier fight with the Kree and though he wouldn’t say it out loud (at least not in front of Tony), he kind of liked how it looked. He dared to think it was cool but he doubted he’d be as fond of the battle scar left by his most recent injury.

Peter turned in the mirror to survey the wound site. Though he couldn’t see the bloodied flesh underneath the bandage (nor did he want to, his stomach was still feeling decidedly weak) he could see the size of it and it was worse than he’d imagined. The incision hooked around his left side spanning almost the entirety of his abdomen from his belly button outwards. Christ, he’d known it was a mess in there with all the organ damage but he hadn’t expected the cut to be quite that large. The sight made his knees turn to jelly and he shook slightly, Tony’s grip on his arm immediately tightening.

“Easy, come on let’s get you laying back down bud.” The man shushed him gently and Peter nodded, deciding not to argue for once.

To his surprise though, Tony didn’t start leading him towards the living room, instead back towards his bed. “Hey, I thought I was allowed to be where the people are?”
But Tony ignored the insinuated question in favour of commenting on Peter’s odd phrasing. “Please don’t start singing the little mermaid, I’ve already got a headache.”

Peter pouted when Tony pushed him down into his now clean bed with very little effort. “Maybe you shouldn’t drink so much coffee then. I could sing Hamilton instead? I wanna be in the room where it happe-”

“No. No musicals.” Tony rolled his eyes, moving to further lay Peter back down, manually putting his legs up. He propped him up with pillows instead of laying him back flat, which the teen appreciated but he was still confused as to why Tony was confining him to his room in the first place.

“Why can’t I go in the living room?” Peter said eyeing his dad suspiciously.

“I’ve got some stuff to do in the lab and there’s no one around to babysit you right now.” Tony said simply which surprised Peter slightly but he was happy that the man was showing interest in his work. It gave him hope that maybe things would go back to normal quicker than he’d initially thought, though it did strike him as weird that no one in the house free to sit with him. Not that he expected it but usually his housemates would have dropped whatever arrangements they had to be with him, but he figured they were all busy. It would make sense considering the havoc he’d caused in everyone’s schedules. Still he had hoped to see more of them now that he was out of the hospital wing. “I’m not leaving yet and I won’t be gone for long but yell if you need me.”

“It’s cool I’ll be fine. I promise not to do anything dumb without a chaperone.” The teen rolled his eyes. He didn’t need a babysitter anyway but he knew better than to say that given the small amount of freedom he was being graced with. “That still doesn’t answer why I have to stay in here though. Bed, couch– there’s not a big difference if no one’s around, I’ll still be alone.”

“Exactly. It shouldn’t matter.” Tony smirked but gave a legitimate reason once Peter scowled at him. “There’s less shit for you to hurt yourself on in here and the bathroom is closer.”

“But I won’t get up on my own anyway.” Peter pouted.

Tony rolled his eyes. “Uh huh and I was born yesterday. You think I don’t know you by now?”

“Okay, well yeah I’d try it if I knew I wouldn’t get caught but JARVIS would tattle on me the
second I tried so what’s the point?”

“Aww, you really are learning!” Tony mock congratulated. “It’s just for an hour or so kid, you’ve been pee, you’ve got means of entertainment and snacks -“

“Please don’t start again.” Peter cut him off with a groan, throwing his head back dramatically and sighing. “I haven’t even been awake for an hour yet and you’re already pressuring me to eat!”

“I’m not pressuring I’m encouraging, there’s a difference.”

“Something tells me you never learned the difference as a kid.” Peter said dryly, snatching the chips Tony had thrust into his hands and stuffing them angrily down the side of his bed.

“Yeah well you don’t get into MIT at fifteen without a little pushing.”

“Tell me about it.” Peter grumbled, recalling all the times Tony had tried to ‘gently suggest’ he skip high school all together and go to college early.

“I’ll tell you all about it when I get back, bub.” Tony chuckled and ruffled the teens hair. He stood from his perched position on the edge of the teens bed and started heading towards the door. He wouldn’t be going to the lab, he wouldn’t be leaving the building, but he still felt the same sick knot in his stomach form as he turned his back on the kid. The winding ball of anxiety wasn’t helped when Peter called after him, suddenly sounding very small and whiny.

“Can’t I come and sit in the lab with you?”

Tony sighed slightly. So much for a quick and painless exit. The kid bounced between wanting independence and being clingy which he usually had no qualms with but it made his developing separation anxiety so much worse. “I won’t be gone long, I promise. Just gotta sort a couple things.”

“What kind of things?”

“Work things.”
“Are you forgetting I’m your assistant? You can go into more details than that.” The teen frowned, crossing his arms over his chest.

Tony sighed again glancing down at his watch. “No I’m well aware of that fact, but as you know there are some things even you aren’t allowed to know about.”

“Ohh - So it’s that kind of work stuff. Is it what Fury made you mad about yesterday?” Peter asked cheekily, coming to a wrong assumption about what Tony was referring to.

The man just shot him a warning look. “Eat your chips. I’ll be back in an hour.”

“Fiiiiine.” Peter groaned again as the man left the room, leaving him to his own devices. He played around on his phone for a while, texting Ned though the boy didn’t reply which disheartened Peter a bit. Then again, it was Saturday, Ned was notorious for sleeping in late on the weekends. Peter couldn’t count the times he had to spend the morning hanging out with the boys family because he had yet to rise from his pit, not that Peter minded. Still, he missed his friend and was looking forward to being able to talk to him.

Instead Peter occupied his time rewatching old YouTube videos and sketching out loose designs for projects absentmindedly as he did so. He made a point of ignoring the food left behind for him too, he had no interest in it.

True to his word, Tony returned only an hour later. “Hey kiddo.”

“Sup.” Peter said automatically, grinning sheepishly when Tony gave him a dry look. He was quick to continue talking before Tony gave the ‘I’m not one of your little friends’ speech. “Can I go in the living room now?”

“What is so bad about your room huh? You usually spend most of your time in here anyway.” The man rolled his eyes but moved to help the boy, planning on changing his location anyway.

“I feel more included! I have abandonment issues, we’ve been this.” Peter whined.

“Good lord, give me strength.” Tony rolled his eyes as he helped the boy stand. Peter swayed
dangerously for a second, twisting backwards away from Tony before he managed to grab him. “Deep breaths.”

“Yeah, I’m good, just..woah this iron deficiency is no joke.” Peter chuckled and gripped his head in one hand as the room slowly stopped spinning. The rush of blood in his ears and the pounding sound that came along with it slowly dissipated and once it did he felt much more stable on his feet. He felt confident in stepping forward and attempting to walk unaided but his dad wouldn’t allow that.

“Don’t get carried away, kid. Come on, let’s get a shirt on you.”

“Why?” Peter asked. It hurt to raise his arms and Tony knew that; the man had been content with him being half naked before and no one else was out there so he didn’t see the point in putting himself through any more unnecessary discomfort.

Tony had an unreadable look on his face that made Peter feel suddenly suspicious. “You’ll thank me later.”

“What does that mean?” Peter pouted as Tony set about pulling a baggy hoodie over his head and feeding his arms through the holes. Man, he couldn’t wait until he’d be able to dress himself again, the experience was very embarrassing when he didn’t have drugs in his system to numb his inhibitions. Imagine having one of your childhood heroes helping you get dressed...because you’d been shot...after said hero adopted you after you were bitten by a radioactive spider...man Peter’s life was weird.

“You’ll see.” Tony hummed ominously. “Let’s go Underoos.”

“See what? Dad? See what?”

“Hm?” Tony said again, though he had no intention of actually answering the boy’s questions.

“What am I gonna see?”

Tony started gesturing to the environment around them as he helped Peter shuffle down the hallway. “Well if you look to your right you’ll see the door to Steve’s office and on the left there’s
that artificial plant Thor’s been watering for a year because no one has the heart to tell him it’s fake.”

“Oh my god you’re so annoying.” Peter cut him off with a laugh but had to stop when his stomach protested.

Tony was quick to get him settled down into the couch before he went back to retrieve the boy’s IV’s that they had removed when transporting him. When he came back he set about reattaching the tubing but every time he glanced at the ports in the boy’s skin he shuddered and had to look away again. He was about to attempt to hook up the tube without looking but Peter grabbed his hand.

“I can do it.” Peter said softly, seeing Tony’s growing discomfort but trying his best not to let on that he knew why.

But Tony shook his head, swallowing quickly. He had an inkling that Peter was catching on to his phobia for needles and he really didn’t want that to happen. “I’m just worried about hurting you.”

“It’s cool, they don’t hurt. Could you grab my phone for me, please? I left it on my bed.”

Tony reluctantly took the out, hoping Peter believed his excuse and rushed to retrieve said device. Peter didn’t fail to notice how pale the man looked as he left the room but chose not to comment further. It was a quick fix, he didn’t even have to mess with the needles poking out of his veins, he just had to connect the luer lock plug with the tube and make sure there were no air bubbles. All that first aid training had come in handy.

Tony was gone for a while, longer than it should have taken to go back and forth from Peter’s bedroom and for a second Peter was worried the man had pushed himself with the whole needle business and made himself sick. He hadn’t noticed before but he wasn’t even sure he’d seen the man go down the right hallway? Huh. Weird. But whatever, Peter figured he just had to go grab something else or, well, whatever it’s not like he could go find out anyway. He didn’t think much of it until he heard the elevator moving.

The doors whooshed open and Tony called out. “Pete, you decent?”

What? He’d gone downstairs? Peter hadn’t noticed and that was a weird question considering Tony had literally been the one to cloth him. Peter couldn’t turn enough to see the man from his position
on the couch but he strained his neck trying anyway. “Uh..yeah? Why?”

“You have visitors.”

“What?” Peter said even more confused. That was when two very familiar faces came into view just behind Tony who was smiling smugly; the man’s odd behaviour that morning finally making sense.

“Sup nerd.” The girl smirked coolly.

“Oh my go- what, when did you- hi!” Peter stammered out, getting over his initial shock of seeing his two best friends in his living room and attempted to get up to greet them. Before he could stand himself up though, Ned and MJ both moved forward to stop him.

“Uh uh, Mr. Stark said you’re not allowed to get up.” Ned said seriously for a second before his face broke out into a grin and he crouched down to hug his injured friend. “Hey, man.”

Peter just chuckled in response, reciprocating the hug tightly, forgetting about the audience they had for their reunion. The absurdity of the situation hit him after he opened his eyes though, seeing Tony and MJ in the same room together. Wait, that meant they must have communicated somehow, without his input, which for some reason sent him into a panic. He was not ready for his dad to meet his friend yet. He wasn’t sure why exactly, he’d met Ned and everything had been fine but, but MJ was different. Not because she was a girl! She was just- just different okay?! He wasn’t sure why..

“So uhh- Tony this is MJ.” Peter said awkwardly causing the two he named to roll their eyes.

“Really? I’d have had no idea who this guy was if you hadn’t just told me.” MJ said sarcastically jabbing a thumb in Tony’s direction who immediately joined in.

“Yeah, especially since she just turned up here, managed to get up in the elevator, with me and Ted, past security without me even seeing her-“

“Okay, I get it.” Peter groaned but he was still smiling.
“So.” MJ clapped her hands together and sat down on Peter’s other side, immediately looking comfortable despite the new and daunting environment she was in. “What the hell happened to you?”

“I uh- got shot?”

“I know that part genius. But we were both spared the details. What did you do?”

“Why do you assume I did anything?” Peter pouted but Ned and MJ both have him a similar blank stare, implying they knew him too well to believe it was a random accident that he’d taken no part in causing. How rude. “It—it was an assassination attempt on Mr. Stark-“

“Well that’s bullshit.” MJ laughed humorlessly and Peter cringed at the intrigued look Tony gave her. “It would have been all over the news if someone tried to kill him, let alone got close enough to him with a weapon. I know you guys can keep a lot of things quiet but I doubt a near fatal shots fired incident would be one of them. Besides, Tony Stark probably has a better security team that the president and the queen of England combined so miss me with that shit. You got yourself into trouble trying to be a hero didn’t you?”

Peter stayed silent for a moment, opening and closing his mouth several times trying to think of what to say. He looked to both Tony and Ned for help but neither offered any, so instead he gave her an odd look and said; “...maybe.”

That was when MJ did something no one expected. She lunged forward and wrapped her arms around him. “Well don’t do that again you fucking idiot. You scared me.”

If Peter hadn’t known better he might’ve thought MJ was crying, if the sudden wetness on his neck was anything to go by. He was stunned for a moment before he realised he should reciprocate the hug and he wrapped his arms protectively around her, feeling an awful stab of guilt. “I’m sorry. I’m okay and I won’t, I promise, I’m sorry M.”

“You should be sorry, you dick.” She sniffed and they stayed in the hug just a moment longer before she pulled away, wiping her eyes on his shirt before the other men in the room got a chance to see the tears. “If you pull this crap again I’ll kill you before anyone else gets the chance to.”

“Fair enough.” Peter smirked. Even though she’d just insulted him and threatened him in the same breath he couldn’t help but feel a warmth blossoming in his chest. “I’ll stop trying to be a hero.”
“And you-” MJ turned her attention to the elder in the room and pointed a finger accusingly at Tony. “You better not let him. That threat is extended to you by proxy.”

“Yes ma’am.” Tony nodded curtly with an amused look on his face, winking to Peter when MJ’s back was turned. This was the first time he’d met her and he already decided he liked this girl. Ned and Peter both looked shocked at her boldness but her attitude reminded him of Pepper and that kind of no nonsense personality was certainly an influence that Peter needed. Though he now understood why the teen had avoided them meeting for so long.

Ned was quick to change the subject because he knew how uncomfortable Peter was with MJ and Tony interacting; he was also bursting to ask questions, since MJ had been right Tony really hadn’t given many details. Everything he knew had been passed on from his mom and she’d also been deliberately cryptic to avoid worrying him more, which had backfired completely. “So what about your kidney? Mom said they took it out- did you get to keep it? Do you need dialysis? I can give you one of mine if you need-“

“No, Ned. That’s really sweet but no, I don’t need a new one. I’ve got one and a half, that’s more than the bare minimum to function.” Peter grinned at the offer. “And no I didn’t get to keep it.”

Tony took that as his cue to leave so Peter could have a proper reunion with his friends and fill them in without worrying about upsetting him, knowing both teens would likely want the Gordy details that he didn’t wish to relive; he slipped out silently giving Peter one last meaningful look that said ‘call if you need me’.

Once Tony was gone Ned felt comfortable enough to be his usual loud and dorky self. “Bro that’s crazy. You were like, shot shot.”

“I know it’s cool huh- I mean, very very serious and not cool at all.” Peter switched his tone when MJ gave him a disapproving look; but secretly he was glad Ned had a similar reaction to him, he still did think it was kinda cool.

“So how many times did you like, actually get shot? Ma and Mr. Stark wouldn’t tell me-“

“And that’s why Ned took it upon himself to tell everyone you were shot nine times.” MJ chimed in and Ned stared at her wide eyed.
“Nine?! Jesus Christ, Ned who do you think I am?!” Peter cried incredulously. Oh god, Peter hopes by ‘everyone’ MJ hadn’t meant people say school because that was not the kid of thing he wanted anyone else to know about; he wouldn’t be allowed to go back to school until after the summer unless he wanted to raise suspicions- no normal kid would recover from being shot in less than two weeks even with crazy Tony Stark tech- crap, that would mean he’d have to pretend to be injured in front of MJ too..this recovery was going to be messier than Peter had previously anticipated, though even more so if Ned started spouting bullshit rumours to try and win brownie points with people at school.

“50 cent apparently.” MJ smirked.

The other boy looked like a deer in headlights. “I may have exaggerated slightly-“

“Slightly? It was just the once. Was once not enough? Not cool enough for you? Shall I go out and-“

“Dude don’t even say that. Not cool.” Ned frowned seriously.

“Why? This bad boy can fit so many more bullets in him.” Peter smacked his stomach referencing a meme that went viral a few months ago, though he instantly regretted it because ow.

“That’s such a dead meme.” Ned chuckled.

Peter responded with a very mature and well balanced retort; “You’re a dead meme.”

“You almost were a dead meme, now shut the fuck up both of you before I pop caps in both of your asses.” MJ snapped at the pair.

“Oooo-“ Ned and Peter mocked in unison.

“Shut up.” The girl grumbled as she took off her jacket. “God I was scared I was never gonna see your dumb face again and now I wanna punch it.”

“I love you too M.” Peter grinned, that was as close as she’d ever get to admitting she missed him
and he took it.

“Oh I know, you already told me when you were off your tits in pain medicine.” She replied with a sly smirk and Peter's grin dropped.

He thought Tony had just been joking about him texting her when he went loopy the first time as the man hadn’t brought it up again and neither had she. “What..?”

MJ’s smile grew wider and darker as she whipped out her phone to provide evidence. “The spelling it terrible but I’m pretty sure you meant to say ‘Hi MJ it’s Peter Parker’ because I obviously don’t have my best friends number saved in my phone, thank you for the clarification, full names are always appreciated. ‘I love you and I think you have really nice teeth but not in a creepy way I just like them.’ Then there’s a bunch of surfer and cat emojis.”

Ned immediately burst out laughing but Peter’s stomach sank and he felt his face flood crimson. “Oh my god, kill me-”

“Hey I’m flattered. My daddy paid good money for me to get braces, so.” She grinned, showing off her perfect smile and Peter cringed. Of course he’d noticed it before, clearly if high-Peter felt the need to tell her about it, but now he’d never be able to get the thought out of his head. What was it about this girl that made him so weird. Even Liz hadn’t made his stomach go all twisty like that and he had a crush on her. He totally didn’t have a crush on MJ so what was with the constant brain fog in her presence? And why did said brain fog make him say odd shit around her? Her teeth? What the actual hell..

“You had braces?” Ned asked off topic as Peter stared at the floor, willing for it to open up and swallow him.

“Invisalign bitch. Like I said, good money.” MJ shrugged and nudged Peter’s arm with her own when she saw the mortified look on his face. “Aw come on P, it’s not that bad.”

“Not that bad? That’s the creepiest thing ever!” The curly haired boy hid his face in his hands. That’s it, he decided he's never taking pain medicine again.

“Yeah but it was cute creepy.” She shrugged again, trying to make light of the situation she had full intent on using for blackmail material in the future.
“How can creepy be cute?”

“It was like Radiohead creepy not Hannibal Lecter creepy.” MJ offered but Ned was quick to refute it.

“Nah bro, that screams I wanna wear your skin. That’s full on Hannibal-“

“Buffalo Bill made the skin suit actually.” MJ quipped matter of factly.

“Yeah, but Hannibal wore that policeman’s face in the movie-”

“Out of necessity not infatuation, it’s very different. But I love that scene it’s a shame you didn’t see the actual removal-”

The imagery the two were discussing was not nauseas Peter friendly. “Can we not talk about gore right now please? My stomachs weak enough as it is.”

“Sorry pukey Parker.” MJ said sweetly making Peter scowl at her.

The change in conversation seemed to remind Ned of something as he suddenly dove into his backpack. “Oh yeah, Mr. Stark said you weren’t eating so mom made you these.”

Ned shoved a blue topped tupperware container of something deliciously familiar into Peter’s hands. “Oh my god are these-“

“Yep. M&M’s and all.” Ned beamed at his friends reaction as he’d told Mr. Stark that there was no way Peter would say no to his mom’s famous brownies. His friend immediately started to tear open the lid but Ned slapped his hands, causing him to pout childishly. “Uh uh! You gotta eat some real food first then you can have one.”

“Wha- I- Oh come on, this is blackmail!” The first time food seemed appealing in anyway shape or form for days and now he was being told he wasn’t allowed it?! And come to think of it Peter didn’t much appreciate Tony telling his friends about his lack of appetite or his eating habits in general. So the man could tell them he wasn’t eating but not that he’d only been shot once, not nine
“No it’s not, it’s bribery. And all’s fair in love and food, so eat something decent and you can have one.” MJ said coolly so Peter poked his tongue out at her before turning his focus back onto Ned.

“No, you know you don’t have the willpower to say no if I give you the puppy dog eyes.” Peter said dryly and Ned shifted, knowing it to be true. He’d never be able to say no to Peter if he resorted to emotional warfare.

“No he doesn’t and that’s why I’m here as the enforcer.” MJ deadpanned, giving Peter a serious look that made him squirm. “Try me.”

“No..” The idea alone was enough to bring a blush to his cheeks. Besides he was pretty sure if there was only one person in the world strong enough to resist his coveted puppy dog eyes it would be MJ.


Peter pouted and crossed his arms over his chest the best his stomach would allow. “You guys suck- to think I was excited to see you guys and now you’re ganging up on me.”

“Poor diddums.” Ned cooed and pinched at his friends cheeks who smacked his hand away.

“You’re meant to be on *my* side!”

“I’m on the side of getting you to eat.” The taller boy shrugged.

“Makin’ it sound like I’m a damn prisoner of war or something..like I’m starving to death..drama queens, the lot of ‘em..” Peter muttered bitterly to himself, though he did concede that he’d try some soup or something the next time Tony offered it.

The trio decided to watch a movie together to pass the time, settling on Attack of the Clones because it always made Peter feel better to pick apart the terrible film that he loved so dearly and MJ admitted she’d given the movie a miss due to the reviews; he insisted she had to watch it just to
appreciate the trash. It wasn’t until about forty minutes in when he felt a twinge in his bladder. He knew he should ask for a hand up so he could go or at the very least excuse himself and attempt to make it by himself, but it was embarrassing. He detested admitting he needed to pee anyway but it was a whole other kettle of fish asking for help to take care of said bodily function. Though of course he knew neither of his friends would make a big deal out of it, he couldn’t bring himself to speak up.

It wasn’t until Peter started ‘subtly’ shifting in his seat, inadvertently bumping knees with MJ that he noticed his friends had caught on to him. He glanced to see the girl giving him a look. “What?”

MJ sighed and reached for the remote, pausing the movie. “Well go on, do whatever you gotta do or do we have to like, leave the room or something?”

“What?” Peter shifted awkwardly, his face flushing pink.

“Come on, P.” The girl deadpanned rolling her eyes.

“I’m fine.” Peter said adamantly and tensed his thighs, returning his focus to the screen waiting for the girl to press play.

But she wasn’t buying it. “Dude your kidney is all fucked up, holding it can’t be healthy.”

Ned nodded in agreement. “Yeah, I figured you’d still be peeing in a bag or something-“

“Shut up Ned. I’m perfectly capable of using the toilet, thanks.”

“By yourself?” Ned asked with trepidation, essentially asking if he’d need assistance or what the bathroom situation was since they’d been told Peter wasn’t walking on his own yet.

“Yes, by myself. I’ve been doing that for like, eleven years now.” Peter said huffily through gritted teeth. Could Ned be any more embarrassing if he tried? Scratch that, he definitely could but seriously, what kind of question is that?

“Eleven years? You’re fifteen?” MJ cocked her head and smirked, giving him a skeptical look.
Peter blushed harder but didn’t point out how the numbers made him look instead moving quickly on. “E-exactly which means I’m fine to take a leak on my own.”

“I know that, I just meant walking there, do you need help getting up?” Ned asked tentatively. Unlike MJ he wasn’t trying to make light of the situation.

“No I’m fine-mm.” Peter, getting uncomfortable with the line of questioning and trying to prove a point, tried to stand on his own. He thought he was okay at first but halfway out of his seat the pain in his stomach intensified and the corners of his vision went black as he was forced to sit back down, lest he pass out. He felt four hands grab him instinctively and he was glad because he almost slumped forward towards the floor, but it did hurt his ego to be proven wrong that intensely by his own body. What a betrayal.

“Okay, I m-might need a hand up but I’m fine to walk I swear.” He admitted shakily and Ned stood up, holding out his arm for Peter to grab without question. After hoisting himself up it took longer than Peter would have liked to admit to get his balance and for the stars in his eyes to go away, and he made a point of avoiding eye contact with MJ for the duration of that time.

Once Peter felt stable enough he nodded to Ned to let him know it was okay to start walking and they made it about fifteen steps before Peter started to sway again, leaning dangerously backwards and Ned positioned himself behind him so the boy would fall back against his chest as opposed to the floor. For a scary second Peter’s eyes rolled back and Ned was sure he was going to faint but he quickly recovered, opening his eyes again fully. “You good bro?”

“Yeah-Yeah I just- woah-” Peter lost his footing again, this time tipping forward but Ned held him firm. He was pretty sure he’d die of embarrassment if his body wasn’t already trying to kill him by making him smash his head into the floor; he’d gone from being able to lift five tonnes and run for hours both horizontally and vertically without even breaking a sweat- to barely being able to support his own weight for more than a few paces. It was humiliating and scary. He hadn’t felt so physically weak in a long time, especially not for such a prolonged period. He was so ready to get better, he hoped Bruce had figured out a way to get more iron in him at the very least because this dizziness was driving him crazy. He’d take three more bullets worth of pain if it meant he could have his balance back. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s aight’ I gotchu.” Ned smiled, starting to pull Peter in the right direction again but walking deliberately slow. “Take it slow don’t pass out on me because I will cry and it won’t be manly.”

They made it the rest of the short distance to the bathroom without incident, Peter finally getting some of his strength back which to him seemed promising. He was able to lift his head to its full
height without feeling like he was going to be sick and he was able to straighten his spine somewhat without disturbing his wounded abdomen. Peter let go of Ned’s shoulder as they stopped outside the bathroom door. “Thanks man.”

“You got it from here?”

“Yeah I’m good.” Peter chuckled at his friend’s concern, swapping to using the wall for support as he entered the room alone.

Ned continued to try and talk to him once the sliding door whooshed shut. “Make sure you sit down so if you pass out you won’t fall as far-“

“Ned! Shut up!”

Thankfully Ned did and Peter was able to take care of business without further interruption, which was good as he started to feel that dull ache in his lower back again; localized to his damaged kidney which worried him more than a little. He even considered mentioning it to Bruce. Ned waited patiently outside the door, prepared to help Peter shamble back towards the sofa but Peter found it much easier to keep upright now that he’d been standing for awhile, which he found promising. The vertigo had improved considerably though the pain in his stomach had worsened. This was highlighted when he hunched over slightly, grabbing the affected area and leaning onto Ned, allowing him to support his weight whereas before he’d tried his best to walk unaided. It took him a couple seconds to recover from the wave and when he opened his eyes again he was met with Ned staring at him worriedly.

“Wow you’re really hurt aren’t you?”

“Yes Edward I thought we’d established this.” Peter laughed through a groan, trying his best to make a joke out of the situation but his friend’s face remained grave. “Bullets make bad booboos.”

“No I mean..I don’t know, I didn’t freak out too much when mom told me you woke up because you know, spidey healing and stuff but you’re still...P, why aren’t you healing?” Ned’s voice changed, riddled with fear and his eyes turned glossy. Peter had been hoping to avoid any more emotional encounters regarding the accident, he had his work cut out for him comforting Tony; he hadn’t thought about the effect it might have on his usually happy-go-lucky friend, but he could only imagine how scary the situation must be from his perspective. If he’d been told that Ned was severely injured, but he couldn’t see him and then wasn’t told exactly what was going on he knew he’d go crazy too…
"I am healing dude, I’m okay.” Peter was quick to soothe. “Dr. Banner has delayed the process on purpose so he can make sure I’m healing properly. My body would have overhealed by now and I could’ve ended up losing my kidney or my intestines would’ve blocked up with scar tissue or something.”

“Oh.” Ned said simply, seeming to be comforted by the knowledge that Peter’s prolonged healing process was deliberate and not the result of some kind of natural accident. “So you’re not like, losing your spider powers or anything?”

“Nope.” Peter chuckled. Trust Ned to jump to that conclusion, though this was the same boy who had once asked if he laid eggs. “It doesn’t work that way dude. It’s not like bullets are my kryptonite.”

“I think bullets are everyone’s kryptonite that’s kind of the point of them. Well, except like, superman.” Ned thought aloud as he hooked Peter’s arm over his shoulder and started the slow walk back to the couch.

“And Wolverine, Deadpool- hell if you wanna forget comic books and think about real life, Hulk-“

“Okay fair point. Besides your kryptonite should be related to your origin.”

“I didn’t get bitten by a spider so I could have a running theme Ned, it just happened.” Peter said dryly.

“Still bro it ought to be something related to spiders. What’s the natural enemy to a spider?”

“I don’t know, insect repellent? Don’t go spraying me with ‘OFF!’ to find out, I know my asthma is gone now but-”

“I mean like in the animal kingdom, you douche.”

“I don’t know, you know May wouldn’t let me watch National Geographic.” Not since an eleven year old Peter saw a documentary where an arctic fox lost one of it’s pups and cried for a week. “Birds or something I guess. Hey, maybe that’s why I fight with Clint so much- Hawk eye.” Or
why he started off on a bad foot with Sam. And come to think of it the Vulture...huh, that made sense.

“He doesn’t have *bird powers* though, dude, don’t be dumb.”

“What do you want me to say then Ned? That I’ve developed a sudden crippling fear of birds-AHH A PIGEON!” Peter suddenly screamed making Ned jump backwards, almost making him drop Peter in the process.

“You scared the shit out of me you dumb fuck!” Ned cried, grabbing his chest dramatically.

“Language.” Came a voice from behind them, startling both boys. It was Tony, having appeared in the kitchen brandishing two bags of food.

“Sorry Mr. Stark.” Ned squeaked sheepishly, not recognising the amusement in Tony’s voice at the cursing.

“And Peter stop yelling and sit your ass down.” Tony said authoritatively, pointing Peter back towards the living room.

“Sorry Mr. Stark” Peter said mocking Ned earning him a clip round the ear from his dad for doing so.

“And boys- esslay offway of the SM talk.” Tony said through the side of his mouth, his eyes darting towards MJ.

“Uhh, come again?” Ned said confusedly as he wrestled with Peter who was trying to get him to let go of his arm so he could go back to the couch by himself, wanting to show MJ he was okay.

“Less of the Spider-Man talk Ned, it’s pig latin. Come on dude we read Holes in like a fifth grade.” Peter hissed as he finally got Ned to stop supporting him, gesturing to MJ. It was bad enough she was seeing him in such a vulnerable state she didn’t need to see Ned carrying him unnecessarily, he was fine now he was up (kind of); and the last thing he needed was the girl finding out about his alias. He was pretty sure she’d go through with her threat of murdering him, both for not telling her and for ‘trying to be a hero.’
“Oh, right sorry.” Ned whispered. “Do you need help to-”

“I’ve got it.” Peter said quickly as he moved back towards the couch, where MJ gave him a look. “What?”

For a second it looked as though she was going to insult him or engage in some kind of banter, but her sly smirk dropped when she looked at his stomach. Where he’d sat down Peter’s oversized hoodie had ridden up slightly and some of the white, blood stained bandage he was wrapped in peeked out. Peter was quick to move to cover it again but her sad expression didn’t change. “I’m okay.”

MJ nodded but put her hand on his thigh, still looking sadly down at his side. “You better be.”

Her eyes met his and Peter felt his mouth go dry, that sickening pang of guilt returning. It was unsettling to see the usually confident and sarcastic girl so distressed and to think that he caused that made him deeply upset. Instinctually he put his hand on top of hers and she squeezed it in return, maintaining eye intact longer that Peter was sure they ever had. Usually Peter avoided eye contact, with most people but especially her, but for some reason he found himself lost in her warm dark eyes for a second and their mutual stare felt comfortable...The tender moment was cut off by Ned flinging a paper bag of food into Peter’s lap, snapping the pair out of their gaze.

“Mr. Stark said if you eat half you can have a brownie.” Ned said through a mouthful of fries and he handed MJ her own bag.

“Since when did you become his messenger.” Peter mumbled bitterly but reluctantly opened the package, of which contents only soured his mood further. Unfortunately Tony had already slipped away again so Peter couldn’t give him a mouthful of abuse. “Is he serious?”

MJ peeked over the boys shoulder to see the Happy Meal container and snickered. “What’s the problem, have you already got that toy?”

“No I haven’t actually.” Peter sighed grumpily. He’d never admit it but the smell of food actually did have his stomach growling hungrily, though he wasn’t sure if greasy fast food was necessarily the best choice to eat after almost a week of nothing but hey, he wasn’t complaining. After all he was the kid who would have happily gorged himself on brownies not an hour before. Though he made a mental note to tattle on Tony to Steve who would no doubt have a lot to say about the man’s choice. He pulled the toy out of the bag and grinned. It was a figurine of Cap and best
believe he was gonna keep it, that was sure to piss Tony off. Little paybacks.

The teenagers spent the duration of the afternoon together, way into the evening. It got to be around six o’clock when Ned and MJ had to leave to return to their own respective homes. As much as Peter was sad to see them go he was hopeful that now his dad had met both of his friends he’d be more lenient towards leisure activities in the future, even if he was mortified that they must have spoken without him being there. He was also surprised that they’d been left mostly undisturbed for that entire time (bar one instance when Bruce came to change Peter’s IV and check his blood sugar) but he figured Tony had threatened their other housemates into giving them some privacy.

“I’ll see you later dude.” Ned said, squeezing the air out of Peter’s lungs with a hug. When he finally let go Peter kept his arms open, looking expectantly at MJ who rolled her eyes but also went in for a hug.

“As much as I loved seeing where you live finally, please get better soon so we can go out into the real world.” The girl smirked once they broke apart. “I don’t really feel like getting touched up by a guard every time I wanna see you.”

Peter’s smile dropped as did Ned’s. The latter gave her a quizzical look. “Wait what?”

“You know the weird guy at the front desk who had to frisk us down, make sure we didn’t have concealed weapons and such.” The girl said seriously and both boys failed to see the quiver of a smile in the corner of her mouth.

“I just went through a detector...JARVIS can see all that stuff anyway right?”

“What did this guy look like-“

“Oh my god, chill out dude I was kidding. I didn’t get groped by anybody.” She laughed darkly at the filthy looks the two boys were giving her. “Well not here anyway, the subway on the way over here was another story-”

“Happy’s driving you home.” Peter said quickly not finding any humour in MJ’s mistimed joke. “I’m serious. It’s dark already.”
“How chivalrous. But I can take care of myself.”

“Yeah that’s what Peter said and he got turned into Swiss cheese-”

“Shut up Ned.” MJ and Peter said in unison.

Tony came up in the elevator, having been texted by Peter to help escort the pair out of the building and home safely.

“Hey, Tony, do you think Happy would mind dropping them both home?” Peter asked before MJ had the chance to argue.

“I’ve got them a ride, just not with Happy.” Tony said shortly, making Peter cock his head in confusion. Tony then turned to the other two teens and smiled, gesturing to a lady inside the elevator that Peter didn’t recognise. “If you two would care follow my assistant she’ll make sure you make it out of here. Nice to see you again Ted and MJ it was a pleasure meeting you finally.”

Tony and the girl smirked and made a show of shaking one anothers hands sarcastically to make Peter mad. “Likewise, Sir.”

“Okay you can get out now.” Peter huffed. He already knew he’d been silly to worry so much about Tony meeting MJ but he didn’t need them rubbing it in his face. Besides he was in pain and getting tired, it was making him crabby.

“I’ll see you later man.” Ned smiled giving Peter a small wave as he turned away. “Thank you for having us Mr. Stark.”

“Don’t do any more dumb shit, okay?” MJ winked.

“I won’t.” Peter sighed poking his tongue out at her which she reciprocated before joining Ned and Tony’s assistant in the elevator; then disappearing out of view behind the sliding door.

As soon as they were gone Tony sat himself down next to Peter who immediately hugged him. “See? I told you you’d want a shirt on.”
“Thank you dad, that was an awesome surprise.” Peter thanked him earnestly making Tony’s heart melt. All the rushing around trying to get MJ clearance that morning had been worth it.

“Well happy birthday. You needed cheering up and I know you missed Tedward.” The man paused before adding, “And MJ.”

Peter looked up at his dad suspiciously. “You didn’t talk to her a lot though, did you?”

Tony smirked at the teens paranoia. “No more than what was necessary to be polite and we communicated prior to this through Ned, so don’t worry. I’m not gonna embarrass you until you’re better.”

“I appreciate that.” Peter sighed contently, relaxing against the man sleepily. All the excitement of seeing his friends had made him awfully tired, or maybe it was because this was the longest he’d been awake since he’d come out of his coma. Either way he was suddenly ready to go to sleep but he did have another question for Tony. “How come you didn’t get Happy to drive? I thought he was like, one of the only guys you trust?”

Peter felt Tony stiffen slightly and his lips pressed into a thin line before he answered. “He’s not working right now.”

“Huh? How com- dad, you didn’t fire him did you?! Because it wasn’t his fault!” The idea horrified the teen. Happy was one of Tony’s closest and, well, only friends.

“No I didn’t, I gave him some time off. Don’t you think he needed a little time to recover from this too? He almost saw you die, kid.” Tony shook his head in disbelief. How did the boy come to these drastic conclusions so quickly? What he’d give to get inside his head, just for a peek at how it worked.

“Oh..” Peter hadn’t considered Happy at all in all of this, he hadn’t spared a thought to how traumatised the agent may have been even though Peter’s life was literally in his hands right after the accident. Bruce had said if Happy had gotten Peter back only a couple minutes later...that was a lot of pressure for anybody.

“Yeah. Happy’s tough but even he needed some respite after that.” Tony sighed remembering the shaking, blood soaked man crying in his car the morning after the accident. “Don’t worry about it,
“Mhm.” Peter yawned. “But I wanna stay up until everyone else gets home.”

“They never left.” Tony chuckled and Peter had figured as much. “But you owe me big time for having all of them leave you guys alone, you should’ve heard my conversation with Steve.”

“Why, what was said?”

“You’re gonna leave him alone with a girl?!” Yes Cap because A, he’s not alone Ted’s there and B, this isn’t the nineteen forties, girls and boys can be friends.”

“Good god.” Peter groaned. “Better not let him know you gave me McDonald's or he’ll have a fit.”

“If anyone asks I gave you organic kale salad.” Tony said ‘threateningly.’

“Sure, so long as I can have one of Donna’s brownies.” Peter bargained cheekily and surprisingly Tony took the bait, shaking his hand to confirm the ‘contract’.

“If I can have one too, you’ve got yourself a deal.”
So uhhh, I don't really like talking about personal issues on here but given it's likely going to affect my uploading it's probably worth mentioning.
I kinda broke both of my wrists. So yeah, typing is kinda hard right now and I'm uploading straight from my phone so please excuse any weird formatting for the time being; I'll fix it when I can use mouse again XD And the lack of proofreading because I truly don't have the energy for all that jazz today.
So kinda a filler chapter here, a little angst and fluff to tide y'all over whilst I..fix my broken bones XD

Things were finally starting to settle down in the Stark household. It had been a couple weeks since Peter had returned to the common floor and he was excelling physically. He’d surpassed all the milestones and time frames Bruce had predicted for him, having almost recovered fully. The early days had been a struggle and he still got sudden sharp pains every now and then, but he was still happy over all with how far he’d come in such a short span of time. After three weeks he still had a moderate iron deficiency, but that was being managed through dietary changes and vitamins and he rarely felt the effects in his day to day activities; other than he still got dizzy every now and then and he was tired a lot of the time, but it was manageable. Nothing a few naps couldn’t fix. He also had to wear this weird, compression brace vest thing that Bruce had concocted- designed to support the muscles in his abdomen to avoid said muscles herniating again. It was an unnecessary precaution, but Bruce was known to aire on the safe side and Peter was not about to argue with the doctors orders; unless he wanted to answer to Bruce’s big green counterpart who had threatened to make an appearance last time Peter threw a fit about not being allowed energy drinks.

But all in all, he was practically back in tip top condition after only twenty one days. In all honesty, had his recovery taken any longer than that he was sure that he would have gone mad, and driven everyone else insane in the process. Peter was not a creature designed to sit still or in one place for too long, he’d gotten so stir crazy before he was able to walk around effectively on his own he’d talked Thor into giving him piggybacks around the tower just for something to do. But he was back to running around the house of his own accord leaving chaos and discarded candy wrappers (that he was not meant to be eating but the adults had made a compromise considering the child had to give up all of his favourite sugary beverages) in his wake.

The only thing that was still truly bothering him regarding his physical health was the unfortunate side effects of having a dysfunctional kidney and deep sleeping patterns...but Peter did his best not to mention that, only talking about it to Bruce who then relayed the information in private to Tony, who dared not to bring it up either. Peter hoped, as did the doctor, that in time it would go away on its own but for now he had to put up with getting up half an hour before everyone else to deal with soaked sheets.
However the other thing that was affecting Peter was a little more pressing than some extra laundry. Tony...Tony wasn’t doing so well. He acted as though everything was fine and for a while the teen thought it was. Once he was back up to walking around of his own volition and had joined the man back in the lab, Tony seemed a lot happier. But towards the evenings his mood always seemed to darken. He tried his best to hide it from everyone, Peter especially, but he couldn’t hide the pained look in his eyes everyday he looked at his son or the ‘incident’, as it was now being referred to, was mentioned. The fact that he wasn’t talking to anyone (in the household at least) about his grief was very concerning but Peter never bothered mentioning it to anyone bar his councillor, knowing the adults he lived with would just tell him not to worry; ‘you’re a kid it doesn’t concern you’, ‘don’t worry about it’- he knew what kind of reaction he would get so he stayed quiet. But he wasn’t going to allow Tony to slip through his fingers and go back into a depression, not on his watch. Even if the man was gonna be crazy overprotective and generally in a weird mental state for a while, he wasn’t gonna let it phase him. He could be patient, just like Tony had been with him.

He’d been allowed to go back to school for the last two days of the academic year too much to his surprise, if only to get his report cards, test results and the necessary schoolwork for over the summer holidays. Thanks to Ned rumours had spread as to his leave of absence but Peter (with MJ’s help) was quick to disperse them, citing that Peter had caught a rare virus during a foreign trip with Tony for his internship and he’d spent the last fortnight in quarantine. The threat of a possibly contagious pathogen meant people left him alone, giving him a wide berth in the halls, which to him was an added bonus.

The only thing that was missing and had yet to be mentioned, was when Peter would be allowed back into the work side of things. He dared not ask Tony as everytime he so much as went near the designated S.H.I.E.L.D side of the lab Tony gave him that look that almost made his bladder release involuntarily. He’d asked Bruce and Steve- even Nat, but they all seemed adamant not to break Tony’s trust on the matter lest they feel his wrath as he’d made it known to everyone that the decision was down to him and him alone.

Only that wasn’t true. Little did Peter know Tony had in fact been given a deadline for Peter’s recovery period, weeks prior and it was the unfortunate Nick Fury tasked with delivering the bad news; The day Tony came back from that meeting with him he’d been told that the boy had been given the short respite period, hence his bad mood and reluctance to talk about it.

“Four weeks?”

“Tony, look, I’m not happy with that number either-“

“FOUR FUCKING WEEKS?!“
Unbeknownst to Peter, with that four week deadline creeping up on him and having not been told, someone decided to pay him a little visit just to pass on the information. He’d been spending time with Tony in the lab, messing around with a dodgy glove on one of Tony’s suits. Peter was sitting on one of the high standing desks near the window, swinging his legs as he messed with the bolts on the glove in his lap. He was usually banned from sitting on random items furniture, especially in the lab, but Tony had given up trying to keep the boy near the ground as he’d been especially hyperactive that day. It was better than him suspending himself from the ceiling at least.

The environment was calm, Tony seeming a little less on edge for once, quietly humming to himself as he worked but all of a sudden the man looked at his phone and his calm demeanour switched completely.

“So...n of a bitch!” Tony yelled angrily, slamming his phone down into the work bench, making Peter jump. He didn’t even apologise for doing so as he stormed out of the room, pointing at the boy and growling; “Stay here, do not move until I get back.”

“Uh, o-okay I won’t..” Peter squeaked but Tony was already hightailing it out of the lab and down the hall. What the hell was that about? Had he done something? He didn’t even remember doing anything this time! Unless Steve found his stash of soda in the vent above his bed...

The man was gone for over ten minutes and each minute that ticked by made Peter even more nervous, more possibilities popping into his head and he was starting to panic. When he heard the elevator shaft start moving he held his breath, watching two shadows dance on the wall as the descended the hallways towards the lab. Wait, two shadows?

Tony was noticeably red faced and wide eyed as he turned the corner, something Peter hadn’t seen in a long time. He soon realised why his dad looked so upset when none other than Nick Fury came into view beside him. It was still worrying to see Tony that upset, he was usually so composed especially around work colleagues, so to see him so riled up shocked Peter a bit. Come to think of it the last time he’d seen Fury was when he’d last seen Tony so worked up was when he’d last seen Fury. Oh wait...no it wasn’t. He kept forgetting about the argument they’d had that night before he left for patrol. Still, it wasn’t like Tony to let that emotional wall down in front of his boss unless something big was going on. Then again the man hadn’t slept in forty seven hours (yes, he’d asked JARVIS for the specific number and frankly the teen was appalled) and Peter imagined that his dad wasn’t too happy to have him involved with work stuff again so soon.

Fury however looked the image of calm. He turned to Peter and smiled as he entered the room, walking straight towards him and not waiting for Tony to announce his arrival. “Mr. Parker. How are you?”
“Uh I’m- I’m uh, I’m good sir, how are you?” Peter stammered as he shook the man’s outstretched hand. He hadn’t expected to speak to Nick Fury on a quiet boring Sunday so he felt kind of weird greeting his bosses boss in a casual setting. Had he had time to prepare he would have gotten more into his Spider-Man headspace not his normal, teenage brain. The lack of announcement of the man’s arrival made him suddenly very nervous, was it bad news? Was that why Tony looked so upset?

But Nick was all smiles, sitting casually across from Peter. “Just dandy. Just thought I’d check in, see how you were doing. It’s usually customary that I come and do a review immediately after an incident but your dad here had that part covered.”

Nick gestured towards Tony with the latter part of that sentence but Peter’s dad continued to give him a cold steely glare in return, one that made Peter nervous for the man’s safety. Nick however was unphased, seemingly used to Tony’s bad attitude, and continued. “Dr. Banner did a good job patching you up I see.”

“Yeah.” Peter agreed awkwardly, rubbing the back of his neck.

“There. You’ve seen him. Now get out.” Tony clapped his hands loudly, the sound reverberating around the room and making Peter jump again; he pointed the other man towards the door but Nick didn’t budge.

“Tony I am not the enemy here. You know I have to do an assessment to ensure he’s-“

“Mhm, sure whatever. Have a safe trip back Nick.” Tony said in a mock friendly tone, heavily patronising the man.

Despite the rude interruption Nick remained calm, seeming to have more patience with the genius than usual given the circumstances. “Tony-“

But Tony didn’t seem to appreciate the leniency his boss was giving him despite his hostility and stepped forward, looking increasingly angry. He had a wild look in his eyes but his voice dropped low, and gravely, sending a shiver down Peters spine and the teenager wondered how Nick had the willpower not to flinch. “I’m not talking to you about this anymore. I’ve said what I needed to say and I won’t be talking about it in front of the kid.”

Nick paused for a moment, looking Tony up and down, taking in his stance. The silence was tense,
only being broken when Nick nodded and made his request. “I wanna talk to him alone.”

“No.” Tony said instantly, his eyes growing dark and hot with anger. “You come into my house demanding to talk to my son.”

Peter bit his lip anxiously, he could see the situation deteriorating quickly. He still hadn’t a clue what was going on but he knew he had to do or say something; it was clear Tony was about to lose his shit after weeks of repressing his emotions and he wasn’t sure he wanted to see that happen. “Dad-“

“Stay out of this Peter.” Tony snapped coldly, not taking his eyes off of Nick.

“That’s kind of hard to do when you’ve brought it in here, in front of me.” Peter said honestly, but regretted it when Tony’s angry eyes snapped towards him for his insolence. He wasn’t trying to be sassy (for once), it really wasn’t his fault he’d been involved in the conversation. If not involved at the very least a witness and he didn’t want to be a bystander when Tony got in trouble for assaulting his boss.

“He’s right.” Fury hummed, seemingly to goade Tony into turning his attention back to him which worked; Tony turned his angry gaze back to Nick.

“He’s my kid.” Tony said through gritted teeth.

Nick sighed and rose slowly from his seat. “You don’t have ownership over him-“

“No I have guardianship and god knows S.H.I.E.L.D doesnt fucking own him either. They don’t care about whether or not he’s ready-“

“But I do that’s why I’m here. I’m happy to go with your judgement on that-“

“Bullshit.” Tony laughed coldly But Nick continued speaking as though he hadn’t been interrupted again.

“-But he’s also a sentient being. If he’s old enough to be an agent, he’s mature enough to be a part
of this decision. A part of it, at the very least he should have been told what was going on. It’s down to us at the end of the day-“

“Me. It’s down to me. My son. He’s my child first Spider-Man second, I’ve said that from the get go.”

“It’s more complicated than that now Tony you know that. You’re not the only one responsible for him anymore. I am trying to help you here I’ve already bought you more time-“

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Tony snapped and Peter was wondering the same thing.

“You know the extension period for injuries is a month max-“

“Yeah for minor injuries- he got shot for fucksake!”

“He also heals forty six times faster than any human-“

Tony let out a blood curdling cry of frustration and started full on screaming, making Peter want to hide behind Nick even though he wasn’t the one getting yelled at. “Not at the moment! Bruce slowed it-“

“I know. That was part of my report and that’s why-”

“Clint’s only just getting back out there now after his spinal injury, why are we only getting a month?!”

Instead of rising to the man’s anger, Fury again took a step back, huffing through his nose before continuing calmly. “Tony when was the last time you got some sleep?”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“Because you’re not listening and you sound like a jackass. That’s not what I said.” Nick chuckled and shook his head. Despite being screamed at he still didn’t yell back and Peter was pretty sure
the man must have some kind of superpower in patience because to show no reaction at all to that level of rage was more than impressive. ‘I’m willing to work with you. Bend the rules. Wait until he’s ready and more importantly when you’re ready. But you gotta give a little, he’s not just your responsibility. It takes a village.”

“And a multimillion dollar government organisation who are very well invested in this particular project, hm? He’s a pretty expensive piece of equipment.”

‘Wow thanks dad, I’m literally sitting right here but go off.’ Peter rolled his eyes internally. He knew the man was just projecting but still, it was nice to hear how valued he was as a person. Jeez.

Nick sighed. It seemed he’d finally given up on having a reasonable conversation with the man, or trying to persuade him to listen to reason. From what little peter knew even he could gather that Fury was on his side about...well whatever- him going back to agent stuff so early he guessed? He was right Tony really wasn’t listening. “Okay. You don’t wanna talk? That's fine. But once you’ve got your shit together give me a call. I’ll buy us time until then. Once I talk to Peter I’ll be out of your hair-“

“No.” Tony said with finality.

Nick huffed another laugh. “What? Did you think I was here to have a tea party with you? I have a legal obligation to see-“

“I have a legal obligation to shove my foot so far up your ass that you’ll be tasting leather for a month- get the fuck out of my house-“

“Uhh JARVIS can you get Steve-“ Peter called up towards the ceiling in a panic when Tony stepped forward and started screaming again. He was not equipped to deal with this and he was debating webbing the men to the wall and running away; the tension between the two authority figures was not something he was prepared to handle and he didn’t know what to do other than call for reinforcements.

“No Steve!” Fury and Tony said in unison, albeit with differing levels of urgency in their tone.

“Then can you either stop yelling or can I, like, leave? Because this is awkward as all hell.” Peter asked, shifting in his seat uncomfortably which made both of the adults cringe slightly in remorse.
Neither had intended for the conversation to escalate to such a degree, especially in front of Peter. “I’m happy to talk to Mr. Fury alone it’s not like he’s gonna try and conspire against you in your own building where JARVIS will report back to you anyway. That would just be dumb.”

“Exactly. Jar will report back to me anyway, so let’s cut out the middleman. Anything that needs to be asked can be asked in front of me.” Tony said simply, leaning against a bench with his arms crossed. He looked somewhat triumphantly towards Nick, as though he thought Peter had helped back the man into a proverbial corner but his smirk dropped when the boy spoke up again.

“Maybe I wanna talk to him in private…” Peter said quietly, but both men heard it. He gulped when both pairs of dark eyes looked scrutinizingly towards him.

Tony’s eyes snapped towards the teen as though Peter had just pledged allegiance to his opposing sports team. “Why?”

“Because you’re being all crazy and overbearing and you’re freaking me out.” Peter laughed shakily, feeling his palms start to sweat when Tony stared at him incredulously. “Go get some coffee or something.”

Tony looked between Peter and Nick, eyeing the teen suspiciously. This was the boy that got too scared to go into doctors appointments alone, who could barely order food for himself in a restaurant but now all of a sudden he was happy to talk to their superior on his own? Had he entered the twilight zone or was he hallucinating from lack of sleep because when the fuck did he become the unreasonable one in this situation? “I’m not comfortable with this.”

“I know, neither am I but- dad please?” Peter dropped his voice, speaking just above a whisper, hoping in vain that Nick couldn’t hear him. “Worst case scenario I’ll just freak out and yell for you to come back anyway.”

Tony stared at his son for a minute longer, seeming to weigh his options in his head. Reluctantly, giving Nick a serious look of disdain as he did so, Tony slunk out of the room without saying another word, slamming the glass door to the lab with such force Peter was surprised it didn’t shatter. Tony did make sure to give Peter one last look of betrayal as he stormed down the hallway in his hunt for some double strength caffeine. ‘Way to make a dramatic exit, Dad.’

As soon as Tony left Nick broke out into a smile, retaking his seat across from peter, looking totally comfortable. The man’s casualness was enough to put peter at ease also. “You’re a brave man than I am taking your dad on like that.”
“Yeah well, he ain’t been doing too good, sir.” Peter shrugged, unknowingly slipping into defence mode over his father’s erratic behaviour. It wasn’t his fault he was being crazy, anyone would if they were running off of a diet of coffee and guilt. He just hoped Fury would cut the man some slack and not come down too hard on him for making things so difficult on his end.

Nick nodded understandingly but didn’t dwell on the subject, quickly moving the conversation along. “So how are you holding up?”

“Been a lot worse.” Peter chuckled, feeling decidedly more relaxed without Tony’s angry presence; though he was still very much on edge. He wanted to be careful with his words knowing Tony would likely listen in on their conversation later but that was hard to do when the impromptu interview had been thrust upon him so suddenly. He didn’t feel prepared to talk to a higher ranking officer when he was wearing sweatpants and one of Tony’s old Iron Maiden t-shirts...not exactly standard S.H.I.E.L.D agent uniform. “I feel almost back to normal.”

“Have you had the chance to attempt any training yet?”

“No sir, Tony won’t let me. But I’ve been doing push ups and stuff in my room and it doesn’t hurt at all. I’m just a little low on energy.” Peter admitted with a shrug. He hoped JARVIS wouldn’t relay that tidbit of information on to Tony or even worse, the resident doctor of the household he’d been warned not to attempt any core exercises without supervision. Hell, everytime Peter sneezed everyone braced themselves as though he was going to rupture from the pressure. He was getting pretty sick of being treated like a broken doll but that didn’t mean he wanted JARVIS getting him into trouble for going against doctor's orders.

“That’s promising. From what your dad has been describing I expected you to be in a lot worse condition.” Nick said nonchalantly but the comment brought a slight blush to the teens cheeks. “So you’re on the right track physically, that’s good to see, but what about mentally? How have you been coping with all of this?”

That question caught Peter off guard somewhat as he himself hadn’t really considered his mental health between all the hubbub in the household. Even if he had he certainly didn’t expect Nick Fury to be asking him about it. Though when he thought about it, if the man was trying to assess Peter’s readiness to return to the field it made sense for him to have concerns regarding his mental health; no one wanted someone with super powers running around New York city if there was a possibility they could have a nervous breakdown, especially one with Peter’s strength and capabilities who had inside knowledge of S.H.I.E.L.D protocol. Never a good idea. “Uhm..I haven’t really had time to think about it. I feel okay, haven’t had any nightmares or anything. To be honest I haven’t really thought about the shooting all that much- not in regards to me anyway..I’ve been more worried about Tony than anything else.”
“Yeah we’ve all been worried about Tony. But let’s focus on you for a minute while he’s off fighting with Steve about his coffee addiction.” Nick said softly with a small empathetic smile. “When you think about going back out in the field-”

“I’m excited- sir.” Peter blushed apologetically having interrupted the man but he was bursting to talk about his agent status. Weeks of having to tread on eggshells around the topic was getting to him and it was a relief to finally have someone willing to talk to him about the matter. “It’s the only thing keeping me going when I’m bored being stuck on the sidelines.”

“So you’re not panicking about the prospect of getting hurt again? The accident hasn’t scared you into rethinking your career choice?” Nick asked with a slight lilt of amusement present in his voice as he leant back in his seat.

“No because I know it was just a mistake. A stupid one on my part and I’ve paid the price for it. I’ve learnt my lesson the hard way when I shouldn’t have had to but I definitely won’t make the same mistake twice. It was a technical error due to human failure and I know thanks to this it won’t happen again so what’s there for me to worry about, you know?” Now that he was actively thinking about it, Peter’s own objectivity and maturity towards the subject surprised him and he felt oddly proud of himself. It seemed all that work he’d done in counselling after the MV incident, coming to terms with the reality of the nature of his job; facing things head on and not fighting against things he couldn’t change, had actually paid off as he meant what he said.

Nick nodded his head slowly, looking happy with Peter’s answer. “I’m glad you see it that way.”

“I know I’m gonna get hurt again, it’s inevitable. It’s part of the job I get that. It’s just been a big deal because it was so unexpected and it was a situation that shouldn’t have happened- that wouldn’t have happened if we’d all been better prepared.”

“So, with that in mind, what are you gonna do differently from now on? What have you learned from this experience?” Nick asked looking intrigued.

“Other than not go out in a broken suit in the first place?” Peter chuckled. “Well I’m gonna make sure I always have a backup and another backup, so I guess I’ll get working on that when Tony will let me. Make sure I do my mandatory inspections before and after like I should have been, that kinda thing. And make sure not to leave without clearing my head properly first, so I don’t get distracted when I’m out there, sir.”
Fury nodded seeming satisfied with the answer. He rose from his seat to shake Peter’s hand again, which surprised the teen somewhat. From the way Tony was acting Peter had expected a much more in depth conversation regarding policy and politics; then again he couldn’t blame his dad from being paranoid given the nature of the situation and he was glad he wasn’t going to be involved with any official legal jargon. Not yet anyway. “Well, I’ll be in touch in a couple weeks.”

“Does- does this mean I’ll get to go back to training soon?” Peter asked hopefully.

Nick didn’t answer, instead giving Peter a sly knowing smile that the boy didn’t quite understand at the time. “In the meantime have fun dealing with your dad-“

“He will have fun thanks for caring so much Nick.” Tony called from across the room, having slipped in silently when the pair were deep into their discussion. He slurped obnoxiously from the mug of coffee he was brandishing, looking at Nick with murderous intent.

Fury sighed and turned around to smile at Tony despite the man’s current attitude towards him. “Just let me know if you need anything.”

“Well I haven’t been sleeping and you bore the hell out of me with all this repetitive, back and forth bullshit. So if you could come to my room every night and talk to me for- Oh I don’t know, maybe five minutes, then slip out as I drift into a coma, it would be much appreciated.” Tony smiled sarcastically as he shook Nicks hand anyway before the trench coat clad man exited the lab. He gave Peter one last wave as he did so which the teen reciprocated, though he felt Tony’s eyes bore into him angrily as he did so, as though he was fraternising with the enemy.

Once again Peter and Tony were alone in the lab and the tension four have been cut with a knife. The atmosphere that had built up in the large space was so oppressive that Peter felt as though he couldn’t breathe for a short time, his breaths sounding impossibly loud in the silent space. It didn’t help that Tony was happy to stare silently at Peter, barely blinking for at least three minutes before turning away from him.

For Peter whole exchange had happened so quickly and without warning that he was still trying to make sense of the conversation he’d had with Fury. He was trying to surmise what was going on with only a few pieces of the puzzle that he’d picked up from the snippet of the end of what seemed to be an ongoing debate between his two superiors; four weeks? So Peter was meant to be back in training by next week, or back in the field?

Peter had to admit, even for someone with this healing abilities four weeks seemed like a very short amount of time. Though there wasn’t much time for self healing in their line of business, all of his
housemates were living proof of that and physically he was fine. Mentally he felt okay too though he could see why such a short respite period could be seen as irresponsible. But people in their profession needed to have good mental health, the resilience to recover from trauma in a short amount of time; if not recover, at least regain the ability to function at a reasonable level. They face dangerous life threatening situations on a near daily basis, that was the nature of their work and they had a job to do after all. And Peter felt as though he had done that, he felt like he was already better enough to start training again- though what didn’t make sense to him is why Tony hadn’t given him the fighting chance to do so. If the man knew he had a finite amount of time why hadn’t he prepared Peter for it? What if peter wasn’t okay mentally and he just found out he’d have to go back to work the next week? Now that was irresponsible on Tony’s part.

That was when it occurred to Peter that maybe that was part of Tony’s game plan. If he kept the in a state where he wasn’t fit to go back out he could keep him safe for longer. If peter wasn’t able to prepare that would mean he would have opted to stay home with Tony for longer and whilst he understood why the man would do such a thing he still didn’t appreciate the deception.

After another minute or so of silence Peter built up the courage to speak up. “Dad why didn’t you tell me I-“

“Save it. I’m not in the mood to talk about it. Back to work, I wanna get this mock up two ten done before dinner.” Tony said flatly, keeping his back turned to the teen as he returned to his work bench and resumed what he had been doing before they were so rudely interrupted.

Peter wasn’t satisfied with that answer. Tony hadn’t been in the mood to talk about it for three weeks and look where the silence had got them. Surely the man should have learned his lesson by now. “But you can’t just-“

“Peter Benjamin don’t you dare tell me what I can and can’t do. I’ve had enough of that for one day. Now are you going to help me or not?” Tony snapped.

Peter closed his mouth knowing better than to push his dad when he was in a bad mood. He silently picked up the glove he had been working on and resumed tightening the bolts and swapping out the artificial tendons; as awkward as it now was he didn’t want to he sent out of the lab, it was the only thing he had to do so he didn’t want to be forced to go back upstairs. The uncomfortable atmosphere grew even worse and the silence in the room only made it more intense. You could’ve heard a pin drop, or a teenager shifting around on a metal stool.

After about ten minutes of the quiet occasional creaking of the chair coming from behind him, Tony sighed and dropped his shoulders down tiredly. “Stop squirming. Go pee.”
They worked in silence though it did get progressively less tense and more comfortable as the pair continued to work. Even though Peter still had a thousand questions burning in the back of his mind, he decided to wait until Tony had calmed down some to ask them. He wasn’t going to drop the subject completely, they’d gone long enough without discussing it, longer than what was reasonable but the teen knew timing was key.

“Hmm.” Tony hummed, breaking the verbal silence after an hour or so.

“What is it?” Peter asked interestedly, jumping on the first opportunity he had to talk.

“Huh?” Tony asked before he realised he’d spoken. “Oh, the MCP joint keeps snapping the spring..I don’t know why the tension is so off.”

Tony continued to ramble about how he’d changed out the parts, tightened and loosened screws etc, trying to solve the problem and as he did so an idea occurred to Peter. He had a specific part in mind, one that was used in his old web canisters attached to his first suit; they had scrapped it in his newer design as the coil provided too much stability, it needed to be more flexible but it seemed Tony was having the opposite issue- it was perfect.

He also realised he had the perfect piece for a part of the two tens optical lumination circuitry. With all the new ideas suddenly rushing through his head he dashed over to his little corner of the lab to look for his suit of it but couldn’t find it; that was when he remembered why said suit may have been misplaced. In the midst of his brain storming he’d forgotten about the fate of the armour- then again he didn’t know exactly what had happened to it in the first place. He vaguely remembered Bruce cutting it off of him and he hoped it hadn’t been destroyed as medical waste because of the blood...no Tony would have at least harvested some of the valuable materials and circuitry beforehand, surely? It wasn’t like he ever intended to wear it again but there was still plenty of valuable materials to be harvested from it, like they had been in the process of doing anyway.

Peter dreaded asking but he needed to know..“Hey, uh, what did you do with my suit?”

“It’s where it’s meant to be.” Tony said through gritted teeth gesturing to where the mark two and three were hanging up on the wall, knowing full well what Peter meant but deciding to ignore it.

Peter shifted uncomfortably for a moment, before biting the bullet and pressing on, asking again. “No I mean the one I was shot in.”
Tony turned his back on Peter and swallowed, doing his best to keep his voice normal and calm. “I
destroyed it.”

“What? Why?!” Peter certainly hadn’t expected that answer. He’d expected Tony to say it had
been locked away somewhere or he’d already dismantled it down to its bare components not
destroyed it.

The man looked over his shoulder to give the boy an angry look. “Why would I not? I don’t want
that thing in my house.”

“Did you not think maybe I wanted to keep it?!”

“Why would you want to keep it?”

“Sentimental reasons.” Peter shrugged.

Tony slammed down whatever tool he was holding onto the metal bench and turned around,
folding his arms across his chest. “What the fuck is sentimental about you almost dying Peter?
Explain that one to me.”

Instead of backing down nervously as Tony had likely expected Peter stood his ground. “Well first
of all- that’s not the only thing I did in that suit. That’s just the last thing I did. That was the first
thing you ever made for me I had a lot of good memories in that suit—“

“You have Karen’s footage if you wanna reminisce.” Tony said dismissively.

“That’s not what I mean. And you know what? Maybe I wanted it as a reminder.”

“Oh my god.” Tony wiped a hand over his face tiredly. He wasn’t in the mood to talk about this.
He wasn’t sure he’d ever be in the mood but especially not then. He was tired. Not just from not
sleeping but from everything else. The nightmares, the constant anxiety and the crippling guilt
were still eating away at him and it was exhausting having to pretend he was fine all the time. Of
course his family continuously told him he didn’t have to hide what was going on but he did. That
was how he was raised, Stark men don’t show their emotions. It wasn’t something he wanted to
pass on to Peter and he knew he had to lead by example but he was getting there. He’d gone back
to therapy, that alone was sucking all of his energy out of him and now he had to face facts and
deal with the reality that he couldn’t protect Peter from the outside world anymore. He regretted ever allowing the boy to enlist in the first place. He regretted everything.

“I could look at that and remember what happens if mistakes are made- if I don’t check over my equipment properly or if I get sloppy or if I-“

“You’re gonna get sloppy. You’re a kid that’s what you do that’s why you need to have a suit- a suit that works. An old shitty suit shouldn’t serve as a reminder to that.” Tony promptly turned from the bench he was hunched over and walked right up to Peter lifting his shirt and brace, exposing the fresh scar on his stomach. “You want a reminder? There’s your reminder.”

Peter didn’t fail to hear the change in the man’s voice, he’d gone from angry to upset, his voice wavering when he looked at the scar. He made eye contact with Peter for a split second before he let go of Peter’s shirt and turned away again, sniffing slightly.

“Tony-” Peter started gently, feeling guilty for having pushed him too far.

“Don’t Tony me. Just get back to work.” The man said coldly, slipping back into his normal voice.

“Dad please don’t do this..don’t shut me out.” Peter practically whispered as he placed a hand on Tony’s shoulder causing him to whirl around again, flinching slightly.

“Peter I need-“ Tony yelled but cut himself off. He paused for a moment, calming himself down and his face fell into a sad expression again. As much as he wanted to shut down and push Peter away, pretend to be okay he knew he couldn’t do that. Nothing good ever came from keeping the teen at arm’s length and he knew that. Maybe it was time to let someone else in. “Time.”

Tony sighed and sat down on the bench, beckoning for Peter to sit beside him which the boy did. Tony took a couple deep breaths, trying to relax himself as he opened up. “Remember how traumatic it was after the MV incident was for you? When you didn’t want me out of your sight in case...that’s me right now. I can’t. You were actually shot and I wasn’t there. I should never have let you out with that suit I knew it wasn’t safe but I was mad and I didn’t think and you- you got shot. I didn’t. I didn’t.“

Tony’s breath was quickening and he got a distant look on his face. Peter instantly recognised what was happening and didn’t let him continue, grabbing one of his hands and trying to make him look at him. “Dad it’s okay-“
“It’s not. None of this is okay. I want to lock you in a room where you’ll be safe and I know you’ll never get hurt but I can’t. I know I can’t have to let you do what you need to do- Clint said that’s the worst part of being a parent and he was right and I- I never even prepared to do that. I don’t think I could have even if I did know I was gonna become your dad but Christ kid, you’ve given me more than a few heart attacks this one just- just-“ Tony laughed shakily but caught himself when he saw the worried look on Peter’s face. He knew he had to calm himself down, spilling his guts like that was only going to make his son feel bad and he didn’t want that, he just wanted the kid to understand why he was being so neurotic. Suddenly his own eyes felt hot and wet and he felt his mouth moving without his permission. “We’ll get you back out into the field alright? I promise we will, just..just not yet. Please, Pete. Please be patient with me I can’t...I can’t lose you again.”

Peter’s eyes grew wide and he was quick to wrap Tony in a hug. There was no way if his dad started crying that he’d be able to handle it. “Hey, hey, no one’s losing anyone I’m- I’m sorry. I understand why you’re so, well you know, but-but it’s okay! And I’ll wait. I won’t pester you until you’re ready for me to go back out there, just so long as you promise that you’ll still let me be Spider-Man.”

“I don’t have much say in the matter. Just when you go back not if.” Tony shook his head and chuckled slightly, pulling out of the hug and shaking himself off. It wasn’t Peter’s job to comfort him and he had to keep himself together until he could break down in private. It wasn’t fair to put that kind of responsibility on the boy. “But Yes. I promise.”

“Then I’ll wait. Until you’re ready. I know I’m not gonna like it but this ain’t just about me I get that, I want you to feel comfortable too.”

“Thank you for understanding. I know it’s difficult when I say no but-“

“But it’s worth it. And I do understand, Dad. I’ll be patient.” Peter smiled, but he paused and decided to try and ask Tony for something in return. “I do wanna start training again at least, I gotta burn off some of this energy ‘cause I’m going kinda stir crazy around here.”

“That can be arranged. You’re driving me nuts with all the bouncing anyway.” Tony chuckled. “You realise when you get back in the gym I’m going to push you right? It’s not gonna be easy.”

Peter grinned. “Good, I want a challenge.”

Peter’s enthusiasm caused Tony to relax somewhat and smile. He put a hand on the boy’s shoulder
and squeezed it. “I know I’m overprotective and I’m sorry.”

“Nah you’re not.” Peter said automatically but retracted that statement when Tony raised an eyebrow at him. “Okay well maybe a little but hey, it’s better than you not caring right?”

‘Better than ol’ howie as Nat said.’ “Yeah.”

“So lighten up, old man. Ya’ so sensitive!” Peter playful barged the man with his shoulder, desperate to lighten the atmosphere.

Tony smirked. “Coming from the kid who-“

“Laaalalalala~” Peter sang obnoxiously, covering his ears. “Don’t start with the who’s more sensitive competition. You do need to do something though..”

“What?” Tony asked apprehensively, unsure as to where Peter was going with the conversation.

“You should probably say sorry to Mr. Fury-”

“Don’t start. Let me handle Pirate Pete-”

“Dad come on. You were rude-”

“So?” Tony said snappily, sounding like a teenager himself.

“So, I don’t want you getting in trouble because you were in a bad mood.”

“I’ll handle it.” Tony said grumpily.

“Yeah, that’s what you said three weeks ago..” Peter muttered under his breath but of course Tony heard him.
“What was that?” The man raised his eyebrows.

“Dad come on, you know I’m right-”

“That doesn’t mean I want advice from a fifteen year old.” Tony said flatly. “I will talk to Nick. Just not right now.”

“Okay, okay, whatever you say.” Peter held his hands up, signifying that he’d back down, though he did silently concede to ensure his dad got some decent sleep that night. He wasn’t exactly sure how he’d go about that yet but he was determined; he was sure if Tony got a good nights rest he’d see the error in his behaviour and hopefully make up for it.

Tony rolled his eyes and turned back to his desk gesturing for Peter to do the same. He really did want to get their project for the day finished, the last thing he needed was to let work get on top of him again with everything else going on. Tony was sat on a stool looking over something Peter came up behind him wrapping his arms around his shoulders. Well, clearly the boy had lost his focus for the day which made Tony sigh internally but he couldn't exactly blame him; he continued to work however, even when Peter started talking again.

“I am gonna miss that suit though.” The teen said sadly.

Tony chuckled. “Pete, that suit was terrible. Even before we took it apart.”

“Still, it was my first one. The first thing you made me and I did so many cool things in it.”

The man scoffed. “Yeah like almost peed in it countless times because I forgot to put basic amenities-”

“And a zipper.” Peter supplied helpfully with a grimace at the design flaw.

“And a zipper.” Tony agreed with a smirk.

“It was kind of awkward having to get almost naked, especially when I had to go in alleys and stuff.”
Tony raised his eyebrows, pretending to be shocked as though it was new information to him. “Public urination is a criminal offence.”

Peter scowled at him, even though he knew it was only a joke, he cheeks burning. “You think I don’t know that? And so is exposure and that second one was your fault.”

“Touché.”

Peter sighed and climbed up the side of one of the small scaffolds above where Tony was working, hanging himself upside down as he continued talking. Because that’s totally normal behaviour, at least in this house. “But I mean like my first mission, the first time I met Steve and the others.”

“Peter even that wasn’t good.” Tony laughed, gesturing for Peter to hand him a tool without looking away from what he was working on. “He dropped a tanker on you.”

“Exactly- But we’re friends now! You didn’t throw Steve away because he almost hurt me.”

“If he had actually hurt you I would’ve done.” Tony grumbled. “Right into the incinerator. That’d thaw him out.”

“You know what I mean dad. You gotta take the good with the bad, you know?”

“And since when did you become this little beacon of enlightenment, huh?” Tony smirked poking Peter’s exposed side making him flinch and giggle.

“I think I reached nirvana when I died on the operating table for a second there. Guess that makes me a Buddha.”

“You’re so full of shit.” Tony chuckled again. He paused for a moment before he put down the part he was working on. He sighed reached into a desk drawer, pulling out something small and black before extending his open palm with the object in it to the upturned boy. “I saved this from your suit before I destroyed it.”
Peter’s eyes lit up and he jumped down from where he was swinging. “Oh my- awe! See I knew you were just as sentimental as I am!”

“Pshh, please. I only took it out because it has a higher melting point than the rest of the carbon fibre-“

“What can we make this into? To like, go into my other suits? That way I can keep a little of the first one with me.” Peter smiled looking at the little emblem in his hands, completely ignoring Tony’s excuses in favour of believing his own narrative.

The older man rolled his eyes. “Can’t you just put it on a keychain?”

“Daaad -“

“Okay, okay. We’ll find a purpose for that little thing. But can we do that after we’re finished up here? I would like to get to dinner on time I don’t feel like being dragged upstairs by my ear again by great aunt Stephanie and I know you don’t either.” Peter winced and rubbed his ear at the memory. “Exactly so come on.”

They ended up finishing a lot quicker than they had expected especially after Peter told Tony about the idea he had had regarding the parts used for his old suit. They were able to conjure up a suitable replica to stand in for the ones Tony had destroyed and frankly they were both pretty proud of their handiwork. Though having finished early that meant they actually had some leisure time in the lab, something they hadn’t had in a long time; initially the prospect was exciting. Of course they had the opportunity to get a head start on the next days schedule but they didn’t want to do that, even though that usually would have been their go to plan. No, instead they wanted to use the spare time to do something fun and creative, only now they had the chance to after so long neither one of them could come up with anything. Well, not anything quick anyway. All of Peter’s ideas were far too complicated to complete in a single afternoon and both knew if they started on one of them that they wouldn’t be able to stop until they’d finished, and Tony was not about to let the teen pull an all nighter with him.

After a while Tony seemed to come up with some kind of idea as he began digging through his drawers looking for something, before turning accusingly to Peter. “Where are my laser diodes, you little hobgoblin? I know you had them last.”

Peter did have a nasty habit of swiping anything shiny and not returning them, but he gave Tony an innocent look as though he was insulted at the insinuation he had anything to do with- oh wait yeah, he had taken them; last week when he was trying to make a..well never mind what he was
trying to make, Tony definitely would not have approved. I’m not sure I think I left ‘em in the drawer over the--"

“Boy what the hell is this?” Tony had dug through one of Peter’s designated cupboards looking for the stolen material and found...well he wasn’t sure what he’d found but it looked positively medieval. It was a dangerous looking mass of wires, with a modified Raspberry Pi microcomputer and a haphazard power relay; the jumbled mass of sharp sheet metal had been soldered shoddily together and without even knowing what it was Tony thought it was some kind of weapon.

Peter immediately went bright red and gave Tony a sheepish smile. “Uhhh...a cheerio cannon.”

The bearded man blinked a couple times as though he was trying to reset himself. There was no way Peter had said what he just thought he said. “I’m sorry what?”

“I 3D printed the facial recognition turret and wrote up some code, if I open my mouth for three seconds it fires Cheerios into my mouth..”

“Why?”

“I was bored...and hungry..”

“Peter look at those exposed wire terminals.” Tony scolded, pointing out the dangerous areas on the machine.

“Yeah I didn’t get around to covering those.” Peter chuckled awkwardly, rubbing the back of his neck again.

“What voltage are they?” The man asked as he turned the thing over in his hands.

“120..”

Tony’s eyes widened slightly and he shook the jumbled box of wires at the kid as he reprimanded him. “This thing is a death trap.”
“I won’t touch those-“

Tony set it down on the table giving Peter a very disapproving look and the teen was sure he was about to get punished in some way. “Sloppy. You’re better than this. Do it again”

The teen went to protest before his brain registered what the man had said. “But dad I- wait what?”

“What? I’m bored I wanna see you try and catch Cheerios in your mouth.” Tony said coolly.

Peter’s face broke out into a grin. “It works with froot loops too-”

“Okay hotshot don’t go crazy on me now. You don’t need all that sugar.”
Chapter Summary

Thanks for the well wishes y’all and being understanding that chapters may be few and far between for a wee bit! I was gonna save this chapter for in a couple days or so but I realised that today is actually Peter Parker's birthday so I rugured a double chapter upload day was in order :p

“You know- I have that Lortazone project that could do with a bit of tweaking before I send it off tomorrow. You run ahead I’ll come in a bit.”

“Uh uh. No.” Peter grabbed Tony's arm and pulled him back towards the elevator. “You ain’t getting out of this, pops. You’re well overdue for a visit.”

“But she’s gonna yell at meeee-” Tony threw his head back and whined like a petulant child. It was the first time Peter had seen the man look like him as opposed to the other way around.

“And you deserve to be yelled at young man! I told her all about you making yourself sick-”

“I meant about me letting you get shot Peter! I feel guilty enough as it is-“

“Oh get over it, it’s been a month and a half already.” Peter rolled his eyes. “She doesn’t blame you for that, no one does except you, but she will fuss at you for not taking care of yourself. And she’s missed you an awful lot.”

Peter batted his eyelashes with that last part making Tony's stomach twist with even more guilt. “I know, I know. I shouldn’t have left it as long as I have-“

“No you shouldn’t have but we’re making up for it today!” Peter smiled cheerfully. He was always in an especially happy mood Saturday mornings; after training it was part of his routine to go down to the hospital and spend the rest of the morning with his aunt, until she kicked him out around lunchtime (‘You’re not spending your Saturday stuck in this place with me go have fun!’). Peter bumped his shoulder into the man and gave him a smirk. “She’ll just be happy to see you, Dad.”
“Fine, but if she yells at me I’m gonna tell her how you stole Cap’s shield for revenge after he confiscated your IPod.” Tony said grumpily as he grabbed his jacket, preparing to walk down to the car with the teen.

“Don’t you dare!”

“I’m sure she’d love to know what kind of music you were listening to too-“

“It was a cover of Limelight! You liked it too!” Peter said incredulously.

“But Ninja Sex Party? That’s hardly a child friendly band name, I’m sure that she’ll agree with Steve on that one.”

Peter clenched his mouth shut and scowled at Tony for a moment. “It’s your fault he’s on me about music now anyway.”

“You should’ve stopped cursing when he warned you-“

“I never swore before I met you!”

Tony rolled his eyes at the Excuse though internally he was laughing; a, because he knew it was true and b, it was so easy to get the kid worked up. Like he’d ever actually tell May that, he didn’t want to be responsible for the woman having another stroke. “Would you prefer to have me taken away instead of your iPod if I’m such a terrible influence? So what you can’t listen to Post Malone anymore, he sucks anyway.”

“You shut your goddamn mouth.”

“Oh what a surprise a generic teenage white boy liking mediocre rap. And don’t you mean gosh darn?”

“Mediocre?! Generic?! Bitch please look at me!” Peter snapped his fingers sassily.
Tony stopped walking abruptly and blinked at the kid next to him, like he wasn’t sure if that had actually happened or not. “Boy, who raised you?”

“A strong independent working woman who let me express myself however I pleased, including but not limited to occasionally letting me watch RuPaul’s drag race.”

Tony shook his head choosing not to comment further on...all that. “You’re a mess. And whatever TV May let you watch I very much doubt she would appreciate you using the term ‘Bitch’ in any context, let alone directed at me. So keep it schtum or I’ll show her your most recent invention.”

Tony smiled slyly with that last threat; it was definitely more persuasive than the iPod argument and Peter’s cheeks darkened instantly. He did not want his aunt to find out about that. Ever. “I hate you.”

“I love you too sonny Jim. Come on, let’s not leave sexy legs waiting.”

“Ugh- Stop it!” Peter slapped Tony’s arm slightly harder than he had intended (super strength, oops). “You’re so gross!”

The drive there was a short one, just under twenty minutes and Peter spent the entire time chattering excitedly, trying to help distract Tony from his anxiety. The role reversal was almost comical to the elder man, the teen who usually required Prozac just to function at a decent human level was now having to talk Tony down from a panic attack. He wasn’t quite sure why he was so utterly petrified of one of the worlds sweetest people, he knew it was completely irrational. But he hadn’t seen the lady since before Peter was hurt, hell before he’d gotten sick himself. Of course he’d had contact with her over the phone, near constantly, especially when Peter was recovering and the woman had been his rock as much as he had been hers. From the very beginning they’d always coparented Peter and the two had grown very close over the year; he also knew Peter was right, May didn’t blame him for the accident, not at all but he felt like she should. He wanted someone to hold him responsible, to hate him as much as he hated himself. He had put their boy in danger, May should have hated his guts and taken Peter out of his care. That’s not what he wanted, not in a million years but it’s what he felt deserved, what he convinced himself would be better for all of them. He was too dangerous.

But the pair of Parker’s were just as stubborn as him and he knew that there was no way in hell either of them would let him push Peter away again. May had been checking in on him constantly, asking the team to reassure the man and make sure he was doing alright. She was so understanding and that’s what Tony was dreading; he knew the second she walked in she’d greet him warmly with that knowing, kind look that would make him feel better and he didn’t want that. He didn’t
want to feel better he deserved the pain- the pain that was nothing compared to the agony Peter had to go through because of his carelessness. Why couldn’t people leave him to his depression and self loathing in peace? How had he managed to get such wonderful people in his life? He knew he didn’t deserve any of them.

“Hey. Stop it.” Peter stopped chattering and looked over to the man sitting next to him who was staring despondently out of the window.

“Stop what?” Tony mumbled absentmindedly.

Peter undid his seatbelt and scootched over into the middle seat, rebuckling to avoid both Tony and Happy yelling at him and lent on his Dad’s shoulder. “Doing a me.”

“And what is that supposed to mean?” Tony smirked as he wrapped his arm around the kid.

“Beating yourself up. Self deprecation is my thing. Get your own schtick.”

“Boy, I’ve been hating myself since before you were born. I’ve practically got the trademark.” Tony chuckled.

“You know when you laugh that means I win right?” Peter looked up at Tony with a glint in his eye as he repeated the man’s words back to him.

“Wow. I hate this.”

“Oh how the tables have turned-“

“Oh shut it.” Tony chuckled and tickled Peter’s side to add emphasis.

“Ha- ha ha- Hey! No tickling me you asshat! Remember what happened last time?!?”

Once Happy pulled up outside the residential care home where May was staying it only took some gently coaxing to get Tony to actually exit the vehicle. Even the usually grumpy agent couldn’t
resist giving into Peter’s enthusiasm that day. After he’d witnessed the boy, oh you know- ALMOST DIE IN HIS CAR UNDER HIS WATCH, he’d finally allowed himself to give in to Peter’s cuteness and reciprocate some friendliness. It’s not like it had taken over a year and a half for that to happen, so he felt that his reputation was still in tact if he allowed himself to be a little bit warmer with the boy.

“See you later Mr. Hogan!” Peter called cheerily as he hopped out of the car.

“See ya, kid.” The man smiled. He smiled. It was like seeing a unicorn only Peter was pretty sure that Happy smiles were a lot more rare. Tony didn’t share Peter’s excitement over the spectacle however as he was too busy grimacing. “Hey, T?”

“Yeah?” Tony looked up to make eye contact with Happy in the rear view mirror.

“You need this. Not just for the kid or May, for you. It’s time to forgive yourself.”

Tony wanted to give some kind of emotional response in return, he truly did but old habits die hard and the old Tony Stark made an appearance. He flashed a confident smile, took on his aloof, light hearted tone and reached through the gap in the front seat to clap a hand on Happy’s shoulder as he exited the vehicle. “I will when you do, big guy. I’ll see you later.”

“See you.” It wasn’t an unfair comment. Happy had also blamed himself for Peter getting shot as he saw the kid as his responsibility- if he had watched him better it wouldn’t have happened. For a short while Tony harboured the same anger towards his old friend but that soon dissipated. It wasn’t Happy’s fault, he’d been the one to save his little Spider from bleeding to death. Peter was a hero he wasn’t supposed to have a babysitter, he was supposed to have a decent suit that was meant to keep him safe-

‘Not now, Tony, not helping.’ The genius took a deep breath to try and calm himself, standing for a car a moment longer than necessary. Peter looked back, taking notice of the man’s laboured breathing and closed eyes and walked back over to take his arm again.

“Hey. It’s alright. Don’t go panicking so much you need your inhaler, ‘aignt? I know we’re at a hospital but-“

“Yeah, yeah.” Tony smirked, giving Peter the same confident smile he’d given Happy though he knew his son saw right through it. He hated being so openly vulnerable, the kid had made him soft.
Still, fake it till you make it, huh Stark? He ruffled Peter’s curls before he continued walking. “Come on, it’s rude to leave a lady waiting, especially one as fine as May.”

Peter walked through the building as comfortably as he did the tower, greeting each of the nurses like he’d known them his entire life, asking them about their weeks and other such pleasantries as he Waltzed past. Tony has taught the boy many things but Peter’s friendliness and people skills were ingrained in him long before he’d gotten his hands on the boy. He could do formalities, he could do small talk but it was a skill that took years to perfect through all of the official meetings and social events he had to attend - both in his youth and his professional life. Even though he had the ability to pretend to be interested in other people he’d never been genuine about it and it had never been easy, he just wasn’t a people person; he could fake it, very convincingly, it was sort of the reason he had made it so far in life. He was great at faking things, pretending to be a model businessman, pretending not to have mental health problems or addictions, pretending he didn’t need anyone... the list goes on, but nothing was fake about his son. Peter really was an open book and, despite his anxiety issues, most definitely a people person. Tony was starting to think everything about him was fake... who was he now? He definitely wasn’t the Tony Stark he was two years ago, that was just a persona. He was a dad now, to a fifteen year old - dear god who was he? He was happy now that was for sure, but who had he been for the last forty odd years of his life?

Whilst he was in the midst of another existential crisis Peter lead him all the way to May’s room but the teen knew to enter the room before Tony, as to not stress the man out more. He bounded into her room and launched himself at the lady sitting in an armchair by the window, excitedly but carefully as not to hurt her in anyway. “Hey May!”

“Hi Cookie!” Tony heard the woman’s muffled voice as he was getting squeezed by an oversized toddler.

“Guess who I found in the hallway?” Peter pulled out of the hug and skipped back to the doorway to pull Tony through the threshold, seeing the man’s hesitation. “What a coincidence huh?”

May and Tony both ignored Peter’s comment in favour of greeting each other, the woman initially going to move out of her chair but Tony rushed forward to prevent her from doing so. Instead he knelt down to hug her at a height that was comfortable for both of them. “Well long time no see, stranger.”

“I’m sorry, works been crazy.” Tony said quietly as he pulled back to face the woman, not even bothering to come up with a better excuse as they all knew the real reason why he’d been so distant for so long. He had been right, she smiled at him with that look - god that look. That sad ‘I know how you’re feeling and it’s okay’ look that only mothers were able to give, not that he’d revived many from his own mom but still; May’s maternal nature often spilled over onto Tony from where he’d become so close with Peter and it was obvious that she shared the same self destructive quality of wanting to help save lost souls as her nephew. She had a way of making Tony feel very
small at times and he didn’t always like it, hence why he’d kept one of his closest friends at such an arms distance since Peter’s accident.

The woman smirked, knowing full well that Tony was becoming uncomfortable with the silent look that spoke a thousand words she was giving him, but she didn’t prolong his torture. She took the heat off of him by running her hand through Peter’s hair, where the boy was sitting cross legged on the floor next to her. “I bet running round after this one.”

“Hey! I’ve been good the past couple weeks! Dad tell her!” Peter pouted dramatically but there was no real whine to his tone. Peter had told May about the development of their father son dynamic as soon as it happened (like they’d be able to keep anything a secret from her anyway), it wasn’t like she hadn’t called it ages before that. She was nothing but supportive about the entire thing even pushing for Tony to officially adopt him. He had yet to broach the subject with Peter as he didn’t want to make him feel pressured to say yes...it was something to think about for their future though.

“Oh he’s been great, we’ve only had-” Tony dramatically counted on his fingers. “-three tantrums this week.”

“You or him?” May laughed.

“Him.” Tony and Peter said in unison.

It was then Peter noticed the balls of yarn and the needles the woman had set aside on the table when he’d launched himself at her. He raised an eyebrow and smirked. “You’re knitting?”

“Yeah, well I had to pick up some kind of hobby again. You know I can’t just sit there doing nothing all day. Gotta keep these hands busy.” She said mock defensively. “Don’t go making any Grandma jokes, you’re the reason my hair is turning grey, boy.”

“I like the grey streaks, the add character.” Peter beamed up at her. “What ya makin’?”

“Well, I figured it’s gonna take me a while because of the shakes so I’m working on Christmas presents.”

“It’s only June!” Peter laughed.
“Hey, I’ve got a long list okay?”

“Whose are you working on now?”

She beckoned for him to come closer so she could whisper without being overheard. “Tony’s. He’s getting a sweater and I know he’s too much of a softy not to wear it, so I’m making it extra ugly.”

“Wow, you are evil. Playing on a man’s emotions like that.” Peter said very seriously, shaking his head. “I love it.”

The three of them talked for a while, Peter explaining the different projects they had lined up and May pretending she had any idea what the boy was talking about; but he was so excited, she didn’t have the heart to tell him that he lost her as soon as he said something about adiabatic process and the thermodynamic system in his suit. She had years of pretending to know what the little genius was talking about under her belt, so she’d gotten pretty good at it and Peter was none the wiser but Tony found it pretty entertaining. They also got to share a laugh at the woman’s ambition of making Bruce and Hulk a sweater for Christmas.

“His sweater might have to be for next Christmas, but I can at least make him some earmuffs or something.”

Tony smirked. “May, I really don’t think the big guy gets cold-“

“Nonsense! It gets freezing in New York during the winter. Do you really wanna deal with a Hulk with a cold?”

“Can’t be any worse than taking care of a sick Peter.” Tony snickered.

Peter’s mouth gaped open in horror and cried indignantly; “Me?! ”

“Well either way I still need a rough idea of the measurements.” May laughed at the pair bickering back and forth about who was the worst patient.
“Right that settles it- Pete when we get home you can chase Bruce round with a tape measure until the jolly green giant makes an appearance.”

The conversation was peaceful with May recanting a story of how Peter had once been chased by his uncle Ben for four hours straight because he didn’t want to go to bed after he’d had his first taste of soda; it was peaceful until May went to reach for her glass of water and had a myoclonic seizure, making her arm jerk suddenly, knocking the glass onto the floor where it shattered.

“And I said ‘that’s what you get for giving a five year old Grape Crush the one time I leave you home alo-‘ oh shoot!” May said exasperatedly, just catching herself from cursing but not catching herself as she went to stand up, almost collapsing from the sudden height difference.

Peter immediately lurched forward to stop the woman from getting out of her chair and knelt down to start picking up the fragments of broken glass that had scattered across the floor. Before either adult could yell to stop him a nurse, having heard the crash, came in brandishing a dustpan and brush.

“Honey you don’t need to do that I’ve got it-“

“It’s fine, ma’am.” Peter ignored the woman, continuing to pick up the glass with his bare hands. “I’ve got it. Thank you.”

Tony frowned as he noticed his sons blank expression. “Peter let the lady-“

“I said it’s fine.” Peter said shortly, through gritted teeth and the man backed off, as did the nurse who left the cleaning tool on the table by the door and backed out of the room. Tony didn’t fail to notice the small cuts appearing and instantly healing on the boy’s hands as he picked up each sharp piece before depositing them in the trashcan next to May’s chair. He cringed but he knew better than to suggest Peter stop again, knowing full well that he’d switched off into his carer mode and he wouldn’t take the suggestion kindly. He simply handed the boy a roll of paper towels and stood by silently.

“I’m so sorry, I’m so clumsy. These new meds are helping the TC’s but they’re not doing much for the other generalised seizures.” May said sadly.

Her apologetic tone seemed to snap Peter temporarily out of his daze as he turned around to look at her, smiling kindly. “Hey, no big deal, just a broken glass. I shoulda caught it, it’s my fault I wasn’t
paying attention.”

“It wasn’t anyone’s fault baby.” May said fondly and stroked Peter’s hair again, trying to help him relax which seemed to do the trick.

He smirked a little and shrugged before turning his attention to mopping up the water. “Right so if it’s no ones fault why are you apologising?”

“Okay smart guy, he’s definitely turning into a mini you.” May chuckled looking accusingly towards Tony.

Tony smirked in return. “Dear God, don’t wish that on the poor boy.”

“I wouldn’t mind unless you expect me to grow weird facial hair like that.” Peter snorted as he stood up to take care of the health and safety hazard now occupying the trash can.

“We’ll worry about that when you finally grow some, huh peach fuzz?”

“Touché old man.” Peter grumbled as he walked out of the room, garbage bag in tow. “I'll be right back.”

Tony regretted having not offered to take the bag for him as now he was having to face a moment he was dreading. He was left alone with the woman he’d desperately been trying to avoid. She was going to try and make him feel better, crap. “So how are you holding up daddio?”

“Not bad.” He said simply and sat on the corner of May’s bed. Of course the woman saw straight through him, of course she did. Fuck, what had he been expecting?

“Wow and I thought Petey was a bad liar.”

“Yeah, well, not much gets past you anyway.” Tony smiled.

“He told me you’re letting goon call with you guys for the first time this weekend?” May
questioned suddenly which made Tony's heart jump into his mouth.

It was true Peter had done three patrol trial runs with partners and this weekend was meant to be the real test to see if he was fit to go back. He knew Peter was more than ready but he'd been putting it off as long as possible. "If you think it’s too soon I can-"

"I think it’s a great idea!" She grinned. "He was so excited when he told me on the phone. I told you, the longer you leave it the harder it’ll be on the both of you. Besides I know he must be nagging at you constantly to let him get the suit back on- boy’s been driving me crazy, I can’t imagine how you feel."

"I feel scared, May." Tony said quietly, surprising himself at the admission. Something about her presence always seemed to coax him into talking about his emotions and if he didn’t know better he would have thought she had some kind of superpowers.

Her face softened and she held her hand out for him to grab, which he did, suddenly needing comfort. "I know, sweetie. I’m scared too but you know Pete, when he’s ready to do something there ain’t much stopping him. And we shouldn’t. I’m just glad he isn’t traumatised."

"But what if he is and he doesn’t realise yet? What if he gets out there and he freezes again, or he realises he’s not ready and he can’t do it but it’s too late to turn back and-"

"Then his Dad will be there to take care of him." May said simply, giving Tony that smile again and ugh- woman stop trying to make him feel better. Punch him in the face or something.

"I wasn’t last time." Tony said bitterly, casting his eyes to the floor.

"But you will be this time. You both need this. Once you see him back out there in his element you’ll feel better, trust me honey."

Tony nodded. He knew she was right but it didn’t make it any easier. He knew once he got over the initial hurdle it would kickstart the healing process it was just so scary getting over that first time. He knew he was going to be a nervous wreck and he hated that. He was Tony fucking Stark for crying out loud.

"Besides, he’ll be a lot easier to manage once you give him that bit of freedom back. He needs an
outlet to let go of some of that energy.” May laughed which in turn made Tony smile. “He’s like a puppy if you don’t walk him he’ll start tearing up your furniture.”

“Yeah, he is a little firecracker.” The man agreed, failing to hold back a chuckle.

“Seriously I don’t know how you keep him contained in a lab for so long.”

“When he’s got something in his hands he’s fine, it’s outside the lab when he’s a problem—“

“I ain’t a problem! I’m a good boy y’all are just boring!” Said good boy walked in at the right moment to see Tony smiling rather than on the brink of tears, with two cups of coffee (one with a lid with he gestured to be May’s to avoid another spillage) and a can of soda balanced in his arms.

“Yes Petey, you’re a very good boy.” May chuckled at the pouting teenager.

“And good boys don’t drink caffeine when they have a kidney condition.” Tony said sternly as he removed the two cups from the boy’s hands as well as reaching out for the soda.

“It’s 7-up! Crisp and clean and no caffeine!” Peter quoted the old ad and slapped the man’s hand away as he cradled the can close to his chest.

“You still can’t have it.”

“What?! Why not?!” The teen squinted angrily at his dad as he saw no reason to Tony to deny him his diet drink given the parameters that had been set by their in house doctor. It was a clear liquid, okay yes it was carbonated but there was no artificial colours or caffeine! So what was the problem?!

“It’s seven-up. Mentally you don’t fall into that category.” Peter’s eyebrows knitted together in confusion for a moment before the realisation hit him and he scowled.

“Oh you ass—“ Peter received a look from his aunt warning him not to curse and he quickly changed the direction of his insult. “Asinine fool.”
“What a big word for such a wittle guy-“ Tony reaches out to pinch Peter’s cheek patronisingly and almost got himself bitten in the process, as the teen snapped at him like an angry chihuahua. “Uh oh, this ones rabid.”

“Careful May-May it’s hot.” Peter took the cup off of Tony, taking off the lid and setting it to the side for a moment letting it cool off before he put it within arms reach. Both adults rolled their eyes lovingly at the boy’s overprotectiveness, May taking it lightly but Tony knew had Peter done that to him he would’ve yelled at him for being patronising. “And I ain’t rabid, I’ve had my shots, but you best believe I will bite you.”

May smiled and went to tell another anecdote from the boy’s early childhood but a thought struck her midway through. “He will Tony. He was terrible for it as a toddler- OH!”

The two males jumped, alarmed at the sudden exclamation, both equally on edge waiting to see whether or not the woman was in pain or about to go into a seizure or-

“Tony, I’ve got something to give you before I forget.” Tony and Peter breathed sighs of relief the latter muttering about her nearly giving him a heart attack, but Tony regained his composure very quickly.

“What’s that, sweet cheeks?” Tony said smoothly, causing Peter to sigh exasperatedly. The flirting was purely a joke by that point and Peter failed to realise he only fueled the man’s desire to do it more when he reacted like that.

The woman grinned somewhat devilishly, making Tony nervous as to what she could possibly be scheming. But he’d soon come to realise it wasn’t him who needed to be nervous. “Peter, honey, can you grab that box off the top shelf?”

Of course, any excuse to climb anything was always greatly appreciated and Peter took the opportunity with utmost enthusiasm. He scaled the wall unnecessarily given that he could have jumped that high with little to no effort and gently plucked the large cardboard box the woman was pointing her shaky finger towards.

“What’s this?” Tony quirked an eyebrow as he took the box off of the teen. He was glad he already had said box in his hands when the woman answered as Peter immediately tried to grab it back.
“Family videos.” She said sweetly, looking towards her nephew to watch the horror appear on his face.

“Oh my god- May no! Not the videos! You can’t!”

“Shh, Shh, shh!” She spoke over his protests, giggling evilly as she explained herself. “As you know it’s mister man’s birthday soon and it’s a tradition that we watch these every year. So, I wanted to give them to you now in case I’m not there—“

“You will be there.” Tony said quickly, seeing the look that crossed Peter’s face and his own, the implied suggestion making his heart pound.

“I didn’t mean die. I don’t plan on kicking the bucket just yet.” May snorted at the horrified looks on the boy’s facesv. “You dorks are so dramatic. I just mean if I can’t get out of here for the day—because there is no way you’re coming to visit me on your sixteenth birthday Petey, I won’t have it. I’ve told the nurses not to let you in, so don’t even start.”

Peter had in fact opened his mouth to protest that statement, but seeing that his counter argument had already been thrashed he shut it abruptly, opting to pout and cross his arms instead. All he needed to do was stomp his foot and he would have looked like a toddler; but Tony was about to find out what Peter looked like as an actual toddler.

“Well we’ve got a few months yet, I’m sure you’ll be recovered enough to come over to our place.” Tony said to find a middle ground so Peter didn’t have a temper tantrum.

“I’m sure I will too. Besides, I want to be able to tell the embarrassing stories to accompany the videos.” The two adults shared a mischievous look, one comparable to the kind Peter and Thor would get when they were planning to cause mayhem.

But Peter didn’t share their delight, he was vigorously shaking his head and staring at the floor. “I hate this. That’s so not happening.”

“Is too, we finally have a big family to show them off to.” May beamed innocently at him.

“I can’t wait.” Tony grinned.
“Save the videos for when I can watch with you, I wanna see everyone’s reactions-“

“Everyone?!” Peter said horrifiedly but the adults ignored him and May continued.

“-buuuut, you can flip through this photo album to tide you over till then.” May pulled out an old, worn leather bound baby book. Despite Peter’s reflexes she managed to pass the book to Tony before he could grasp it; they took advantage of the fact that Peter recognised said book and was too mortified to move for a split second to make a grab for it.

“No, no, no, no! Give me that!” Peter cried and reached out to snatch the book away but Tony held the book over his head, moving it every time Peter jumped for it. Tony had never been more grateful for their height difference in his life, it was the only physical thing he had over his son and he was gonna milk it for as long as possible (though in all honesty he doubted Peter was going to be very tall anyway).

“Do I smell blackmail material? Now I’ve got something to show MJ when she comes over.” Tony waggled the book teasingly, relishing in how quickly Peter’s face turned red as he continued to jump fruitlessly for it. Oh he was going to have some fun with this puppy.

“And who’s MJ?” May asked pointedly and Tony whipped his head around to look at her. He hadn’t realised Peter had been trying to keep his friendship with the girl secret and he felt slightly guilty for exposing him but not much. It was hard to feel guilty when Peter was so adorably flustered and Tony couldn’t resist picking on the kid a little, not when it was so easy. He’d be an idiot to spare Peter in such a perfect moment.

“Oh my god! No one- come on Dad we’re going, now!”

“Wait is she that girl from AD you said was pretty? Not Liz the other one?” May pressed on smiling slyly and Tony seized the chance to join in.

“I didn’t know she was in AD with you, so she’s smart as well-“

“If you two don’t stop we won’t have to worry about you being better for my birthday because I won’t make it that far! We’re leaving! Now!” Peter stomped his foot and grabbed at Tony’s arm, attempting to drag the man out forcefully.
Tony did a half salute with one hand, managing to grab the box under his arm along with the book before Peter practically pulled him over because of his heightened strength. “See ya next week May.”

“Bye boys.” She called out to them cheerily knowing full well what was about to happen.

Despite being embarrassed and slightly angry, Peter ran back to hug her. He couldn’t leave without saying, “Love you May May.”

“I love you too Cookie.”

They decided to walk back home, after depositing May’s stash of Peter blackmail material in Happy’s car (the teen begging Happy to take the documents somewhere and destroy them which the agent, of course refused to do, opting to read some of the embarrassing titles of the tapes aloud instead) where the man had waited for them. It was a good forty five minute walk but Tony didn’t mind. The weather was nice and despite the teen being upset about his baby photos and videos being uncovered he was still in a good mood, so it would be the perfect time to have one of their father son heart to hearts. Plus the exercise and fresh air would do them both good.

Tony decided to kick off the conversation without warning as they strolled casually through the busy streets of Manhattan. “If you could change anything, what would you change?”

“Wow that’s a really broad deep question. Care to be a little more specific?” Peter laughed, raising an eyebrow at his mentor, wondering where the line of questions was heading.

“Okay. You were just given unlimited power. You could change anything and everything with a snap of your fingers, what would you do with that power?” Tony explained offering Peter a slightly more fleshed out scenario that was still decidedly vague, but that was the point.

“Hmm. Well obviously no crime, illness and money - everyone lives in a happy, healthy constructive society that like, actually functions instead of falling apart- and there’s no crime or hate of any kind. But you know, instead of everything being boring because of that, it actually works you know? Everyone’s happy.” Peter said almost instantly and Tony had expected nothing less from the teen. “But maybe an evil alien or two every now and then so we would be out of a job.”
“I appreciate that part.” Tony chuckled.

“Oh and I have unlimited supplies of candy and everyone is shorter than me.” Peter added on.

“Naturally.” Tony nodded seriously though he couldn’t keep the smirk off of his face.

“I’m guessing you’re talking closer to home though huh?” Peter quirked an eyebrow. It was obvious what Tony was hinting at, given all their recent traumas, trials and tribulations. It wasn’t a secret that his Dad had become very insecure and doubtful in his ability to appropriately provide the right amount of love and care for his son; and the teen didn’t blame him. Anyone would after what they’d been through, but Peter didn’t mind having to reassure the man constantly, he’d tell him a hundred times a day if it made him feel better. “Not much honestly. I’m pretty contented.”

“That’s nice to hear but come on. Don’t spare me.” Tony pressed on. Christ, Stark, you’re not being very covert about it.

Peter sighed softly but gave a more tangible answer, one Tony had fully expected. “I’d have May living with us and her be healthy again.”

Tony didn’t fail to hear the use of the term ‘us’ as opposed to ‘me’ or Peter saying they’d move back in together. It had been a scenario Tony had played in his own mind a lot for when the time came that May was better, whether or not Peter would want to continue living with them. It plagued his mind a lot in the beginning, especially when he began to realise that he loved as Peter more than just a mentor but the thoughts had dissipated once they’d defined their relationship and became comfortable within their new dynamic. Up until a couple months before Tony was fully secure in the fact that Peter would continue living with him indefinitely as there was no reason for him not to. However, recent events that had caused Tony to question everything had old thoughts and fears resurfacing in his mind. “So you’re saying when she gets better you still wanna stay with us?”

“Well duh- man you call me insecure. I love you dummy and May does too, though I think y’all would fight if you lived together. She runs a tighter ship that Steve.” Peter barged his shoulder into Tony’s which in Peter talk silently said ‘I’m lightening the mood because I’m not letting you go down that road again’.

“Oh really?” Tony fed into what Peter was hinting at, also wanting to move away from the darkening conversation. He didn’t regret asking that question but he also didn’t want to dwell on it too much, knowing his head would soon tell him that Peter was lying to make him feel better. God damn, his friends were right- he did need to go back to therapy.
“Really! Waaaaay overprotective- even worse than you and that’s saying something. I didn’t eat anything with artificial colours until I was twelve and I only got to then cause Ned’s big cousin was watching us and I snuck some candy from the kitchen.”

“Well that explains a lot.”

“Yeah I’m still not allowed skittles after that night…”

Tony made a note to ask May for the story and to never let Peter have skittles. “Okay so what else?”

It took a second for Peter to realise that Tony was referring to his initial question. “Nothing. Nothing about other people anyway.”

“So, about yourself?” Tony prepared himself for the self hating rant that was about to ensue. He had kind of asked for it, he realised that now.

“Oh yeah, I’ve got a long list. I’d be a solid foot taller at the very least and get myself up to a more impressive bmi, change this whole thing-” the teen made a hand motion that gestured to his entire face. “-completely. And while we’re at it, I’d fix my kidneys, bladder size and my brain so I’m not anxious all the time and we’d be good to go!”

“Your self esteem is still a work in progress, bubby. But you’re getting there.” Tony put an arm over the boy’s shoulder. It broke his heart to hear that the teen thought so little of himself but part of him was glad that Peter was talking to him about it; rather than bottle it up like he had done for so many years. That being said the teen had come in leaps and bounds where it came to his self confidence so Tony could only hope his self worth would be next in line to develop. “And are you hinting that you have to pee?”

Peter stopped walking for a second and did a weird little twisty dance, pushing one hand subtly into his lower stomach. Part of Tony wanted to roll his eyes but the other half thought it was cute- Peter was literally checking to see if he had to go or not, as if he hadn’t noticed consciously if his bladder was full. Not that that was an uncommon occurrence, he often did when he was distracted, be it by conversation or some kind of project, and he’d end up dashing to the restroom last minute. But to see Peter’s little jig he’d developed to determine if he needed a potty break was another level of adorable, not that he’d ever in a million years express that to him. “Nah, I’m good! There is one other thing I’d like to change right now though…”
“What’s that?”

“The fact that my stomach is starting to eat itself- I’m starving!”

Tony rolled his eyes and lead Peter over to a street cart on the opposite corner to where the were standing. The teen ordered one of the most revolting looking chilli dog that Tony had ever seen.

“Oh come on! You’re telling me that doesn’t look good?!?”

“That looks disgusting. It’s like an IBS attack waiting to happen.” Tony grimaced watching greasy sauce drip down the boy’s chin and he shoved a napkin in his face. God, he knew Peter had grown up in New York eating that kind of shit but he had no idea how the teen could stomach it.

“You have IBS?” Peter asked around a mouthful, being completely unphased by the new topic of conversation considering he was eating.

“Everyone does when you get to a certain age bud, it’s just one of the things you have to look forward to after you’re thirty.” Tony shrugged, knowing full well he was embellishing the truth to try and freak the kid out. “That and parts of your body hurt for no reason, you grow hair in places you’d never even imagine grew hair and hangover last three days.”

Peter grimaced in response to that bit of life advice. “Great. Can I make it to eighteen first?”

“Try sixteen.” The man chuckled at the boy’s horrified expression. “Speaking of which, August is just around the corner now. What do you want for your birthday?”

Peter shrugged around another mouthful of hotdog. “I dunno.”

“Come on kid, there’s gotta be something.” Peter swallowed his mouthful quickly and opened his mouth to answer but Tony cut him off. “No energy weapons or flying abilities. In fact no suit related stuff or work related stuff at all. Or pets.”
“I don’t know, you don’t have to get me anything. You’ve already given me everything I’ve ever wanted or could ask for.” Peter shrugged honestly. Tony had to swallow the ball of feelings that had accumulated in his throat. “I’m not just saying that to be all cute and humble by the way, it’s true. Besides, birthdays make me anxious.”

“How so?”

“Everyone’s attention on me? No thank you.” Peter shivered at the thought.

“So I should cancel the party then?” Tony smirked.

“Not funny.” Peter said dryly. “And as for presents, I prefer giving than receiving.”

“That’s not a phrase you should ever repeat in presence again but moving on- I refuse to not get you anything to save you some embarrassment. It doesn’t have to be a big deal but it’s your sixteenth. That’s like a milestone or something, right?”

“Yeah for girls.” Peter snorted.

“Come on, bubs. It can be anything, I know how you are about money but if you want you can give me a budget to work with if that makes you feel better.”

That seemed to get Peter’s attention, but for some reason the teen looked even more hesitant than before. “Hmm...well me and May did have this tradition but I don’t know you might think it’s stupid...”

“Lay it on me.”

“And I’d understand if you wanna make our own traditions and stuff-“

“Pete. just spit it out.”

“Well, we had this rule. Mostly it was because we didn’t have much but it also just meant more.
No buying gifts, we had to make ‘em. Me and Ned do it now too. Like May would get me one thing, like a main gift it was usually books or new school shoes or something big that we couldn’t afford to get the rest of the year, but everything else would be stuff she’d made. Like she made me that bookend I’ve got—“

“The badger with the hufflepuff scarf?” Tony recalled.

“Uh huh! And Ned made me this key ring with the beaded spider on it- though I think his sister did it for him.” Tony and Peter chuckled as the boy proudly dangled said fluorescent red and blue ornament out in front of them to illustrate his point. “I don’t know, I know it’s easy for you to make stuff and you do it for me all the time anyway but..”

“I think it’s a great idea.”

“Really?” Peter’s big brown eyes lit up, making Tony’s heart melt.

“Definitely. Should I pass the message on to everyone else as well?”

Peter’s face twinged. “They don’t have to-“

“They’re going to and you know it. We wanna spoil you kid, but it’s hard when you won’t let us, so your birthday is one of the only times we’ll get to without you being able to stop us.” Tony said finally, leaving no room for argument and Peter knew it to be the truth anyway. “We won’t make a massive deal if you don’t want to. How about just us, May and Ned included of course and MJ if you want, just hang out at our place with movies and take out?”

“That sounds perfect.”

“And of course we’ll all watch those tapes May gave me-“

“LESS PERFECT!”

In all of this Tony was forgetting one thing. It was Father’s Day first and Peter had already been working on his present for the last several weeks, since he’d been recovering, really; he’d put extra
effort into it since he’d missed his mentor’s birthday because he was still in a coma which he felt never ending guilt about but hey, at least they had the Hallmark holiday he could help make up for it; besides it was their first Father’s Day with the whole...new dynamic thing going on and Peter wanted to make it special. It was coming up in the next few weeks and the boy felt the timing couldn’t have been more perfect. Tony really did need a solid reminder of everything he’d done right when it came to parenting and though Peter would never be able to find the words that would express his love and gratitude he hoped the present he’d been working on would at least be able to convey some of those unspoken feelings for him. It seemed that now, more than ever, Tony needed a reminder of what a great Dad he really was.

As soon as they got home that afternoon, Tony immediately announced that he had Peter’s baby photos and the entire team (bar Clint as he was back home with his family, but Nat kept him more than updated) filed around the dining table to look at them. Much to the teen’s embarrassment of course.

“Aww!” Steve was the one to point out a particularly adorable photo of a two year old Peter, wearing nothing but a diaper and a singular sock, holding a blue blanket to his face; a face that was still chubby with baby fat and blushed from teething, surrounded by a halo of honey blond and brown curls. Tony had never understood when women said they wanted to eat babies when they found them cute, the whole ‘I could just eat you up!’ thing always struck him as morbid and mildly cannibalistic, but when he saw that photo he finally understood it. He was so chunky!

Despite his face being on fire Peter still indulged the adults with providing tidbits of context. “Yeah I used to carry that thing around all the time for like- five years. You know that Linus kid from that old cartoon Peanuts?”

“Yeah I think I’ve heard of him.” Bruce smirked but Peter didn’t understand that the man was being sarcastic. Of course they’d all heard of Peanuts. The generational gap was so stark at sometimes it was hilarious.

“That’s what my dad used to call me.” Peter chuckled, recalling the story he didn’t remember but had been passed down to him.

For no discernible reason Tony felt funny when Peter said that. He knew it was completely illogical, wholly unfair and irrational but he felt a pang of jealousy ran through him when he heard Peter referencing his biological father. It was stupid and he knew that- what did he expect Peter to say; ‘my father’, ‘the name of the male responsible for my birth’, ‘that man who inseminated my mother that one time’, it was ludicrous. Of course Peter called him his dad, that’s what he was, there was no point in dancing around the term to spare Tony’s feelings (feelings which he hadn’t voiced, by the way, as he didn’t know they even existed until that very moment). He knew all that so why did it still make him feel funny? Was he really resentful towards a dead man for having gotten his son first? A man that he’d never even met- who Peter didn’t even have any memories
of? Apparently so. Jesus Tony, what is wrong with you?

He shook his head as they continued flipping through the album, getting to some pictures of Peter’s extended family.

“That’s my dad, my ma, May, my aunt Julie and my cousin Chris or Curtis or something- I don’t remember. We don’t talk to them anymore.” Peter shrugged.

“Why did he change his shirt?” Nat pointed to a picture on the next page, depicting the same group of people in the same outfits all bar from Peter’s father. She was right, the man in the previous photo had been wearing a light blue polo where as this one was wearing an orange striped button down. They assumed there would be a story about how Peter had messed up the man’s shirt somehow but that wasn’t what they got.

“No that’s my uncle Ben.” Peter said simply like it was obvious, only elaborating when he received quizzical looks from the adults. He turned the page and pointed to another photo, where a baby Peter was being held by the man in the orange shirt, looking up at him whilst the man was facing the other in the blue shirt. The two men in the photo were the mirror image of each other.

“They were twins.”

They all made noises of understanding once they saw the third picture but it was Nat who said something in response first. “Thank god it wasn’t hereditary. Can you imagine having two of him walking around?”

Peter’s face went blank and he spoke flatly to show he wasn’t impressed by her wit. “Monozygotic twins aren’t hereditary, they’re spontaneous. And even if they were fraternal, it was on my dad’s side so it doesn’t matter-“

“Yes nerd we all took 9th grade biology. Just take the insult for what it is- you’re annoying and the idea of having more than one of you is terrifying.”

“You’re annoying.”

“You know you don’t really look like him. Like. At all.” Steve chuckled studying the photo closely. He was right, Tony notes, Peter bore zero resemblance to the men other than his pigment, having the same colour hair and eyes.
“Nope I look like my mom. If I dyed my hair blond and popped some contacts in I’d be her double.” Peter shrugged. It was a well known fact within his family he’d been told it for years, so he it wasn’t a new realisation for him.

“And pinned your ears back.” Nat quipped but the four men shot her a disapproving look. Peter however just rolled his eyes.

“Get some new material Tash, I know I look like a teacup. Hit me with something fresh next time.” The pair then poked their tongues out at one another.

“You know if you put your mom next to Tony and said they were your biological parents I’d believe you.” Thor commented, not realising the social implications of that statement and how they might be deemed as awkward. Luckily Peter didn’t take offence to it in fact he look thrilled.

“You think?”

“Most definitely.” Thor said everyone else nodded. Considering it was just the dark hair and eyes that made him distinguishable from the woman Thor’s statement certainly wasn’t untrue.

“You know Scott thought I was your love child.” Peter snorted thinking back for the conversation he’d had with the man.

“So did Pepper.” Tony said under his breath and moved over to grab a cup of coffee. Once his back was turned he smiled to himself in satisfaction. Peter did kind look like him at times. For some reason that offhand comment made him feel better.

“Oh my god!” Nat laughed loudly seeming to scare herself and covered her mouth staring at the open book; snatching it from view of the others once she saw one particular photo.

Peter seemed to know exactly which photo she was reacting to and his face went redder than Tony had ever seen it. “No no no- Nat please don’t!”

The teen attempted to hop over the counter and grab the book but Steve, Thor and Bruce all blocked his path peering over Nat’s shoulder at the offending photo.
“Tony you gotta come and see this—” Bruce grinned.

“What?”

“NO NOT THAT ONE!” Peter yelled making one last grab for the picture but Thor put his palm flat against the boy’s forehead and held him at arms length long enough for Tony to barge into the circle.

It was an old photograph, of the worn edges and the age of the figure in it were anything to go by. It was of a curly headed kid around age eight dressed in Iron Man pjs with a homemade arc reactor made out of scrap pieces of electronics strapped to his chest with duct tape. He was wearing a foam Hulk glove and holding a stuffed bear in one hand (that Tony definitely recognised), brandishing an Iron Man action figure in the other. The kid was showing off the homemade model with a large, gap tooted grin and Tony was pretty sure his heart stopped beating for a second. “Oh. My. Go-“

“Shut up! I’m serious shut up!” Peter stomped his foot, he wasn’t ready for the ridicule.

“Pete were not making fun-“ Steve said quickly but he was still snickering.

“Bullshit!”

“Hey come on now, it’s sweet!” Nat said and for once she didn’t sound like she was being sarcastic.

“It’s the cutest fucking thing I’ve ever seen.” Tony said out loud and everyone stared at him. Did he just say cute? Fuck it, he was owning it. “Look at those fashionable Pajamas, you had great taste-“

“UGH!”

Since that afternoon Peter’s baby photos had since been copied and distributed amongst the team- several of them being printed and hung around the common floor much to the teens mortification. He couldn’t be too angry though (at least on one level) as the book May had handed down had given him extra material to finish the project he’d been working on for Tony’s father day present.
It had taken some sneaking to do, especially since he was rarely allowed in the lab unattended and it was even rarer that Tony allowed him any time to himself; but thanks to a few emergency meetings, early mornings and conspiring with JARVIS, Peter had managed to pull it out of the bag at the last minute. He literally got the last files together that Sunday morning, now all he had to do was give it to the man but of course he wasn’t going to be so blatant about it. As excited as he was to give it to him he was pretty sure he’d be too anxious to actually hand it over, so he devised a plan.

That morning Peter had snuck up to one of the higher floors, one that he wasn’t usually allowed to be on unless he was accompanying Tony on Stark Industries business. It was clear Tony hadn’t remembered the date, or at the very least he didn’t think it applied to him, because he looked seriously surprised when Peter popped up at the window to his office. “Wooah! So this is your big serious Mr. Stark office!”

Tony didn’t even greet him, he continued to stare right through the boy even as he entered the room, though Peter had expected nothing less. He knew he wasn’t allowed to be up there. “What?! It’s cool! I’ve never been in here before!”

“There’s a good reason for that. I have a rule against bratty fifteen year olds being in here. Out.” Wasn't Bruce meant to be babysitting anyway? He didn’t want Peter in the lab by himself, who knows what the kid would get up to.

“Aw come oooooon-“

“Out Pete, there’s stuff in here you’re not allowed to see.” The teens birthday present being one of them but he wasn’t about to let the kid know that or he’d never leave. When he said that though Peter gave him the saddest look ever after being told to essentially go away and it made Tony’s heart hurt. Damn that kid played dirty. “Uh uh, no puppy dog eyes! It’s the one room I get to myself, you can go anywhere else just- just not in here- Christ you’re getting heavy!”

Peter feigned offence, clutching a hand to his chest as Tony struggled to push the boy out of his office; it wasn’t that Peter was actually heavy it was the fact he was locking his legs and using his super strength to keep himself anchored to the ground, trying to prolong the exchange as long as possible. “Ouch! Careful with my feelings dude I might develop a complex-“

“You’re gonna develop a black eye if you don’t get your skinny ass outta here pronto.” Tony said in a strained voice, feeling a little flustered at how much he was struggling to move the kid.

“Oh so now I’m skinny? Skinny or heavy Dad make up your mind!”
“I don’t have to explain relative density to a kid who got a perfect score on his MIT entry level exam. I’ll see you at lunch.” Tony huffed, having worn himself out as he finally got the kid back on the appropriate side of the door.

“Fiiiiiiine- I’ll see you later.” Peter grinned and slipped down the hallway before Tony got the chance to question the sudden change in attitude. Christ, what was with him today?

Shaking his head Tony returned to his desk when he noticed something he hadn’t before. There was a box sitting on top of the stack of papers he’d been working on. A terribly wrapped box that had clearly been taped and retaped if the wrinkles in the paper were anything to go by. There was even a patch that had an extra piece of wrapping paper taped over a gap where the person wrapping it must’ve misjudged how much paper they would need to appropriately cover the box. The shoddy job was cute, especially the note attached to the cable tie that was holding the hack job together: “Sorry I couldn’t find any ribbon, but I can’t tie a bow anyway so I made do with what I could find in the lab (^-^)”

On the other side of the hand written label there was more text: “Happy Father’s Day, love from your favourite child.”

Tony rolled his eyes but he felt his heart skip a beat. He hadn’t even realised the date which made him feel guilty but then again, why would he have? He never had to think about it before. The most aware he had been was years ago, where he’d had to schedule Clint out of missions so the man could be with his family but he’d never in a million years imagined he’d be associated with the holiday in anyway.

It took more than a little effort but Tony managed to rip the package open and he was more than a little confused by it’s contents at first. It was a smooth, metal ball and a small square platform with a divet in the centre for the ball to sit on. Tony raised an eyebrow and set the weird, smooth orb on his desk, looking perplexed at it. Just as he was about to ask JARVIS for some assistance in just what the hell the thing was, it made a wiring sound and the sphere began to spin wildly; as it did it raised a couple inches off of its base, suspended in midair and a beam of light came out of it. Holy shit the kid had made his own holotable. Well, colour Tony impressed.

The small square screen that he orb was projecting started playing images in a slideshow and that was what really made Tony get choked up. It was a collection of all the pictures Peter and the man had taken together, including the ones that Peter had forced him to take where he looked grumpy as all hell or the ones where Peter had whipped his phone out in the middle of a fight. There were some he didn’t even remember like events he’d taken to the kid to very early on in their relationship; the kids first expo, some random convention, Peter’s first time in the lab. The kid had even gone so far as to include some of Tony’s favourite pictures of him from that baby book that he
detested so much. The reel went on for around three minutes and Tony found himself rewatching it a bunch of times, noticing a different picture and a different memory each time. He may or may not have been crying by the fifth time round but he’d never admit that.

After he’d composed himself Tony stood up from his desk, being sure to carefully place the gift back in its box and bringing it with him. He wasn’t getting any work done not after that. “Jar, where’s Underoos?”

“He’s hiding in the lab, Sir.”

Tony made his way downstairs and JARVIS had been right, Peter was hauled up in the very farthest corner of the lab under one of the desks where he’d made his ‘cave’ as he’d dubbed it. “Oh, hi da--”

“Get over here.” Tony deadpanned, for a second making Peter worried that he was upset but as soon as he crawled out Tony immediately hugged him.

“So, I take it you liked it?” Peter grinned into the man’s shoulder, his nerves melting away. Now he knew the man’s reaction to be positive he regretted not having given him the gift in person; oh well, he could always ask JARVIS to show him the security footage later, if the AI would let him see it from the man’s office that is.

“I love it.” Tony said sincerely. He wanted to say something else but he couldn’t find the words to really express how much he loved it. “It was..it’s really thoughtful kiddo.”

“You don’t have to keep talking you know, I know you’re emotionally constipated.” Peter chuckled. “I just figured you needed a little reminder of the good times when you’re busy being all depressed and guilt stricken.”

“Well, I’ll keep that in mind.” Tony smiled, trying to ignore how watery his eyes felt. Get it together man.

“It’s also an alarm clock, so look forward to hearing me screaming songs at three in the morning.” Peter beamed.

“You had to go and ruin the moment didn’t you kid?”
“It’s my job.” Peter grinned and hopped up on the desk. “Not bad for your first Father’s Day present huh? I’m pretty proud of it.”

“Peter it’s really impressive.” Tony said seriously. Though he wasn’t one to dish out praise like crazy he wanted to make a point of showing not only his gratitude but his amazement at the boy’s handiwork. “How did you manage all this by yourself?”

Though he was reluctant to reveal his secrets at first, Peter went on to describe how he’d gone about completing his side project and how he’d managed to do it without Tony noticing. The pair discussed the intricate components for a while before Peter suddenly made a comment that jarred Tony a little. “You’re nothing like your dad, you know.”

“Oh? And how would you know that?” Tony asked amusedly, though he did feel his heart beating a little faster at the change in conversation. “Psychic Spidey powers?”

Peter rolled his eyes. “No, I’m just saying, I know you worry about that all the time. You don’t wanna make the same mistakes he did and stuff, which proves my point in and of itself. Because you try so hard.”

“He tried hard too, Pete. In his own way. I wasn’t the easiest kid to try and parent.” Tony said automatically finding himself defending his father’s questionable parenting techniques.

“Pssh you think I don’t know that? You’re stubborn as a mule but that doesn’t mean you deserved all that. God knows tryna take care of me hasn’t been all sunshine and roses- but you’ve never laid a hand on me. Even though I’ve deserved it at times.”

“I would never, ever lay a finger on you in anger. And who said he ever hit me?” The man raised his eyebrow in amusement, wondering how Peter had come to this assumption. It wasn’t unnecessarily an unjust conclusion but Tony had been very careful to skip the nitty gritty details about his childhood trauma when relaying stories to the boy.

“You mean to say he didn’t? It’s not a hard thing to figure out Dad. It’s obvious from the way you talk about him, like you’re still scared he’s gonna be there when you turn around if you bad mouth him.”

“He did whoop my ass a couple times. But unlike you I definitely deserved it.” Tony shrugged
casually. “I wasn’t exactly the easiest kid.”

But Peter shook his head, unwilling to entertain the thought that Tony had deserved that kind of treatment ever, even if he knew the man had been a tough child to parent. “You were a kid. A kid too smart for his own age, but not smart enough to know what was good for him. It wasn’t your fault.”

“Well doesn’t that sound familiar, huh?” Tony said deflectively, in hopes that they could stop talking about his less than ideal childhood now.

“Like father like son.” Peter quipped with a cheeky grin.

“I love you kiddo, but if you don’t stop psychoanalyzing me you’re grounded.” Tony said, but there was no real bite to his words as he wrapped an arm around Peter’s shoulders.

“I love you too, Dad.”
Memories

Chapter Summary

I thought I'd try writing a flashback in this chapter, but I'm not sure if it really worked. I'm not so good at getting the flow of that kind of thing right but I'd like to implement it more. I wanna write more about Tony and Peter's early days working together but I want it to come across naturally in the story you know? be relevant instead of just shoving it in there. I don't know- thank you for coming to my TedTalk. Enjoy the chapter lmao.

Tony still wasn’t letting Peter go on patrol but he was occasionally allowed to go on call with them, which Peter was happy with. The mutual compromise came with a lot of understanding and communication which was needed after the rocky few months the pair had. Despite all the ups and downs they’d come out the other side closer than ever; so close that the two stopped bothering trying to censor themselves around their teammates, openly being affectionate and Peter calling Tony Dad consistently; accept when he was mad then it was various versions of the man’s first name (but never, ever, Mr. Stark- not after last time, he never used that term of address unless they were in a public setting).

They were scheduled to go on call that night as an entire team for the first time in months, as there had been several high priority threats called in. So they’d spent the majority of the afternoon congregated in the living room together as they waited for the call out to come through with the details and for some reason Tony was struggling to contain his emotions. He’d never felt so content and relaxed in all his life, just sitting there spending time with his family. Of course he had been attached to each member of the team on an individual basis, it wasn’t until Peter came along that everyone had become unified and their dynamics set in stone. The boy had really unified the group and it was times like this where Tony could sit back and fully appreciate that fact; the stark contrast of emotions to what he had been feeling weeks prior when Peter had been in a state of disrepair were indescribable and he was highly uncomfortable with how emotional he had been as of late. He watched as Peter moved around the room, interacting freely with everyone and it occurred to him how comfortable and happy the kid looked. Tony wasn’t sure what was wrong with him, what had him so sentimental that day but he figured it was something to do with the anxiety of letting Peter go out as Spider-Man in an official setting for the first time in months; then again the warm happy feeling in his chest wasn’t exactly an unwelcome one, he was just dreading when that feeling would go away and be replaced by that crippling anxiety again.

The entire morning Peter had had a particular spring to his step, one Tony hadn’t seen for a long time. He was being particularly cheeky that day, slipping back into his role of mischievous yet undeniably adorable kid who you couldn’t stay mad at for a minute even if he did make you want to rip your hair out at times. And how the role suited him well, Thor being his partner in crime most of the time. In fact, Peter had specifically labelled them once and not everyone was quite as happy with their assigned part of the family puzzle as the blond god was.
Tony, of course, was named the dad since he was ‘mean and boring but still, you know, pretty cool’. Steve was then the mom, which everyone agreed with including the man himself. Bruce was dubbed the grandpa as he was wise and kept everyone in check, often being the only one that could stop Tony and Steve from killing each other at times, the one everyone respected and went to for advice. Nat was then called either the aunt or mean older sister which she protested against-

“So, does that make Bruce my Dad or Grandpa? I just need to know what level of Alabama we’re talking here.” She said dryly, clearly not impressed.

“No that’s not how it works- this is an individual evaluation of character not necessarily how it connects.” Peter rolled his eyes as he explained. “And it’s not like we’re all biologically related so there’s no incestuous implications to this assessment.”

“Oh good, because our family tree was starting to look like a circle.” Nat quipped causing everyone to laugh and Peter to give her a dirty look.

“Why you gotta make everything weird?”

“Like this wasn’t already weird.” Clint snorted.

“Anyway, if that was the case we just married off Dad and Steve- and I come from a broken enough home without adding a divorce on top of it!”

“Well I tried to get us in with a couples counsellor but Mr. Prude over there wasn’t having it-”

“Tony!”

Clint was given a similar title to Nat as Peter commented on how the pair were basically genderbend versions of each other. “Come on guys, get your own discernible personalities- hey!” After both a Team Rocket and a Wonder Twins joke, Peter caught a pillow to the face and he moved on, framing Thor to he his honorary big brother- the fun big brother. A title which the god absolutely relished in and would bring up at every given opportunity. It was obvious Thor adored getting a second crack at being a big brother, especially with a kid almost as equally mischievous as the dark haired god of mischief himself.
That morning Peter was being especially irritating but no one took it to heart. They were like Tony, too happy to see him back to his old self to actually be annoyed at the boy, though Bruce had asked Tony more than once if he should write a prescription for Ritalin.

“Curly, quit bouncing off the walls and get me some damn coffee.” Nat groaned as she shoved the boy with her foot on his way past from where she was lounged on the couch.

“Well when you’re being so polite how could I refuse?! Coming right up m’lady!” He bowed sarcastically, casing Nat to deliver another swift kick to his butt.

Peter headed over to the kitchen and grabbed a mug, but Thor caught his eye as he went to pour the coffee from the pot. The god made a shaking gesture with his hands that Peter didn’t quite understand so Thor did it again, mouthing the word ‘sugar’ dramatically. Tony watched the entire exchange from across the room, watching that familiar playfully evil smirk plaster itself across Peter’s face and that twinkle in his eye that was mirrored in Thor’s. Well, at least they couldn’t start a fire this time and Tony was bored enough not to intervene, content to watch the ‘prank’ play out.

“Here you go.” Peter skipped happily back across the room, handing Nat the cup.

The woman barely took one sip before she spluttered. “Ugh, what did you put in this, corn syrup?!”

“Ohhhh, I forgot you don’t take sugar do you? I guess I’ll have to drink this then-“

But just as Peter snatched back the mug and raised it to his lips Bruce swooped past him, claiming the coffee for his own. “Nat doesn’t take sugar but I do.”

Bruce sat himself behind his girlfriend and she immediately laid her head in his lap, still reading her book. “I’m sweet enough.”

“Ha!” Clint barked out one solitary sarcastic laugh from his perch across the room making everyone chuckle, even Nat smirked as she laced her fingers into Bruce’s. It wasn’t just Tony and Peter who had become more affectionate, the couple had become more open and comfortable displaying their relationship and frankly, everyone thought it was adorable (though they couldn’t voice that without Nat threatening them with violence).
“Heeeeey!” Peter whined indignantly, looking longingly at the cup that had been swiped from his hands. “I called dibs on that!”

“Mm mm-“ Bruce shook his head with a mouthful of the sickeningly sweet coffee before swallowing- “uh uh. No caffeine with your kidney, Pete, we’ve been over this.”

“Forget his kidney, Capitan ADD doesn’t need caffeine.” Clint quipped. It was true Tony had been trying to find an excuse to ban Peter from caffeine for ages now, due to the boy’s already hyperactive nature but he didn’t have a foot to stand on because Peter would always retort with Tony’s own addiction to the stuff. The kidney issue had been rather convenient in giving a legitimate reason why the teen couldn’t have any of his favourite sugary drinks.

“I have AD H D for your information and hey I’ve been promoted to captain! Watch out Steve I’m coming for ya!” Peter beamed then started to emulate the scene from the 2013 movie, Captain Phillips that he hadn’t actually seen, but he knew his memes. “Look at me, I’m the Captain now.”

“Dear god, how old were you when that came out?”

“Uhhhh, twelve? No wait eleven I think-“

“Christ! You’re definitely too young for coffee, you haven’t earned our level of exhaustion yet. You’re too young to need caffeine.” Clint commented as he grabbed himself a cup.

“Hey I’ve earned my aches and pains. I’ve got old bones.” Peter pouted, trying to slip behind the archer to grab his own cup but Bruce yelled back across the room.

“Peter! No. Kidney.” The man barked like he was scolding a misbehaving dog which to be honest wasn’t an entirely unjust comparison.

“Come on just one cup! My kidneys are fine I haven’t even peed blood for like a week!” The room fell silent and everyone stared at Peter with different levels of concern and the teen realised he probably shouldn’t have mentioned that- considering he’d told Bruce and Tony that that particular ailment had fully dissipated weeks ago. The doctor would not be letting that comment slide, vowing silently to reprimand him later in private, and possibly force the teen to give a urine sample again. “Uhh I mean three weeks-“
Everyone adult the room chorused simultaneously in response. “No coffee!”

Tony’s son continued swanning around that afternoon, pissing off Clint and Nat and scheming with Thor, before wandering back over to ask Bruce about a random medical question that had popped into his head or mock fight with Steve. As Tony observed Peter blending in within their little family, he was overwhelmed with pride at how far the boy had come. He couldn’t help but reminisce about the early days when Peter was too scared to speak up for anything; the difference in him was night and day. If someone had told Tony a year ago that Peter would be begging Steve to let him have some Oreos before dinner he would have laughed. Not just because the scene was hilarious in and of itself but because even during their first day working together Tony had picked up on Peter’s inability to ask for anything.

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It was only the third time they had met in person after Peter was selected to be the winner of the Stark internship, so the child was still noticeably and understandably awestruck. He could barely speak two words to the man who he was now alone with for the first time, but Tony was used to it. Honestly he hadn’t expected any more or less of the child, most adults got that way around him but he had hoped Peter would at least have been able to speak two words without stuttering by that point; he wasn’t sure if it was nerves or excitement, but luckily Tony wasn’t planning on having much in depth conversation with the teen. What did intrigue him though was how Peter's eyes instantly lit up when he looked at all the tools and materials on the workbench. It was though he could see the cogs turning in the boy’s head as soon as he laid eyes upon the selection, already putting the pieces together in his mind. That was exactly what Tony wanted him to do.

“Of course I’ve seen some of your work. Your portfolio was impressive for sure, but I want to make some assessments for myself. See what we’re working with here.” Tony saw the startled look that crossed Peter’s face at the term assessments and he was sure to clarify himself, lest he scare the kid away on his first day. “Don’t worry, it’s not an actual test. There’s no failing it, you won’t lose your spot.”

Peter looked visibly relieved to hear that and his face resumed that spark of inspiration that it had had a few moments earlier.

“I want you to take what you see here and just build. Whatever comes to your mind. No blueprints.”

Much to Tony’s surprise Peter looked even more excited to hear that. Whenever he’d assessed people’s skill level with this tactic before they’d always seemed intimidated; the idea of having to make something impressive or up to Tony Stark standard in front of the man himself, without any clue as to what to make, was supposed to be intimidating. It was designed to see how people would
perform under pressure. But not to this boy apparently. Interesting. He looked like a kid in a candy store. Then it occurred to Tony that that analogy was pretty accurate to their situation.

Peter nodded and looked back and forth across the table for a moment. “H-how much time do I have, sir?”

“How much do you need?” Tony quirked an eyebrow at the question. No one had asked that before and he had never instigated a time limit.

“I could have it done in ten minutes.” Peter squinted as he drew up his own blueprints in his head.

“You have five. Let me know if you need anything else.” Tony smirked and backed away from the table. The kids eyes went wide for a second before he looked back at the bench, even more determined than before. “Begin.”

Peter moved quickly, passing over the entire table selecting a few parts and skipping over others. He made a few choices that Tony found questionable as he had expected the kid to go for the easy option laid out in front of him. What most people in his situation would have gone for, what Tony expected; All the pieces corresponded to a small drone with articulated limbs, capable of performing basic tasks such as rewiring circuits. It wasn’t impressive but it was more so a test of patience than of ingenuity, at least at this stage. Of course there were more objects laid out, strategically to see if the person Tony was testing would get caught out and it seemed that Peter had been. For a moment, even he wasn’t sure what the kid was going for, but he caught up to speed the second he saw the boy reach for a specific item, one of those that had been placed there to throw him off. Tony connected the dots, surely the kid wasn’t-

But he was. This adolescent boy was really about to attempt to make a simplified scaled model of one of his own creations; the Stark sonic cannon. Right in front of him. He had to admit it took guts. For the first time in a while he actually found himself excited. Finally an intern who was willing to show such similar thought processes to his own. He watched Peter tinker for a few minutes, impressed at what an accurate rendition he was managing to put together when all of a sudden the boy stopped. He was still on the clock, Tony knew the boy knew that, but after fifteen seconds he still didn’t move. He had been on such a roll and despite the distance Tony could see that Peter was on the right track, having assembled the pieces perfectly with only a few minor adjustments and additions to be made. Thirty more seconds and he still didn’t move, what was happening?

“You alright there?” Tony asked concernedly. Had the stage fright of being watched by him only just kicked in? Oh god please don’t let the kid puke, he’d had to deal with that before when someone got themselves so worked up being in his lab. But Peter had seemed so confident only moments before? Though he knew teenagers had mood swings, were they really that dramatic?
“Uhm…” Peter started in a quiet voice and Tony waited but the boy never finished his sentence.

Tony frowned and walked back over to where Peter was hunched over the desk, stopping the timer he had set. “Why’d you stop?”

“I uh..uhm..uh..” Peter swallowed thickly and his face was getting increasingly red. Tony felt bad for whatever was causing this sudden bout of crippling shyness. He sat down opposite the boy trying to get him to make eye contact but Peter continued to stare at the object he had partially created in front of him. Just as Tony was about to ask if he was okay Peter finally managed to get out the words he was looking for. “D-do you have any um, any smaller incline planes I-I can use to prop open this hatch long enough for me to put in the redactor?”

“Yeah, sure, one sec.” Tony promptly stood up and went to fetch what the boy had asked for, shaking his head, slightly shocked. It was such a simple thing to ask and he had told Peter before he started that he could ask for extra materials. He retrieved the pieces quickly and Peter thanked him, immediately resuming the pace he had once been working at. Once Peter had finished his creation, Tony estimated him to have completed it under the time constraints he had set, factoring in the loss of time during Peter’s paused moment. He looked over the model, aiming it to the far corner of the room away from anything valuable before firing it; sending papers and various other debris flying across the lab.

“Woah.” Peter said quietly under his breath. Clearly he had underestimated how powerful the object he’d been working on really was.

“Nice work. Not what I was expecting.” Was all Tony said. In hindsight, he wished he had shown the boy how impressed he really was, had given him some extra encouragement or at the very least been a bit more congratulatory. Had he known back then what a huge impact he and Peter would have on each other lives and how close the pair would become he most certainly would have- but he didn’t, not at the time.

He also wished he had addressed the boys shyness then and there rather than taking note of it silently. Maybe that would have helped build Peter up from the get go and they wouldn’t have struggled so much in the future getting him comfortable with asking for things he needed. But again, Tony didn’t. He didn’t question Peter’s actions, chalking it down to the general nervousness of being around him, something he was accustomed to. He only came to find out later that that was only part of the reasoning behind the teens lack of ability to speak up.

Their next few meetings went the same, Tony asking Peter to perform a multitude of small ungraded tasks as well as assist him on a few minor projects, all of which the teenager was ecstatic
about being involved in. Each time however, Tony never failed to notice the small moments in which Peter seemed to lose focus or freeze up and it was always due to the fact he needed to ask where something was or if he was allowed to use it. It was only a minor nuisance to their work, barely making a dent in the time it took for them to complete things, but it continued to nag at the back of Tony’s mind. The list of instances of Peter’s sudden paralysis kept growing with every time the boy visited his lab. But it wasn’t until an incident about four months into their working relationship, not long after Tony found out about the boys alter ego, that he really grew seriously concerned about it.

Peter’s personality had more than begun to shine through at that point, his initial shyness around the man beginning to weigh. Their working relationship had more than started to bud into something more (oh if only Tony had known back then) and their conversations often lead to topics outside of the lab. The fact that Peter no longer had to hide his Spider-Man side from his mentor had helped relax him a lot too and the kid was a lot more forthcoming about certain things. It was around the time Tony started to realise that he really missed when the kid wasn’t around but he was still in denial, shrugging off the feeling as him simply enjoying the company. But he couldn’t deny having someone who had fresh eyes and was still so enamoured with all the possibilities and ideas that were out there in the world, was more than a pleasant change for him. It wasn’t often he encountered genuine people, not anymore and certainly not someone as genuinely enthusiastic and passionate about his work as Peter. So, when the boy came in one day looking tired and pale, he instantly knew something was wrong and it gave him an odd, tight feeling in his chest.

“Hi, Mr. Stark.” Peter called quietly as he entered the lab, his tone nowhere near it’s usual excited lilt. Tony didn’t even need to turn around to sense something was amiss.

“Hey, kid. You okay?” Tony tried to keep his voice cool and his face expressionless, but it was difficult.

“I’m good, Sir. How are you?” Peter answered a little too quickly, as he set his backpack down by the door gently, as opposed to the way he’d usually bounce into the room and toss his personally belongings carelessly to the side in the process. Another red flag.

Tony stood from his crouched position at the knee of one of his suits and walked over to get a closer look at the kid. His eyes weren’t focused properly and his movements were sluggish and awkward. Tony wasn’t one to initiate physical contact unless he was working on Peter’s suit or adjusting his hand position when working on a project, but something in him made him go over and grab the boy by the shoulders. He turned Peter to face him, his face looking equally shocked at being touched, and he swayed a little. His head bobbed for a second as though his neck wasn’t fully attached to his body.

“Uh.. Mr. Stark?” Peter said clearly unsure of what was happening.
“I didn’t want an automated response, Peter. Are you okay?” Tony said seriously, despite himself. He wasn’t sure where the sudden emotions he felt were coming from but something about the boys off appearance was making his stomach churn.

“Yeah- I mean, yes Sir, I’m fine. J-jus’ a long day at school.” Peter chuckled nervously. If only Tony had known then what it meant when the boy stuttered. He came to realise stuttering meant either the boy was lying or otherwise upset in some way.

The man was quick to snap out of his emotion fuelled daze and straightened up, resuming his usual aloof manor. He didn’t fully believe the kid but he knew better than to push him, even back then he knew that Peter had a tendency to shut down when he was stressed, like he had with the incident that lead to him finding out the kid was Spider-Man. That and he knew he couldn’t come across as too emotional if he didn’t want to freak the boy out. “Good. Can’t have you operating machinery if your gonna be putting yourself at risk. You have to remain sharp, especially with what I’ve got planned for today.”

Luckily Peter seemed to perk up a bit at that. “What’re we workin’ on?”

“Oh you’ll see.”

Tony had been letting on for a month or so now that he was planning on letting Peter work on his newest model of the Iron Man suit and today was that day. Despite the pale face and dark under eyes Peter managed to look just as excited as Tony had thought he’d be.

“Remember, one piece at a time, kid. We’re just working on the articulated joints today.” Tony allowed himself to chuckle slightly at the boys unwanered enthusiasm.

“But this is like- you’re actual suit! You’re really gonna let me touch the Iron Man suit?!”

“Yep. But only if you wash your hands first.”

“Oh, right!” Peter nodded and went to dash across the room to where some sinks were located.

“Peter. I was kidding.” Tony said dryly, though he had to bite back the urge to laugh at the boy’s
“Oh. Yeah, I know. So was I.” Peter blushed, allowing some colour to come back to his face for the first time since Tony had seen him that day.

They threw themselves into work immediately, Tony working on the electrics whilst handing off the more menial tasks, like the body work, to Peter who accepted them with glee. He openly admitted he would’ve been happy to just polish the suits shiny surface so anything more than that was an added bonus to him. The suit was suspended from the ceiling a few feet off of the ground so that it was at a comfortable working height for the pair whilst they were standing. They worked for an hour or so, conversation lulling to a comfortable silence as it often did when the two were so focused. Well, Tony thought it was a comfortable silence.

It wasn’t until he heard Peter’s shoes squeak against the floor three times in the space of a minute that he realised something was amiss. His initial reaction was to get irritated at the ear piercing noise and he turned his head slightly to give Peter a disgruntled look but he saw the boy had his eyes closed. Tony immediately snatched the tool out of the boys hand. “Hey.”

“Hmm? Sorry! Sorry, Mr. Stark.” Peter snapped out of his daze and shook his head quickly, like he was trying to wake himself up from a daydream.

“You can’t close your eyes when your holding a soldering iron, Peter, for Christ’s sake you could hurt yourself. Do you need to go take five?” Tony asked and Peter gave him a wide eyed look.

“N-no no! I-I thought I was gonna sneeze. Sorry, sir, it won’t happen again.” Peter shook his whole body as though he was fighting off a shiver. “I’m sorry.”

Tony sighed through his nose. The kid had a nasty habit of apologising at least fifty times a day, if Tony hadn’t known better he would’ve thought his name was sorry (he constantly bit back the urge to say “Sorry? I thought your name was Peter”- the dad joke that crossed his mind sickened him but it was truly apt for Peter’s situation). He wanted to revoke his question and replace it with an order, but he also wanted the kid to learn to ask for a break if he needed one; something he had yet to do even after months of working together (though he would later regret trying to implement that rule in that particular instance). So he didn’t press the issue, but he did make sure to swap Peter’s soldering iron out for a less dangerous power tool.

After that there was another fifteen minutes of silence that tricked Tony into believing the fidgeting had been an isolated incident. Until it started up again, sneakers dragging across the lino. He knew that Peter was capable of much better balance than what he was currently displaying and
the squeaking of rubber against the smooth floor was setting his teeth on edge. “Can you sto-
Peter?!”

As he turned his head he saw the fourteen year old looking as though he was on the brink of losing
consciousness. His eyes were unfocused and fluttering wildly, the arm holding a wrench was
hanging limply at his side whilst the other was seemingly grabbing at nothing in the air and he was
leaning precariously backwards. “Uh. M-mr. Stark, I don’t feel so good..can I sit down for a sec-”

Before he could finish his sentence Peter eyes rolled back and his knees gave way, sending the
swaying teen hurtling backwards towards the ground like a puppet having its strings cut. Tony
managed to lunge forward just in time before the boy slammed onto the floor. “Woah, okay. Easy
does it- JARVIS!”

“Scanning now. Blood pressure is low, eighty over fifty, should I send for Dr. Banner, sir?”

“Yes.” Tony said calmly, even though the adrelenline has started to kick in. Why hadn’t he just
told the kid to take a break instead of giving him the option? Of course he knew by then how bad
Peter was at admitting something was wrong but Jesus, he didn’t think he’d go as far as passing out
on him. “Hey kid, can you open your eyes for me?”

He shook Peter gently but he didn’t budge, making Tony panic more. He put a hand on his
forehead and it felt cold and clammy to the touch. He had dealt with plenty medical emergencies in
his time but not one so sudden and with someone so young. He wished he had paid more attention,
rather than taking the teenagers word for it when he said he was fine. He should have protested or
made more of a show of forcing the boy to admit something was wrong before he started working;
he was fourteen years old for Christ’s sake, he was the adult why had he allowed him to decide?
He grabbed a chair from a nearby desk and put Peter’s feet up on it to elevate his legs, as well as
putting a rolled up lab coat under his head.

Before Bruce even made it down there Peter began to stir. His eyes fluttered for a second before
they opened, blinking slowly. He peered around for a second before his eyes adjusted to the harsh
lighting and unfamiliar surroundings until he realised where he was. He looked at Tony wide eyed
for a second then attempted to sit bolt upright.

“Mr. Stark! I-I-I am so s-“

“If you’re about to apologise, save it. Just lay still for a minute alright? Get your breath back.”
But Peter started shaking, a combination of his body and mind going into shock and he started to try and sit up; Tony wouldn’t allow him to, keeping a hand firmly on his chest. “I-I don’t know what happened- I just, I got dizzy and then you were yelling and everything went black I don’t-“

“Hey, hey. Calm down. You’re okay, nothing bad happened. You just gotta calm down okay? Getting worked up ain’t gonna fix things.” Tony tried his best to soothe and he found it came more naturally to him in the moment than he had previously thought. Peter stopped struggling to sit up and laid there more calmly, though he was still visibly distressed having just fainted in the man’s workshop.

“I’m really sorry, Mr. Stark.” Peter bit his lip and looked nervously up at the man. “I didn’t break anything did I?”

“It wouldn’t matter if you did the only thing I’m worried about being broken is you right now, kid.” Tony said seriously. He was surprised himself by the genuine concern that came out of him. He did his best to ignore that niggling feeling in his stomach again as Bruce walked in.

“Tony, is everything- oh. Well, hello.” Bruce started towards the man who he could see crouched on the floor but he failed to notice Peter lying there until he turned a corner of one of the desks. The doctor smiled kindly at the very pale, fear stricken face peering up at him. “And who do we have here?”

“My intern. Don’t ask questions. You didn’t see him.” Tony said, giving his longtime friend a look letting him know he was deadly serious.

“Of course not. Well, hi there, what happened to you?” Bruce crouched down on Peter’s other side. The boy’s mouth was gaping like a fish. If it was possible for Peter to get paler in that moment he definitely would have.

“Oh my god- y-you’re, you’re-“

“Yeah I’m the Hulk.” Bruce sighed gently, but he still smiled.

“Well yeah that too but- you’re Dr Banner! Dude I’ve read so much of your work, I just finished reading your thesis on dissipative quantum phases and quantum stochastic processes!”
Bruce and Tony exchanged surprised glances, but Tony ended up just shrugging. He’d gotten used to Peter’s randomness by that point but Bruce looked utterly bewildered. “I..I wrote that when I was in college..how did you-“

“Anyway.” Tony stressed. He wasn’t ready for the two people in the room with him to have an official meeting yet, he hadn’t called Bruce down there to sign autographs on one of his old college papers. He hadn’t planned on Peter meeting any members of the team whilst he and Steve were in the midst of...their little disagreement. And he certainly wasn’t ready to share his little genius with anyone else yet. “Intern here just passed out with no warning. He was out for a couple minutes.”

Bruce snapped out of the confused but intrigued look he was giving Peter and went back into doctor mode. “I’m not calling him intern. What’s your name?”

“Uh-“ Peter looked up at Tony for approval who dejectedly rolled his eyes but nodded. “-P-Peter, sir.”

“Nice to meet you Peter. Do you remember feeling nauseous or dizzy at all?” Bruce distracted Peter with his questions as he pressed his finger onto the pad of a medical scanner.

“Uh, I’ve been feeling a little dizzy today I guess..” Peter avoided Tony’s gaze, probably to avoid persecution for not having been forthcoming with that information sooner.

“Do you know if you hit your head when you fell?” Bruce was sure to speak to Peter first, addressing his impromptu patient directly. But Tony had little patience for his bedside manner at that time. He was trying to keep their face time minimal due to his desire to keep Peter’s identity a secret. Tony already had Bruce working on samples of Peter’s DNA trying to figure out what kind of radioactive chemicals the boy had been exposed to to give him his powers, he didn’t want there to be any chance of Bruce figuring out who the boy was until he was ready for that to happen. Which certainly was not right then and there.

“No he didn’t. I caught him.” Tony chimed in before Peter had the chance to and the teens face reddened at the idea of having to be caught, let alone by his boss.

“Okay, that’s good.” Bruce was looking down at the medical scanner with a concerned look on his face. “Peter, have you eaten anything today?”

Both men turned and looked at the boy, who’s face flushed a rosy pink. “Uhm, I think so.”
“You think so?” Tony asked sternly and raised an eyebrow, clearly unconvinced.

“Uh, well, I don’t remember…” Peter turned his face away from the side Tony was sitting, seemingly desperate to avoid that disappointed stare.

“Did you eat at school?” Tony pushed. He felt Bruce’s eyes flicker to him before falling back onto Peter for his answer. Shit, it wasn’t Peter he had to worry about giving away information, why did he mention school? Why didn’t he just say lunch? Well it wasn’t like Bruce was about to assume the boy was over eighteen, he still had chubby cheeks and his voice was cracking for Christ’s sake.

“I didn’t have time…” Peter admitted sheepishly.

“What about this morning?” Bruce asked, significantly more gently than Tony.

“Uhhh- oh yeah I did! I had some M&M’s on the bus.” Peter said proudly. Tony wasn’t sure if he was proud that he remembered or he was proud of his choice of nutrition but either way he was sure to let his face convey that he was less than impressed.

Bruce too looked unhappy with the information as he gazed back down at the scanner in his lap.

“Yeah, your blood sugar is at two point seven.”

“Is...is that bad?” Peter asked innocently

“Take a wild stab in the dark there, genius.” Tony snapped. He didn’t mean to come across so harshly but the stress from the situation was starting to hit him now that he knew it was nothing serious. Well, it was serious but it was something easily fixable at least. Something self induced on Peter’s part in fact. Though he knew he as an adult had lapsed in judgement when it came to Peter’s wellbeing and he felt an overwhelming sense of guilt at the same time- but at that point Tony had only two emotions in his repertoire to choose from. He didn’t know how to convey any complex feelings other than anger or impartial and in his upset state it came across as the former.

“That’s almost hospital numbers.”

Bruce continued to state at the scanner, clearly perplexed. “Peter are you diabetic?”
“No, s-sir not to my knowledge.”

“You might want to go see your doctor about this. In someone young and healthy we shouldn’t be seeing numbers this low, even if you’d eaten nothing all day. There might be an issue with insulin production going on because by the looks of things you’re hypoglycemic—”

“Oh, Bruce lets not scare the kid. Can you give him some gulo-tabs to tide him over until I can get some food in him?” Tony could sense that his friend was dangerously close to figuring out about Peter’s startlingly high metabolism.

“Right. Yeah, sure.” Yeah, Bruce was definitely on to him. Great. Just great, that’s exactly what he needed right now. Like he wasn’t busy juggling work, a civil war, a crumbling relationship (though that part was entirely his own doing, even he could admit that) and a Spider-Baby, he now had to worry about Bruce finding out who said Spider-Baby was. Great.

They got Peter sat back up without him losing consciousness again (which was a hassle in and of itself). But they managed and once Bruce was happy that he wasn’t going to expire on their journey home Tony insisted on driving him there, something he had never done before. There was some back and forth on the matter, the boy insisting he was okay to get the bus, before he finally managed to convince him to get in the car. There was another struggle when Tony pulled into McDonald’s on their way there but once again Tony won the battle.

“Yeah, whatever kid pay me back, just eat slow okay? Don’t overwhelm your stomach you’ll just end up bringing it back up.” Tony warned and luckily Peter’s food didn’t make a reappearance because Tony would not be able to handle seeing the teen puke too.

When he pulled up to Peter’s apartment complex, he stopped him from hopping out immediately. “Hold up. Sit down for a minute kid.”

Peter obliged but it was evident from the expression on his face that he was expecting a very different lecture than the one Tony was about to give. “Mr. Stark I am so sorry, I swear it was an accident it won’t happen again- please give me another chance, I didn’t mean to screw up—“

“Kid.”

“I just forgot! I was late for school this morning and I forgot my gym stuff, then Ned forgot to write his history essay and I had to do that for him at lunch but I forgot I’d already promised Mrs.
Hughes I’d help set up for the parents evening—“

“Peter.”

“I’m just really sorry I’m so embarrassed I can’t believe that happened—“

“Peter, breathe for the love of god, kid- breathe .” Tony had to put a stop to the ranting before the child sent himself hysterical. He didn’t want to see him pass out for the second time that day. “I’m not firing you.”

“You’re not?” Peter stopped rambling and blinked slowly, looking at Tony with his big, innocent doe eyes.

“Of course not. Not for something like this. Yeah, you were an idiot and you made a mistake, but so long as it doesn’t happen again it’s fine—“

“I-it won’t. Sir.”

“You best believe it won’t. Now cut the crap, why didn’t you eat today?”

“Like I-I said I forgot—“

“Peter trust me I know what it’s like to forget to eat a meal when you’re busy but I also know damn well that Ned wouldn’t have let you skip lunch.” Tony had yet to meet the other boy but Peter had told him so much about him. He also didn’t seem like the kid who would’ve made Peter do his homework had he forgotten. “So spit it out. Don’t even think about lying to me.”

“Sir, in all honesty, and I really don’t wanna sound rude or disrespectful or ungrateful or anything but I really don’t wanna have this kind of conversation with you.” Peter said quickly, clenching his jaw shut tightly as he finished the last word.

“What kind of conversation?”
Peter sighed and started picking at a loose thread on his jeans so he could avoid eye contact. “It’s awkward, alright?”

“What is?”

“Talking to you about this kind of thing.”

Tony sighed. Peter knew by now how much the man detested talking in circles yet he continued to do so. “Care to elaborate there?”

“It’s a money thing.”

Ah. That made sense but Tony still needed to get to the route of the problem so he remained steely. “Okay.”

“And I knew if I told you you’d offer to help-“

“So it’s a pride thing?”

“Not on my behalf.” Peter threw his head back and sighed exasperatedly, looking like the poster child for a stereotypical teenager. Tony found the sight amusing as Peter was often so reserved and quiet in his presence, seeing him act so juvenile, for lack of a better term, was entertaining to him. “Look. Aunt May gives me money every week to get food for school or groceries to make lunch or whatever, but she also pays for my bus fare to get there and- and it’s a lot. Since they cut her hours ‘cause of how sick she’s been- I know she can’t afford both. Not without starving herself.”

“Right.” Tony felt a slight lump in his throat but he swallowed it down, making sure to seem completely neutral on the outside. He knew if any emotion flickered across his face Peter would stop talking.

The teen cringed anyway. “Ugh, this is really personal man, are you sure you wanna-“

“Peter I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t care. Keep talking.”
The use of the word care saw Peter’s expression relax slightly and he continued, albeit reluctantly. “Ugh okay. Well I tried just not getting the bus to school. B-but since I’m up late at night patrolling I just..couldn’t keep up with getting up an hour early to walk there. I almost fell asleep at school and I was forgetting to do homework and I even forgot to put my mask on when I went out as Spider-Man one time. I was lucky no one saw. And May was catching on and she was getting worried so I switched to the other alternative...”

From what Tony understood the boy was still being given money for both so it didn’t make sense to him why he was choosing one or the other. “If you’re not spending the money Pete, where is it going?”

“I slip it back into her purse when she’s not looking. Not all at once or she’d notice. Just five dollars here and there.”

“Jesus.” He had to hand it to him, the plan was smart. It seemed to be working just not in a way that would benefit anyone in the long run, let alone the super kid with a super fast metabolism to match. The idea that the boy had been going hungry made his own stomach twist. Had he been spending time with the boy when he was uncomfortable? Sure Tony sent him home at a decently early time so he’d always assumed he’d have dinner then so he never bothered to feed him. But if he was going all day without eating, with Peter’s metabolism he must have been starving. They were lucky an incident like that hadn’t occurred earlier. “How long has this been going on?”

“Couple of months. It’s not like I’m starving, I mean yeah today, but that was my own fault. I miss timed it. We’ve got food at home I just usually get to stop by there before Happy picks me up. Today I didn’t, he took me straight to your place.”

Tony sat silently for a moment letting the information wash over him as he tried to think of a solution. “You’re not going to let me help financially are you.”

“No chance in hell. Excuse my french.” Tony smirked. If the innocent teen thought ‘hell’ was a curse word him and Steve were going to get on just fine. Then again he wasn’t talking to Steve in that moment...Peter interrupted the sad thought. “The money you pay me for my internship is more than enough.”

That comment made Tony snap. The amount of times he had tried to increase the boy’s wage and he’d always turned him down, it became an embarrassing conversation. Even Tony, who often had little regard for social standards especially when money was involved, felt awkward bringing the topic up because the teen and his aunt would damn right refuse. He was paying the teen in peanuts (by his standards), he was Tony Stark for fuck sake; his intern should be earning hundreds of
thousands a year, especially one as amazingly valuable as Peter, both in a technical work sense and in a familial sense. ‘More than enough my ass’.

“Clearly it’s not Peter if you can’t even afford to eat-“

“It’s helping cover some of the medical bills. That’s more important.” Peter cut him off indignantly. He was obviously referencing May’s illness in an attempt to get Tony to drop the line of questioning.

Sensing they were getting nowhere Tony sat silently again. He stayed silent mulling his thoughts over until Peter started squirming uncomfortably, unsure as to whether or not Tony was hinting he should get out of the car. But looking back on it Peter was probably also squirming because of the large drink he’d gotten with his meal. “Okay. You know what, kid?”

“What..?” Peter gnawed his lip apprehensively.

“You’re gonna start eating dinner with me.”

That was clearly the last solution Peter had been expecting. “What?”

“I’m serious. If I can’t trust you to tell me these kinds of things, I’m gonna have to make sure of it myself. If Happy picks you up straight from school we’ll eat together before we go to the lab. It’ll do me good too, I tend to skip meals when I’m working anyway.” It was the only option Tony could think of that would cover all bases without upsetting anyone and would, more importantly, make sure Peter’s stomach didn’t start eating itself in the middle of their labtime.

“Sir, as much as I appreciate the offer I really don’t wanna impose-“

“It’s more imposing when you pass out on my floor. Besides it’s this or I send fifty grand over to your aunt right now with a note that says ‘grocery money since your nephew doesn’t understand how to budget’-”

“Alright. Okay. Thank you, Mr. Stark. I didn’t realise you-“ Peter chuckled before he cut himself off.
“Didn’t realise what?”

“That you were so...emotionally invested.” Before Tony got a chance to respond or even really react to that comment, the pair saw May appear at the front of Peter's building, looking confused as to why he was home so early. And why the two had been sitting in the car outside for ten minutes. “Anyways, thanks again for the food and the ride. And sorry again I promise I won’t ever pass out ever again- I’ll see you later Mr. Stark!”

“See ya, kid.” Tony watched as Peter bounded up the steps towards his aunt and the two Parker’s waved to him before they headed safely inside. He looked down at the now empty seat beside him and saw four dollars and a pile of coins. Enough to cover the fast food Tony just bought him. Tony sighed angrily and muttered under his breath. “That little shit.”

It wasn’t until a week or so later, when he finally had to say something regarding the boys asking issue. He caught Peter trying and failing to hide a nose bleed by holding his sleeve to his face for half an hour as the garment filled with blood and Tony had enough. As it so happened, he did so only a few days before the altercation in Germany.

“Peter this is ridiculous. This has got to stop.” Tony snapped after the boy came out of the bathroom.

“I know, I know I’m sorry Mr. Stark. I didn’t mean to make a mess-”

“I mean you not telling me when you need something. First you pass out. Now you’re sitting there bleeding out for thirty minutes until I have to call you out on it instead of actually saying anything. You won’t ask for equipment or water- And don’t even get me started on your refusal to ask for a bathroom break.” Another memory of the first time he’d witnessed Peter’s now signature potty dance sprung to current Tony’s mind- but that was a memory for another time. Back then he hadn’t quite caught the knack for how to approach these kinds of things with Peter. He didn’t have a full understanding of the boys temperament or how complex Peter’s brain was when it came to his anxiety issues. Looking back on it the man often cringed at how little empathy he often showed towards him in the early days. Had he known how much Peter would take his blunt words to heart he would never have been so harsh. At least he knew how to talk to his son now. “Why does everything have to be a soap opera level of drama with you? Why wouldn’t you just tell me?”

Peter’s face turned redder than his bloody sleeve and for a second Tony thought he was going to cry. “I-I didn’t wanna bother you sir..”

“You would never bother me by telling me you need something, good god kid your fucking nose is
bleeding that’s not something that can be helped. You’re worrying me. If you’re not taking care of yourself, how can I trust you with all this responsibility?” Tony waited for a reply but the shaken boy didn’t respond. “Peter answer me.”

“I-I don’t know Sir.”

“I’m not chastising you. And I’m not firing you or stopping you from being Spider-Man, this isn’t a threat Peter. I’m concerned.” It didn’t take a genius to figure out that Peter was jumping to conclusions in his own little mind. Every time Tony so much as changed his tone of voice with him Peter instantly fell back on his fears of being fired, no matter how much Tony told him he was stuck with him. “We’ve been working together how long now?”

“One hundred and fifty four days.” Peter answered automatically.

“So, you’ve been counting. Cute.” Tony smirked slyly and Peter blushed. “Don’t you think that’s long enough for you to get comfortable around me?”

“I know…”

The boy’s eyes fell ashamedly towards his feet and Tony felt a stab of guilt in his chest for making him feel bad about something that wasn’t technically his fault. He softened his voice and manually tilted Peter’s chin so he’d meet his eye again, both actions coming abnormally naturally to him. It was almost affectionate and the sudden display of tactile physical contact certainly got Peter’s attention. “I know I’m not very approachable at times. I’m sorry if I’ve done anything to make you scared to ask for things-

“No Mr. Stark it’s not you. It’s just me I’ve always been like this.” Peter said sadly and Tony just could not take another second of those big brown eyes looking so downtrodden. It physically pained him, even back then, Peter’s puppy dog eyes were killer. “I just..I don’t know how to ask for stuff without it coming across as rude.”

“Well it stops today, you understand? This can’t happen in the lab or when you’re out in the field, it’s too dangerous. I’ll make more of an effort to check up on you if that makes it easier. But if you need a tool, a break, help or just someone to talk to please for the love of god come to me before something like this happens again.” Peter nodded in agreement through his entire speech. “You’re putting me on edge pal I’m constantly waiting for another emergency to crop up because you’re being stubborn.”
“I’m sorry.”

“Me too. Neither of us can work with all this stress going on and I know since things have been going wrong upstairs I’ve been tougher on you than usual.” Ah yes, the midst of the Avengers Civil War; even in hindsight Tony was glad he’d sheltered Peter from the worst of it. “But last week especially made me realise you’re human. Even if you’re a superhuman you’re still a kid I can’t expect you to work the way I do—”

“But I can usually I swear! It’s just...been a lot lately I guess.” Little did Tony know just how much stress Peter was under. May’s health was starting to rapidly decline but he wouldn’t come to realise that for another few months, when Peter had to move in with him.

“I know. But I’m the adult, you’re just a kid. I need to be more mindful of that. Just let me help. Just tell me.”

“I try to sir, really I do. It’s just as frustrating for me when the words won’t come out.” Peter wrapped his arms around himself, looking to self soothe and Tony had the urge to hug him. But that would be inappropriate. And no doubt awkward. He wasn’t exactly a hugger. So, he bit that urge down.

“So you don’t have to say anything. Just say time out. I’ll drop whatever we’re doing and you can step away or we can talk, whatever you need. We’ll work on this together.” Tony said gently, though he was starting to become uncomfortable himself with how emotiv the conversation had become. “I’m not just your mentor anymore kid. I care.”

Peter nodded hesitantly. “O-okay Mr. Stark...thank you.”

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The memories that suddenly cropped up in his mind left Tony slightly misty eyed and he hadn’t realised in the midst of his reminiscing he’d been looking at his son in awe. His wonderful, intelligent, funny, sensitive son who was too good for this world- and far too good for Tony to call his own. His son who...had stuffed an entire Oreo in his mouth in an attempt to be defiant when Steve had agreed he could have one bite, which he was now struggling to chew and swallow without spitting half of the biscuit out. Really? A kid who could have gotten into MIT at fourteen was about to choke himself on a cookie? Yep, that was his Peter.
After Steve had finished smacking the boy on the back to clear his airway, Peter noticed Tony looking bleary eyed at him.

“Why’re you starin’ at me like that?” The pint sized protege genius tilted his head with crumbs falling out of the corner of his mouth as he spoke.

Tony didn’t even reprimand him on the grossness of talking with his mouthful, he was feeling too sentimental. “Nothing bubs. You enjoy that cookie. You’ve definitely earned it.”

Peter shrugged and gave his Dad an odd look before he turned back to his glass of milk. “Alright, weirdo.”

Not long after that the alarm rang, alerting them to the call they’d been waiting for coming in. It had been a while since they’d all worked as a team and the familiar rush of bodies, readying themselves, suiting up and grabbing weapons and reading out information as it popped up on monitors was oddly nostalgic. It reminded Tony of the good old days before everything got so convoluted. Then it struck him that he was living that life again, only better. Everything had become simple again- well as simple as it could be given he was now raising a teenager. He’d reconciled with Pepper and Cap, the team was back united all under one roof and he had Peter. He couldn’t help but put a lot of that down to the kids grounding influence on him. Had Peter never been dropped into his lap, who knows where he might’ve ended up. Or where he might have ended up had Peter not made a full recovery after his accident...nope. Not thinking about that, not right now. He couldn’t afford to thin about that when he was already nervous as hell. Christ what had him so emotional today? Snap out of it Tony you’ve got a job to do.

“Clint, you got the map out of the route?”

“Yep.”

“Bruce, you’re controlling comms today, Nat’s on recon with Steve-” Tony continued, along with Steve, giving out orders to each member around the room of tasks to be done in preparation before they left, all seemingly very important and within small time constraints. Everyone except Peter had an important role to play in that moment before the mission, he was basically just tasked with showing up.

“What do I need to do?” The teen asked, having already slipped into his suit.
“You need to go pee while you have the chance.” Tony stopped what he was doing briefly to look up at Peter with a serious expression and pointed towards the bathroom.

“How’s that going to help the mission exactly?” Peter pouted, putting his hands on his hips.

“Think of it as a risk assessment.” Tony shrugged before going back to pinpointing all the access points and exit routes they’d need to be mindful of and sending the info along to his teammates wirelessly. He wasn’t going to make a big deal out of it as he wanted to save Peter some embarrassment for once, but Nat wasn’t about to let an opportunity to tease him slip by so easily. Not after the coffee incident.

“Yeah, and it’ll save us time from having to stop on the way there to find somewhere for you to tinkle because of your baby bladder.” The woman said in a sing song voice as she ruffled the boy’s hair, making it stand up in all directions.

“Shut up, Tasha!” Peter stomped his foot, his face going bright red but he stormed into the bathroom before anyone else was given the chance to comment on his bladder capacity. It was obvious he wanted to bite back but he was too flustered to think of a worthy response.

“You shouldn’t tease him, especially about that.” Steve chided but Nat ignored him and picked on him as soon as he reappeared.

“Feel better pipsqueak?”

“Bite me, Romanov.” Peter hissed.

“Aww, we not using first names anymore? I’m so hurt Parker.”

“I just realised that your name backwards is literally AH SATAN - so excuse me for not wanting to anger the lord.” Peter said coolly, looking very proud of himself. He’d obviously had that one saved for a while and was happy he finally got to use it.

“Be careful Pete, if you say it backwards three times she’ll haunt you forever, how do you think we got stuck with her in the first place?” Bruce chimed in, pecking Nat on the cheek as he strolled past.
They spent the next fifteen or so minutes going over the plan as they travelled to the stake out area; though Peter had taken out the Vulture and his band of weaponologists, he hadn’t been the only one in the illegal alien weapon trade and there was a lot of high strength foreign materials still in circulation. They’d been tipped off about a major handover taking place and they were ready to intercept; six truck loads of weapons as well as a few supers. Piece of cake.

“Nat, you’re paired off with Rohdey because he’s not going to be able to hold off all four trucks without some back up but you’re mainly there to distract them whilst he places the bugs. Bruce, you good to hang back until they get to the bridge? We wanna minimise collateral here. So that leaves Hawk and Spidey up on the rooftops for aerial intel- Pete you’re on Cap’s comms line this time, he’s on ground duty. But the rule stands, I want you to check in with me every so often, Capiche?” Part of Peter’s probation period had been him agreeing to Tony’s terms and conditions; he wasn’t allowed to go anywhere alone, he had to report back to Tony at regular intervals and he was never, under any circumstances to go against orders unless he wanted to be pulled immediately. Tony was more than nervous, despite their practice runs and no one dared to point out how over the top he was being- even Thor knew better than to comment.

“Capeach.” Peter lisped slightly as he struggled with the pronunciation and Tony had to stop himself from pointing it out. The boy could speak Spanish near fluently but he sometimes struggled with the most simplest of words and Tony found it so endearing.

“And what aren’t we going to do today Peter?” Steve smiled, making eye contact with Tony and the two shared a look.

“Uhhh go against orders?” Peter said unsurely, that had been established right? He hadn’t spent weeks doing trust exercises and extra training to have that questioned right at the last minute.

“And?” Tony pressed on.

“Uhm..go out without checking my suit?”

“And?” The two heads of household said in unison with differing levels of sarcasm.

“And...and uhm…”

“You’re not going to introduce yourself to anyone using your real name. ”
“Ohhh- Oh Right, yeah!” Peter said at the revelation- Wait he didn’t plan on doing that anyway! He’d gotten better! His face flushed red at the snickers around the car, it seemed he’d become rather infamous for doing that. “I- uh- I won’t do that..”

Grinning to himself Steve continued reading out the game plan. “Scott’s said hell infiltrate carrier three since we won’t be able to get someone on the inside for route thirty two-“

“Wait Scott’s gonna be down there?” Peter interrupted but before Steve could answer him Tony interjected. 

“Yes and you’re not to talk to him. You won’t see him anyway, he’s got a job to do.” The man said through gritted teeth.

Peter rolled his eyes. Of course Tony would immediately get defensive as soon as Peter even mentioned Scott. “Jeez I was just asking, no need to get jealous.”

“Jealous? ” Tony said with ferocity and Steve was quick to continue talking before a fight ensued.

“Anyway .” The blond said loudly clapping his hands. “Pete don’t concern yourself with what anyone else is doing. Focus on yourself and your task, even if you see someone get into trouble.”

“I’ll try..” Peter said awkwardly. He knew he couldn’t promise that, it was instinctual; but he also knew he had to show Tony that he could fight his instincts and follow orders when he had to.

“Everyone has someone watching their six, Sport.” Steve smiled as he knew what was running through the teenagers mind. “Chances are if you’ve spotted someone in trouble their partner already has.”

“But what if their partner is in trouble too?”

“That’s why we have the chain.” Clint muttered with a laugh under his breath as he was looking down messing with one of the straps on his wrist armour; he failed to notice until he looked up the looks the other adults were giving him, silently saying ‘Clint, shut up.’ But unfortunately it was too
late.

“What do you mean? What chain?”

“Uhh, it’s nothing pal.” Steve said quickly though he was looking desperately at Tony. The bearded man offered little support however, as Steve had dug this hole himself. It had been the blond who insisted on not telling Peter about one of their most fundamental tactical maneuvers as he through the boy would end up disrupting it. “It just- it’s just how everyone has one another’s back.”

“But you just said only to pay attention to your partners?”

“Uh, well yes but-“

“So everyone else is allowed to do that but me?”

“I- no! Well not like that-“

“So I’m not trusted not to mess things up by jumping in where it’s not necessary? Wow. Thanks.” He wasn’t stupid it was pretty clear what Steve was hinting at; there was a chain that everyone was included in, each person watching the next persons back which made it obvious that Peter was at the bottom- meaning everyone was watching him to make sure he didn’t get hurt. Rude.

“Peter it’s not-“

“It’s cool. I get it. I’ll stay in my lane unless I’m told otherwise.” Peter sighed flippantly. It was clear that no one thought he was capable of either looking after himself or taking care of others without messing up the mission and he knew there was no point getting mad mad it. If that’s what they thought of him he’d prove them wrong instead of ranting and yelling in true teenager (or Tony Stark) fashion. It would be the first step in proving himself to be more mature than everyone gave him credit for.

They made it there in one piece, somehow without murdering each other in the process. Tensions were high in the armoured car mostly because Tony was having one of the worst anxiety attacks of his life and was trying his best to keep that private. It was Peter’s first time back in the field and he
He thought he was. Hell he had been preparing enough for it; all the field tests and extra training, the mandatory teams counselling he’d forced Peter to go to even though the boy and therapist agreed that it wasn’t truly necessary in his case- he should have been ready. The time he and Steve had spent meticulously planning their next mission to a T to try and alleviate Tony’s anxiety had amounted to nothing because he was still fighting the urge to grab his son and fly him home. But he didn’t. Somehow he managed to refrain from doing so by focusing on his breathing and remembering all the new upgrades he’d added to Peter’s suit which included but wasn’t limited to a new system which meant he could take control over the suit at any given time and pull Peter the second he thought it was necessary.

He also didn’t like the fact that Peter wasn’t in his group. He trusted Steve with his life, of course he did, but some part of him very deep down didn’t trust anyone with his son, not even the big himself, and that little part of him was suddenly taking centre stage in his brain and was making it very difficult to listen to reason. Maybe they could put it off until next time, where Peter could be in his group.

No, May was right, they needed to do this. For the both of them. Better to rip the band-aid off sooner rather than later and the kid (despite being slightly miffed about the whole ‘chain’ thing) was clearly excited to be back out, he couldn’t take that away from him last minute.

‘Uh you could, you totally could. Look I’ll do it right now- HAPPY TAKE HIS ASS HOME!’ An intrusive thought decided to chime in right as they pulled up to get out of the car. Though Tony managed to ignore it but gritting his teeth impossibly hard he couldn’t stop himself from grabbing Peter’s wrist as he went to hop out. The teen looked up at him, half way through pulling on his mask, questioningly.

Tony just stared back at him for a second before he realised he had to say something before the boy thought he’d gone completely insane. “Be careful.”

Peter grinned at him before pulling his mask the rest of the way down. “Careful is my middle name.”

“God you are so lame Parker.” Clint groaned dramatically from outside the car.

“Shut up, Clint.” Tony and Peter said at the same time as they hopped out the vehicle and awaited further instructions.
Finally they were set up, everyone in their respective spots waiting for the onslaught of attacks from the terrorist weapon dealers after their initial raid from Nat’s team; she was set to be leading an initial attack, acting as a distraction and lulling the bandits into a false sense of security while Pietro, Rhodey and Scott went about setting up devices to take down and over power the security systems in their trucks; this meant they’d be able to reroute the trucks without notifying the drivers that they were being tampered with and if there were any remote signals coming from any secret bases that S.H.I.E.L.D was unaware of, they’d be able to trace them.

This would also leave them open for the second wave, Tony’s cohort, to take hold of their vans and disperse the criminals for Steve’s group to then pick them off individually. As simple as it sounded, based off of the intel they had about how advanced the groups tech was, it was no easy feet.

Steve had been kind enough to put Peter in a spot where Tony would likely be able to see him up until his que and the teen had been instructed to stay there; it was his job to give the people on the ground visuals about where the next assailant was coming from, occasionally dipping down and taking people out where necessary (i.e. when he was asked or when he could see people becoming overwhelmed not just whenever he got bored or wanted a slice of the action, which Tony and Steve had both reiterated countless times before they left).

It didn’t take long for the action to kickstart. Nat was immediately greeted by her chosen target and her group soon had the assailants off and running in all directions; Tony managed to complete his part, his group helping remove the trucks from the area they’d corners off. He was distracted at one point when one of the trucks was hijacked and some of the faction leaked past the boundary line but that was dealt with pretty quickly. No, what concerned Tony was when he circled back around he couldn’t see Peter anywhere.

It’s okay don’t panic, maybe he just had to be moved somewhere safer- there was that one guy blowing up buildings after all. Best call it in just to make sure. “Anyone got visuals on the kid?”

No one replied, which essentially meant no, so he switched back to manually searching, he was about to check using JARVIS but he was side swiped by a blast from a proton cannon and propelled through yet another building. After getting up and taking care of the asshole who had interrupted him he switched over to Steve’s comm line. He realised that Steve’s group had already joined in on the attack so where the hell was Peter? He was meant to be on the ground with them by now. “Has anyone got eyes on Spidey?”

Clint came back straight away. “Yep I see him. On top of the bank, upper east side.”
“Thanks Hawk.” Tony flew over there immediately and breathed a sigh of relief once he laid eyes on his son. He was still in one piece thank god- but he was shifting around, oddly animated. He kept bouncing foot to foot and changing his stance, putting weight on one foot then the other alternatively. ‘Oh for Christ's sake, tell me he doesn’t have to pee now?’

“Jar put me through to Karen.” JARVIS did so immediately and Tony was about to question the boy when he heard something odd. Peter was talking. No, wait, no he wasn’t he was-

“BECAUSE- When the sun shines, we shine together
Told you I'll be here forever
Said I'll always be your friend
Took an oath that I’m a stick it out 'til the end ~”

“Peter.”

“Now it’s raining more than- AHH!” Tony watched the boy nearly jump out of his skin, just catching himself from falling backwards. “M-Mr Stark!”

“Boy what the hell are you doing?” Tony tried his best to keep the amusement out of his voice and sound more angry but come on now because what the fuck Peter .

“Waiting for my cue, sir?” There had been a change of plans as Steve had told Peter not to go in yet; he had to be pushed back while Scott was apparently disarming some kind of intricate self destruct system inside each armoured van. Of course Tony hadn’t known this as he wasn’t on their comms line so he’d assumed Peter had gone AWOL.

“I meant the singing . What are you playing at?” Tony clarified, irritation seeping into his voice.

“I-It helps me focus! I’ve always done this- it helps block out all the background noise!” Peter said defensively but his voice had a high pitched lilt to it that showed how embarrassed he truly was having been caught.

“Kid you need to hear the background noise. Background noises help you stay alive.” Was the boy stupid? If he was distracting himself it would make him an easier target. On his first day back in the field he was putting himself in danger?! Cool it Tony, you’ve managed to avoid a break down
thus far, just keep your head.

“No not like that- it’s- ugh you wouldn’t get it. It’s ‘cause of my hearing- I’ll explain later.”

“Damn right you will.” Tony said seriously, but his tone changed. He just couldn’t bite his tongue over the boys choice in song. “Rhianna? Really?”

“It-It has a good beat I- Shouldn’t you be doing something instead of standing there criticising my *impeccable* music taste? Like oh I don’t know- fighting the bad guys?!” Peter huffed angrily and crossed his arms over his chest.

“If you’re gonna be listening to anything it should be something to pump you up, get you ready not something to sing and dance to.” Tony deadpanned.

“Fine. Karen play Live Wire by Mötley Crüe.” Peter said through gritted teeth.

Tony grinned, now that was more his style. He’d trained the kid well. “Much better.”

“Queens!” Steve yelled through the mic, clearly not for the first time. This time it was loud enough for Tony to hear despite not being on Cap’s line anymore, it had echoed through Peter’s headset into his mic so it must’ve been deafening for him.

“Oh crap- coming! You happy?! You made me miss my cue! Now I look stupid!” Peter yelled as he rushed back over to the edge of the building, back to his marker where he was supposed to be.

“Oh now you look stupid? Not when you were dancing around like an idiot?” Tony chuckled.

Peter grunted in frustration. “See you later Mr Sta- WOAH!”

The kid was cut off by a large metal hand clapping onto his shoulder and dragging him over the edge. Tony flew to peer down, only to see some guy with what seemed to be a retractable mechanical arm slinging Peter around like a ragdoll. Well. That wasn’t part of the plan. He was a millisecond away from flying down there to resolve the issue that he had inadvertently caused (maybe he shouldn’t have distracted the kid, ‘my bad’) but as he braced himself Peter gained the
upper hand- wrapping the chain from the man’s arm around the guys throat and flinging him onto the ground, repeatedly pummelling his face.

“You good kid?” Tony called down in a totally neutral tone.

“Phew- uh huh!” Peter looked up, still kneeling on the unconscious man’s chest and gave Tony a thumbs up.

“I told you you needed better music.” Tony smirked before flying off again. For some reason despite seeing Peter get dragged off of the side of a building he felt much better. Seeing the kid back in his element had a way of calming his nerves, even if that meant seeing the kid get thrown into the side of a building- which he immediately stuck to, much to the displeasure of the man he was fighting.

“Come down here and fight like a man!”

“I don’t suppose I could convince you to come up here and fight like a spider?” Peter laughed shakily from his perch above the man, who by the way was brandishing a massive spear. “No? Well okay then if you insist!”

The boy then launched himself off of the wall, kicking the man in the face as he landed, tumbling gracefully into a roll before he sprang up spryly. Tony had to admit, the kid’s hero banter had improved, if not a little cheesy. Still, Tony couldn’t stand by and watch Peter all day he had his own work cut out for him; he had to jump back in when Clint got himself pinned between two armoured vehicles and he ended up losing sight of the boy again.

The fight went on for a couple hours but eventually all the bad guys were corralled and safely taken care of as were their weapons, all seized and accounted for. They’d also managed to avoid any casualties or major injuries and minimise the amount of property damage (at least on their end, Hulk had behaved himself this time). The male Avengers met at a designated rendezvous point on a rooftop safely away from the city skyline so they were away from the public eye; as they waited for their two remaining members. Nat was held up but Tony noticed as Steve jogged up to them that there was a distinct lack of red and blue clad boy accompanying him.

“Where’s Pete?” Steve asked Tony as soon as he was within earshot, making the genius’ heart jump into his mouth again. Man he was not cut out for this.
“He’s not with you?” Peter was meant to meet up with Steve and come back with him- if Steve didn’t know where he was- oh for God’s sake not again-

“Yoo-hoo! Up here!” The teen called out from the top of a neighbouring building, about two stories up from the rest of the team just as Tony was about to set into a full blown panic. He was hanging precariously, suspended from seemingly nothing but the tips of his toes and one hand as he crouched on a particularly unstable piece of concrete. He waved wildly to his team mates below, still holding part of the first man’s mechanical arm in his hand (what? he’s going to prison anyway it’s not like he needed it- and Peter wanted to study it! he’d won it fair and square when that guy had tried to strangle him).

“Peter come down from there.” Tony said agitatedly but Peter was too hyped up on adrenaline.

“It’s over Anakin! I have the high ground!” Wow, that was a terrible Alec Guinness impression. EvenE Tony was offended by it.

“Boy get your butt down here before I whoop it.” Tony growled and begrudgingly Peter dropped from his perch on the ledge above them, flipping as he did so. As soon as his feet touched the ground Tony instinctively reached out and cupped the back of the boy’s head, forcing Peter to look at him (even though he couldn’t see his eyes behind the mask). “You alright?”

It wasn’t an unreasonable question, even though Peter had made a show of flipping midair and sticking an Olympic level gymnast landing, Tony had still seen him take a fair few hard hits out there; he also knew how well Peter could perform with serious injuries thanks to adrenaline, so given the boy’s track record for continuing fights long after he was delivered near fatal injuries, he wasn’t inclined to believe that he’d made it out completely unscathed, not based on appearance alone.

“Yeah I’m- I’m fine!” Peter started off confidently but it was as though he realised part way through that statement that it wasn’t quite true and Tony instantly picked up on his hesitation.

“Peter.” Tony said lowly.

“Uh, I think my nose is broken.” Peter said nasally.

“Karen, scan him.” Tony said quickly, removing the boy’s mask. He tilted the boy’s head back and forth and up and down looking at Peter’s nose. Sure enough what was usually a sloped button nose
now had a large bump and was pushed to one side, as well as congealed blood being smeared over his face. He didn’t need the AI to confirm what his eyes could tell him but it was better safe than sorry.

“Peter has a fractured nasal bone with deviation of the cartilage of his septum.” Karen said in a sing song voice making Peter cringe.

Tony clicked his tongue and shook his head slightly but he looked marginally less concerned. “Yeah, we’ll have Bruce take a look at that as soon as we get back.”

Peter’s eyes widened slightly. “But won’t it set by then??”

“Probably but he can always just-“

Peter pulled away from him and protectively cupped his hands over his face as though Tony was threatening to have the minor operation done there and then. “No I’m not having him rebreak my nose- that’ll hurt!”

“Let me have a look youngling.” Thor strode up to the pair and held the boy’s face in his large hand similarly to how Tony had, turning it every which way for a second before nodding himself. “Ah, yes it does look a little bit crooked. Well no matter-“

Before anyone had a chance to react Thor brought up his other large hand and swiftly pinched Peter’s sore nose in between his forefinger and his thumb. With a loud crunching sound, followed by a yelp and a stream of blood pouring down the boy’s chin he stepped back to admire his handiwork. “There! All better!”

“Jesus- Thor you fucking idiot!” Tony pushed the blond back and held Peter’s upper arms, trying to encourage the boy to stand upright from where he had hunched over clutching his face. “Lemme see, lemme see.”

“What? It’s straight now isn’t it?” The god chuckled and shrugged though Clint came up behind him and punched him hard in the arm. “Ow! Why birdman?!“

“Some warning would have been nice, dude, ow.” Peter said teary eyed, though he was trying to pull Tony’s still gloved hands away from him so he could shake himself off.
“That and you could have just made it worse.” Tony said angrily. “Karen?”

“That doesn’t mean you-“

“It’s okay, Dad.” Peter clapped a hand on a Tony’s shoulder before launching himself at Thor to
play fight with him, deliberately scuffing up the blond’s precious hair. Apparently he’d recovered
quickly. “Just give me a count down or something next time man!”

“If I had would you have let me do it, little one?” Thor said having grabbed Peter by one of his
ankles and dangled him upside down.

“Touché.” Peter said as he used his core strength to flip himself upright, wrapping one of his legs
around Thor’s neck going to pull him backwards onto the floor but the god just laughed and held
Peter over his head.

“Put him down before you break something else.” Tony barked and rubbed his temples stressedly.
God what was taking Nat so long? He wanted to get out of here already. He didn’t want to admit it but seeing Peter’s blood has set off that familiar fluttery, short of breath feeling in his chest and he really didn’t want to have a panic attack there of all places. He considered putting his mask back on and calling Pepper to help talk him down from it but he was determined to deal with it himself, which would have been much easier to do if THOR WOULD STOP FIGHTING WITH THE KID. “BOYS!”

The pair stopped mid pose and dropped their hands behind their backs sheepishly. Fuck, Peter had been right about that stupid family dynamic, since when had ‘boys’ become a thing? Why did he suddenly view Thor like another one of his responsibilities- well okay, he always had been but not in a familial sense, at least not to Tony’s knowledge. He refused to adopt the big blond oaf too no matter how much of a child he acted- he was millennia older than him, though maybe not mentally... “Can you two stop for five minutes?”

“Sorry.” The pair said in tandem, though they immediately scampered off to do something else, clearly needing the stimulation. Who needs coffee when you have adrenaline, huh?
It was another hour before the other members of the team who had been straggling behind finally reappeared, explaining their relative hold ups due to unforeseen issues during the fight. Steve took the opportunity to debrief them while they waited at the rendezvous point for Happy to arrive and in that time Peter began shifting around.

“Are you listening to Rihanna again?” Tony asked with a smirk knowing full well what the problem really was. He couldn’t say he blamed the kid they had been out there for hours after all.

“No.” Peter hissed trying to persuade his dad to keep his voice down, wanting to not draw attention to both his music tastes and his odd movements. “I’m just achey.”

“You sure there’s not somewhere you need to be, bubs?” Tony smirked as did Nat. He felt a bit mean teasing him considering the teen wouldn’t openly admit he had to go in front after the comments about his bladder capacity before they left. But then again it was entertaining and Peter was awfully cute when he got all hot and bothered- he also felt justified in pissing him off a little considering how worried the boy made him, giving him several mini heart attacks in one afternoon.

“No.” The kid snapped as they clambered into the car. Peter was in the middle row, between Tony and Bruce. He was already rhythmically bouncing his legs before Happy even put the car in drive.

“Oh so you won’t mind if I ask Happy to stop off at Burger King on the way? I’m kinda peckish, aren’t you Nat?” Tony hummed, inviting Nat to join in the torture.

“Oh I could eat. I’m sure Thor could too. Hey Tho-“

“I don’t care, do you want.” Peter huffed and crossed his arms angrily. The teen had missed his nap that day and he was always irritable or teary when he had a full bladder so Tony decided to stop teasing him as it could go one of two ways. He hadn’t been joking when he said he was hungry though, and Thor had jumped on the chance to get fast food already bellowing his order throughout the car. Tony figured when they stopped Peter could jump out and go pee but that’s not what happened.

Peter had just pulled on a hoodie and a pair of sweatpants over his suit when they pulled in and Tony gestured for him to get out, suggesting through body language that he’d get out with him but the teen turned his head away. Tony elbowed him and gestured again but Peter just shrugged and looked back out the window on Bruce’s side of the car.
“Come on kid.” Peter shook his head. “I’ll come with you—“

“I don’t need to go.” Peter snapped.

“Oh come on, Pete we were just kidding—“

“I said I don’t. Need to.” Peter said through gritted teeth and gave him the filthiest look he could muster.

Sensing that the boy wasn’t about to give in Tony opted to have Happy go through the drive through, so that they could home and get the stubborn child to a bathroom quicker; though he did feel increasingly guilty about teasing him in the first place, it wasn’t a long drive so he wasn’t too concerned. Peter spent the remainder of the journey squirming and twisting in his seat, crossing his ankles and pulling the seat belt away from his abdomen which was visibly distended, much to Tony’s horror; he could see the slight bump of his bladder everytime the boy’s sweater rode up when he moved a certain way. That could not be good for his kidneys but he knew he couldn’t call the boy out on it unless he wanted to deal with a tantrum, even if it was already obvious to all the adults he needed to go.

The second they pulled up outside the tower Peter was out of the car, ripping his sweatpants off and putting his mask back on quickly before running full pelt towards the tower. He started scaling the side of the building- almost getting himself seen by members of staff. Thor ran out after him, using mjolnir to fly them both skyward and ultimately get Peter to a familiar bathroom quicker, which Tony had been about to do himself.

“What was that about?” Steve and Clint look bewildered but Bruce gave Tony and Nat the filthiest look he could muster and for a scary moment the pair were worried he was about to go green on them.

“We’ll apologise—“

“You bet your asses you will- what is wrong with you two?!”

“What did they do?” Clint asked but Bruce ignored him.
By the time everyone got themselves upstairs and changed, Peter re-emerged from his room back into normal clothes and looking decidedly grumpy, but who could blame him. Tony patted the spot beside him on the couch and the kid sat down next to him, though he didn’t look particularly thrilled about it. “Hey there.”

“Hi.” Peter mumbled, folding his arms over his chest.

Tony sighed slightly through his nose and threw his arm behind Peter, leaning it against the back of the couch as opposed to around his shoulders. “You okay?”

“Yes.” Peter said shortly.

“You mad at me?”

“Yes.” He said in the same tone, though he did lean closer to Tony as he said it, so that was a good sign.

“Fair enough.” Tony shrugged, ignoring the look Bruce was giving him from across the room that essentially said ‘then say, sorry you asshole’. He was getting around to it, jeesh doc, give him a second. You should know by now that apologies don’t come easy to him. Tony leant his head against Peter’s briefly before cringing when his damp curls tickled his face. “Why are you wet?”

“I took a shower?” Peter said because it was a dumb question. “Obviously.”

“Oh.” Tony said quietly under his breath, content to leave the conversation there as his mind had reached the wrong conclusion.

“Not because of that. I made it no thanks to you.” Peter sat up slightly to glare at the man. “I was covered in nose blood.”

“As opposed to regular blood?” Nat chuckled but Peter stared at her angrily too. “I’m sorry chipmunk.”
“Yeah yeah.” Peter said grumpily as he stood up from the couch, going to retrieve the rest of his Oreos.

“No, really I am.” Nat tried again but the teenagers face didn’t budge. As earnest as she was being Nat just had one of those voices that always sounded sarcastic. “How can I prove it?”

“Be my slave for twenty days.” Peter said dryly.

“How about a hug?”

Peter raised his eyebrows for a moment, seemingly shocked at the offer but his face fell back into a neutral one as he tried to play the part of annoyed aloof teenager. “No.”

“No?” Nat asked incredulously with a laugh. “When have you ever said no to a hug?”

“Just now.” Peter said coolly but there was an ever so slight smile present on his face and Nat certainly didn’t miss it.

“Oh really now?” She hummed amusedly, before launching herself at him, almost tackling him back onto the couch, hugging around both of his arms pinning them to his sides.

“What are you doing?” Peter laughed and tried to squirm out of her grip, but she’d locked into him tight; taking full advantage of both the height difference and the fact that the boy’s shock and laughter had weakened him.

“Hugging you what does it look like?” She shrugged.

“Get off me!” Peter laughed and continued trying to duck out from under her arms. “I didn’t consent to this!”

But she didn’t budge. “Not until I’m forgiven.”

“Na-at! That tickles quit it!” Peter giggling wildly when in the process of trying to move away
from her Nat’s hand had brushed over his ribs.

“Then say it!”

“Fine- Fine! I forgive you!”

“Good.” She smirked and instantly let go of him, smacking him hard on the shoulder as she walked away before he could take back his exclamation.

Peter sighed, still giggling as he brushed himself off before throwing himself back down on the couch, ducking back under Tony’s arm.

“Does that mean I’m forgiven as well?” Tony asked, considering he was now getting a half hug too.

“Nope.” Peter popped the P.

“How is that fair?” Tony chuckled.

“’Cause you hug me all the time. I need something substantial to prove your penance.”

“Oh my god- like what?” Tony rolled his eyes and sat back, waiting for some ridiculous command that he’d have to abide to.

“Hmmmm…” Peter hummed obnoxiously, making a show of scratching his chin as though he was deep in thought.

“You’re gonna milk this aren’t you?”

“Yup. You should’ve known better to make fun of me when I had to go to the bathroom. I have a kidney condition you know.” Peter said seriously but his face was smug and Tony deeply regretted ever teaching the kid to be a smart ass. Oh if only he’d remained that innocent boy who didn’t understand sarcasm. “You know this guy I’ve been living with for like a year now, well he’s more
like a father to me really- he’s this really big business guy and I’ve been picking up pointers on how to negotiate the best deal~“

Tony sighed. “That’s it you’re never coming to another meeting with me again~“

“YES! Haha! You said it!” Peter sprang up from the couch and ran over to high five Bruce. “Thanks man! I really didn’t think that would work!”

“Anytime, Pete.” The doctor grinned.

What the- Tony couldn’t believe it. Bruce had given his son advice in reverse psychology, *that bastard*. No, no, no that doesn’t count!”

“Does too! I have a room full of witnesses!”

“Eye witness testimony doesn’t stand up in court and any of these witnesses can testify that that was coercion!”

“Well which one is it dad? Either it stands up in court or it doesn’t and if it doesn’t I can use that argument against you when you pull your witnesses to the stand. Face it- you just entered into a verbal contract.” Peter grinned, going in for another high five with Bruce and the doctor mirrored his enthusiasm.

“Bruce what happened to not getting involved in legal matters?” Tony said with a slight pout.

Bruce shrugged. “You were mean to him.”

“I’m being conspired against. In my own house.”

“Get bamboozled old man.”

“Stop calling me old!”
Baby Face

Chapter Summary

Sorry for the long break between updates, life's been hectic and this chapter's been giving me hell because I find it helaa boring and I accidentally deleted half of it *sigh*- but it sets up for the next one, which is an idea from one of you guys that I thought was super cute so there's that! Sorry again, imma try and get better with updating- oh and I'm kinda low on ideas right now, inspiration hath left me barren (I blame all the painkillers lmao) so if anyone else has any requests or prompts I'm down to write them :p

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hey Dad?”

“Hey Peter?” Tony replied in a sing song voice mirroring his son’s tone.

“Is it okay if I go to the movies with Ned and MJ tonight?”

Tony didn’t look up from what he was soldering. “Sure kid, just let Happy know when and where.”

Peter groaned slightly. “Oh dad come on, does he have to drive me?”

“You know the rules. At least let him drop you at Ted’s.” Tony said lightly. He wasn’t about to have this conversation again.

“Fine.” Peter knew better than to argue, he was lucky Tony had said yes in the first place. And he did know the rules as much as he didn’t like them. On weekends Peter was allowed to go out with friends but only if one of his family members or said family members bodyguard was available to take him to and from wherever he was going; and he had to give constant updates. It had been that way for a while but Tony had been even more militant about it since...well, the patrol incident. Besides, Tony offered a fair compromise with Happy just taking him to Ned’s. That way the boys could walk to MJ’s apartment and she wouldn’t have to know he needed a chaperone just to leave the house (even though Peter was pretty sure she was more than aware already, not much got past MJ but at least she didn’t have to bare witness to the babysitting). And god knows Happy driving him would be a lot less embarrassing than Steve..he shuddered at the memory of the last time he’d
needed driving somewhere and the blond had offered to do so. He was not about to go through *that* again.

Tony didn’t ask any more questions, mostly because he was busy in work mode but he also didn’t want to be too invasive. He knew he’d been more than a little overbearing as of late so he wanted to allow the boy some freedom, some semblance of normality. By this point it was a well established fact within the household that he couldn’t say no when Peter asked him things. Well he *could* but he didn’t want to, not when he’d gone about it in a mature way and the kid rarely asked to do normal teenage stuff; it would be good for him to go out. Maybe he could find something ‘normal’ to do with his evening too, maybe see if Pepper was free.

“What are you guys gonna see?” Tony asked that night over the dinner table after Steve had silently prompted him to do so.

“Dunno yet.” Peter shrugged, which was true they hadn’t decided yet; and by hadn’t decided he meant that Ned and MJ had been arguing in the group chat about what to see. Of course it had been down to Peter to break the impasse and suggest they wait until they got to the theatre and decide then.

His answer seemed to worry Steve, who immediately furrowed his brows as though he thought Peter was trying to be sneaky. “Nothing R rated, young man-”

“Ahem. I was getting to that part, it’s my job to give that speech thank you.” Tony said grumpily. He actually wasn’t going to say that; A, because he knew Peter was a good kid and likely had no intention of watching anything scary or graphic anyway given his previous experiences with such genres and B, the thought just hadn’t crossed his mind to give such a warning. The fact that he hadn’t thought of it and Steve had irked him slightly, both because he didn’t want to miss anything important and because it set off his jealous streak. Peter was his kid he’d be the one dealing out warnings thank you very much. “Nothing R rated, young man.”

“I don’t plan on it. It’s not like I’d be able to get into an R-Rated movie anyway, I still have to take ID to get into PG-13.” Peter huffed a laugh but he severely regretted giving out that tidbit of information because Nat’s eyes instantly lit up at the new material.

“Awe. Do you mean people don’t think you’re a teenager yet?” She faux cooed and reached over the table to pinch at his cheeks. “Can you blame ‘em? Look at those chubby little cheeks.”

“Hey!” Peter cried indignantly, slapping her hands away. He then whined and pointed accusingly at her, expecting his father to jump to his defence. “Tony!”
“Nat, leave baby face alone.” Tony said flippantly as he scrolled through his phone, having lost interest in the conversation.

Peter wrinkled his nose angrily. “You wanna call me baby face? Have you seen yourself without a beard?”

“You wanna go to the movies? You wanna check your attitude?” Tony cocked his head to the side and gave Peter a pointed look which instantly made the boy back down. Tony smirked smugly and returned his gaze back to his phone. “That’s what I thought, baby face.”

“I’ll see you guys later!” Peter called as he headed towards the elevator. He couldn't believe that he was actually leaving the house after dinner time, it was unheard of. Glancing down at his phone he realised he’d likely be home long past his bedtime, let alone his usual curfew; so it was lucky that Tony had given him a one time extension with the parameters that he was to be home by ten thirty at the very latest and if not in the car on the way home and he wasn't to walk anywhere after the streetlights had come on. Peter found himself feeling rather, well, grown up to be allowed to go out so late at night (as himself as opposed to Spider-Man) as silly as it sounded. He told himself that he’d use his newfound maturity to prove to Tony that he could be trusted to go out on outings such as that again in the future; maybe if he was able to convince his dad of that fact he'd be allowed to go out without Happy babysitting next time.

“See you later kiddo!” Steve called back merrily. “Have fun!”

“Remember your ID!” Nat cackled.

“Text me when you get there safe!” Tony yelled just as the doors metal doors were closing.

“I’m sure Happy will.” Peter muttered under his breath.

“I heard that you little-“ But the doors cut the man off before he was able to finish his insult.

Happy drove Peter over to Ned’s without incident, though Peter noted the man was more chatty with him nowadays; not that it was a bad thing, Peter liked the new Happy but he couldn’t help but feel a little guilty for the man’s sudden shift in personality. Still, if it made car rides a little less awkward who was he to complain.
“Thanks for the ride Happy.”

“Anytime kid, what time are you gonna need picking up?”

“Uhh, I’m not too sure yet.” Without knowing what movie he was seeing he couldn’t estimate what time he’d be heading home. He felt guilty putting the man on hold all night, it wasn’t fair that he had to spend his evening waiting on Peter. Then again it was what he was paid to do and it wasn’t his fault that his dad was so neurotic. Still, he at least wanted to give Happy a time frame. “I-I shouldn’t be out past curfew but if I am I’ll text you-“

“You better not be unless you want Tony to tan both our hides.” The agent said seriously though a small smirk was still present on his face. “I’ll see you later kid.”

Peter hopped out of the car, meeting Ned outside of his house. His best friend was reluctant to let Peter go inside and say hi to his family, knowing it would be at least half an hour of him chatting to his parents and he wanted to make it to the movie theatre ‘before it closed for christmas’. They walked to MJ’s house meeting the girl there, then the trio walked the rest of the way to the theatre, Happy following along in the car behind them (slightly more stealthily than usual, even when Ned waved to him). The entire walk there Ned and MJ were still arguing about what they should see.

“I wanna see Zombie Holocaust 3.” MJ started as she scrolled through the movie listings on her phone.

“Well we don’t.” Ned said grumpily.

“Uhm, I don’t remember Peter having a preference? Don’t speak for him.”

“Well he doesn’t, do you P?”

When his two friends turned to him Peter tried his best to play the impartial third party, though he felt awkward being put on the spot like that. “Uhm, we-well I don’t mind but I don’t-uh -I don’t think we’ll get into that-“

“I have connections, don’t doubt me.” MJ said sassily.
Ned groaned. “Can’t we just go see BattleStar-“

“Ugh, I don’t wanna sit through three hours of more nerdy shit-“

“Well Peter doesn’t wanna sit through three hours of gore, do you want him to puke?”

“Dude.” Peter hissed and smacked his friend in the chest with the back of his hand. Way to make him sound like a baby, Ned- he wasn’t that bad, at least not anymore. Still, Peter tried desperately to find some kind of middle ground because he really didn’t want the final decision to be up to him and he hated confrontation; and come on guys, what kind of person goes to the movies without figuring out what they’re gonna see first . “What about Treasure Cove?”

“Ned’s already seen it.” MJ shrugged not understanding that the news should have been broken more gently as Peter and Ned had planned to go and see it together before the film was even released.

“You went without me?!” Peter cried looking at Ned in horror.

“Sorry dude..” Ned smiled sheepishly. “Tony still had you on house arrest and Mom wanted me to take Cassie and Evie.”

Peter sulked but he knew he couldn’t truly be mad if Ned was telling the truth about taking his nieces. Still he was more inclined to lean towards MJ’s side of the argument now, he could have at least told him he was cinematically cheating on him the bastard. “Look, why don’t we just watch whatever’s showing next?”

“What if it’s some kids movie?” Ned whined.

"Pshh, oh yeah because Treasure Cove isn't a kids movie." MJ scoffed scornfully, making Ned's frown deepen even more.

Peter shrugged. “Then we watch some kids movie. It’ll be an experience.”
MJ and Ned both rolled their eyes at the suggestion; well at least Peter got them unified on something. As soon as they got there MJ immediately strode up to the counter with a sly grin on her face, walking right up to the ticket kiosk before either Ned or Peter could intervene.

“Well hi there.” The man behind the counter waggled his eyebrows suggestively at MJ, addressing her directly which made Peter feel...weird for some reason. He wasn’t sure why but the way the guy was eyeing her up and down skin crawl and it set him instantly on edge; he couldn’t have been much older than they were, college age at the most but it was still weird. Peter couldn’t put a name on what he was feeling either, or why he was feeling it, all he knew was that he instinctually did not like that guy. “What can I do you for?”

“Three for Zombie Holocaust 3.” What? They hadn’t decided on that. Peter was pretty sure that movie went against Tony and Steve’s rule against R rated films. But he couldn’t say anything, he’d look like a baby. He’d never been one for peer pressure but he felt the sudden urge to try and impress MJ even if his weak stomach protested just looking at the poster for the movie behind the counter. Ned seemed to mirror his thoughts exactly but he also chose not to say anything. “Don’t look at me like that, look. It’s the next one showing.”

MJ pointed at the board behind the guy and she was right, they had little room to argue though the realisation made Peter’s stomach twist uncomfortably.

His hesitation must’ve been evident on his face because the guy behind the counter looked Peter up and down specifically, his eyes only glanced over Ned but he stared at Peter a second longer than necessary. “This your new pet? I know he ain’t old enough to get in.”

“Come on Harry, don’t be a prick.” MJ said dryly. “You owe me.”

‘Harry’ sighed and rolled his eyes as printed off the three tickets. He handed them over to the girl without another word, though he didn’t take his eyes off of her, smiling sarcastically at her the entire time. “Enjoy the movie.”

She gave him an equally sarcastic smile as she snatched the pieces of paper away and sauntered happily away from the kiosk. The whole exchange left Peter with a bad taste in his mouth. “You know that guy?”

“Yeah he’s an ex.” MJ shrugged and Peter wasn’t sure why but he suddenly hated Harry even more. Maybe it was because he was tall. MJ spluttered when she saw Peter’s sour expression. “I’m kidding. The dudes my neighbor, I helped cover for him last week when he busted his moms car.”
“Oh.” Somehow that made Peter feel better though he wasn’t sure why. Now he just felt stupid for caring in the first place.

“Why Parker? You seemed upset for a second there?” MJ smirked and cocked her eyebrow at him, wiggling it suggestively but he shrugged her off.

“He looks, like, twenty five, excuse me if I don’t want you getting taken advantage of.” Peter mumbled grouchily but he couldn’t help but blush slightly when MJ looped her arm through his.

“Aww, now that’s sweet. But he’s nineteen.”

“Bullshit.” Ned chimed in though Peter wholeheartedly agreed with his exclamation.

“It’s true.” MJ laughed. “Not everyone has baby faces like you two.”

“I don’t have a baby face, why does everyone keep saying that?!” Peter huffed.

“Oo, did I touch a nerve there?” MJ chuckled but her tone softened when she saw how upset Peter really looked. She reached a hand up and gently poked his cheek. “I like your face.”

Peter felt his entire face flood with warmth that spread into his chest and he got that awkward dry mouthed feeling again only this time it seemed MJ was fully aware of what she was doing. She had this sly look on her face that Peter couldn’t fully read but it seemed that Ned saw right through it.

“Ugh, get a room you two.” Ned rolled his eyes barging between the pair and for once MJ didn’t clap back with a witty remark, she just ignored it and lord knows peter was too choked up to defend himself.

After a minute Peter managed to shake himself off, changing the subject. “MJ you sure this movie is a good idea? What if we get caught sneaking in?”

“Eh, try living dangerously for once in your life, P.” Oh honey if you only knew the half of it. “If
we get caught I’ll take the fallout. You can tell your daddy that I’m a bad influence.”

Now it was Peter’s turn to roll his eyes (and punch Ned in the arm for laughing). In truth he was more than a little worried about his dad finding out what they were watching though, especially after the whole Grudge incident; he still hadn’t gotten over the embarrassment of what happened that night so to be putting himself through all that again voluntarily seemed like a really, really dumb idea. He was surprised he hadn’t gotten a text from Happy or even worse his dad already, he knew the men must’ve been spying on him somehow. A little part of him even hoped that they would intervene, tell him he wasn’t allowed to see it and threaten him with being grounded so he had an excuse not to go in..but he wasn’t so lucky. Maybe Tony was finally letting him make his own bad decisions the one time the teen was internally begging him not to. Or maybe his dad was just busy.

They had around twenty minutes before the movie started so they made their way over to the concession stand where Peter ordered himself a large popcorn and a medium soda; but he didn’t fail to note that both of his friends made faces at his last choice. “What?”

“Should you really be drinking that?” Ned said with an odd expression on his face, one that made him look like he was in pain just imagining what Tony would do to him if he found out he’d allowed Peter to drink soda.

“Why shouldn’t I?” Peter deadpanned. He knew exactly why but he didn’t much appreciate his friends pointing that out.

“I don’t know, with your kidney and everything..” Ned said awkwardly, shuffling uncomfortably under Peter’s gaze. He’d really perfected that mean look that Tony could give sometimes and Ned hated it. He may or may not have ducked behind MJ when Peter looked at him like that.

“Yeah, maybe soda isn’t the best idea.” MJ chimed in to take the heat off of Ned though she regretted it when Peter looked angrily at her instead. “I don’t think Tony would be too happy with us if we let you get that.”

Peter scowled at the girl; she hadn’t been very concerned with what Tony would think five minutes ago when she got them into an over eighteens movie. Besides Peter hadn’t drank anything caffeinated it in months, he’d earned a little treat; and he didn’t much like his friends trying to baby him. He came out to get a break from nagging adults who treated him like a little kid- he didn’t need the same treatment from his two best friends. He turned back to the worker behind the desk. “Make that a large.”
Ned shook his head as Peter was handed a small bucket of bright blue soda; if the caffeine in it wasn’t bad enough that monstrosity definitely went against Bruce’s no artificial colours rule. It looked positively radioactive. “Man this defiant streak is growing a mile long. You used to be such a good kid.”

“Yeah well you try living with Tony Stark for a year, see what happens.” Peter grumbled through a mouthful of popcorn.

“Is that an invitation? Don’t threaten me with a good time.”

“Shut up, Ned.” Peter spat as he noisily slurped at his contraband soda obnoxiously. The second the liquid touched his tongue his eyes went wide and he threw his head back. “Ohhh my god that is so good~”

For once MJ looked embarrassed and Peter was actually rather proud of himself for managing to do so. “Can you not make orgasm noises like that in public please? Jesus, you haven’t had soda for two months and you’re acting like you just-“

Peter put a hand up to silence her, still with his eyes shut as he sucked eagerly at the straw. “Don’t ruin this for me with your gross analogies. Fuck me, that’s good.”

“I’m so done with both of you, oh my god.” Ned shook his head, his face turning pink.

“What did I do?!”

“Peter slow down dude, Jesus.” Ned chastised, snatching the cup away from Peter who was still relishing in the sickly sweet liquid.

“Hey!” Peter cried petulantly and made a grab at the cup but Ned slapped his hand away.

“No more until after the trailers.” Ned said seriously as he held the cup away from him and Peter knew better than to argue.

But that didn’t mean he couldn’t be a brat about it. He crossed his arms over his chest and pouted.
“Fine.”

After visiting the bathroom and entering the theatre (both Ned and Peter freaking out about being rejected entry) they found their seats and waited for the movie to start. Now Peter hadn’t been nervous before then but as soon as he entered the darkened room and remembered what they were watching, he started to feel a little more than jittery.

He hadn’t even seen the trailer for this movie, he didn’t need to, the Zombie Holocaust franchise was well known for being having some of the most gruesome and obscene horror in mainstream cinema and had been banned from several countries; if the title alone didn’t make that obvious enough. There was a big hooha about the latest movie being released; a bunch of people (mainly concerned, conservative parents) petitioned for it to get pulled but alas here they were. MJ was convinced it was all a big publicity stunt but Peter wasn’t so sure, especially from the poster outside the screen. His nervous energy seemed to rub off on Ned, who wasn’t nearly as petrified of horror movies as Peter but he still had a rough time with them.

“Dude, we can still back out and go and see BattleStar.” Ned whispered as they settled in their seats but Peter shook his head. He wasn’t about to admit defeat despite knowing he was going to get grossed out if not scared by the film. He didn’t care. He had a score to settle..with himself- but also that Harry kid, and MJ and even Ned, anyone who thought he wouldn't be able to handle the film. If he was old enough to stay out until past his bedtime almost midnight, he was old enough to watch some stupid zombie flick.

Then again he’d just gotten over the whole Japanese ghost thing, and had only very recently stopped having freaky dreams about it and he was already kind of a germaphobe; so zombies had never really been his thing and Peter really didn’t want to start up all the nightmares again..he was having enough nocturnal issues as it was... No, he had to prove himself to MJ that he wasn’t a baby, he could handle a little gore. Besides he’d been shot for Christ’s sake and that- that was gorey. He was made of tough stuff, he’d seen his fair share of gross shit- wait, wasn’t that what he told himself the last time then he’d almost puked when he watched the Grudge..? No, he'd matured since then! And well, his stomach was just going to have to deal. He was not about to throw up and lose that contraband soda he’d earned, not after everything he went through to get it in the first place. Besides, he had to prove to himself that he wasn’t a baby, he could handle this movie. If he could handle getting shot and kidnapped and generally beaten up, he could suffer through a zombie film- he knew zombies weren’t real, Tony would have told him if they were and he had the theoretical discussion with Bruce many times; he tried to convince himself the only reason he found the Grudge so scary was because he didn’t know if ghosts were real or not.

Despite his fears he actually found the movie rather boring; after he looked past the unnecessarily grossness of the film (which was really hard to do when every other frame made his stomach do gymnastics) he realised it was lacking in every other area other than special effects. The plot was lacking, there was little to no character development which was saying something considering each character was as cliche and as two dimensional as a scooby doo villain, just without the charm. And the dialogue? Had it not been for all the horror going on on screen to distract from it, the
awkward chatter between the characters could be likened to a b-movie comedy. Though Peter didn’t enjoy the film itself, in any sense of the word and it definitely still turned his sensitive stomach at several points, he still enjoyed picking it apart. As he was busying himself writing a rotten tomatoes review in his head (that he intended to share with Thor later, knowing the god would love the carnage) he noticed a twinge in his bladder.

Stupid soda, he was starting to regret getting a large drink- but hey he’d made it a decent way through the movie without needing to go so he was rather proud of himself. Though he hadn’t drunk much that day so maybe his body just needed the liquid; then again that was his first taste of caffeine in months his kidneys should be going haywire. Once that thought crossed his mind though it was like he’d reminded his body of the reaction it should have been having and it kicked into overdrive, his bladder filling impossibly fast. Crap this wasn’t good. They still had a fair bit of the movie left and the tension growing on screen let Peter know that the directors were building up to a scare.

No he’d be fine. He could hold it. The movie wasn’t scary. The jump scares were predictable enough he just had to pay attention and brace himself before- AH SHIT!

Peter hadn’t expected that zombie to pop up in the backseat of the car like that! Jesus Christ! Always check the backseat you bunch of amateurs! When did the director of this shit show of a film suddenly know how to build a suspenseful ambience? That was nearly disastrous for the interior of Peter’s underwear but strategically crossing his legs had saved the fabric, though not for long it seemed as his abdomen was now spasming. Each vibration from the giant speakers inside the theatre was not helping either, resonating through the muscles in his abdomen and reminding him of the growing fullness in his bladder. He actually found himself grabbing MJ’s arm at that point as it was resting on his arm rest, much to his embarrassment, though the girl just grinned at him.

Peter blushed and pulled away, straightening back up into his own seat but he didn’t move his hand right away. And neither did MJ. It was awkward but at the same time it..it wasn’t. But it did leave Peter with that familiar fluttery feeling in his stomach which didn’t help his need to pee in the slightest. He pulled his hand back when Ned nudged him, drawing his attention to his other side.


Peter shook his head adamantly. Despite no one being able to hear or see him, thanks to the loud audio from the movie and the dimmed lights, his face flushed red yet again. He thought he’d been doing pretty well at hiding his rapidly growing desperation but apparently not. Even though his friends couldn’t see him squirming they could certainly feel him shifting around. “I’m okay, I can wait till the end.”
“No you can’t.” MJ muttered gleefully around a mouthful of popcorn. Clearly she’d caught on to his predicament too and found it highly amusing.

“Can too.” Peter scowled with a wiggle, his body instantly disproving his point much to the girls satisfaction.

“I’m not betting you on this. Go.” She chuckled. “Honestly I don’t know how you get yourself in these situations all the time.”

Instead of heeding her words Peter found his pride getting hurt at the accusation that he wouldn’t be able to wait for the rest of the movie. He probably couldn’t but that didn’t mean he didn’t find himself more than a little peeved when his friends pointed that fact out. He was more determined than ever to ignore the urge now, and by this point he wasn’t even watching the screen he was just focusing on keeping his bladder in check. It went on this way for another ten minutes as he prepared to bolt out of the room the second the credits started rolling at least that way he could say he managed to make it through an entire movie without needing a break (something he had yet to achieve in his short life). There was less than twenty minutes left but he could barely sit still even for a second.

“Peter!” Ned hissed. “Just go already, you’re making me seasick!”

But stubbornly Peter ignored him, not taking his eyes off of the seat in front of him. Just twenty minutes, he could wait that long, it would be embarrassing to have to dip out now when anyone else could hold it that long; he'd missed what he and Ned dubbed the 'golden period' of the film, a part that nearly every movie had. It was a point usually just before or after the first crisis in a movie, where there was filler information that could be missed without ruining the plot, leaving enough time for one to restock snacks or use the bathroom without missing anything good. That ‘golden period' and the RunPee app were pretty essential when you're a movie buff with a tiny bladder. That being said, despite the social implications of having to leave so close to the end, Peter couldn't deny the fact that it was kind of starting to hurt. His bladder was solid in his abdomen and constantly pulsing, he knew he was getting to the point of no return and he was pretty sure the second he stood up it would hit him like a freight train. Even if he could wait those last twenty minutes until the movie ended, whether he’d be able to make it out of the theatre and to a bathroom would be another story entirely. Not to mention at that point there would be a flood of people all heading in the same direction and he wouldn’t be able to outrun them with a full bladder. A bladder that was now slightly less full after another leak escaped him. This time it was nothing to do with what was happening on screen his muscles were just beginning to fail him.

“Peter!” Ned said a bit louder, clearly alarmed when Peter doubled over as a wave of desperation coarsed through him.
“Shh!” Came a disgruntled hiss from behind them but Peter didn’t stick around to start a fight or even apologise for interrupting the ‘riveting’ film.

He scrabbled up, over Ned’s lap, not even giving the other boy a chance to get out of his way and inadvertently sending his popcorn flying all over the floor in the process, and bolted out of the cinema. Once he was in the lobby he made a beeline for the restrooms, unashamedly grabbing himself as and when he needed to since there was no one around; well, that was until he rounded the corner and saw two long lines. Crap, another movie must’ve just gotten out before them as the line for the men’s and the women’s room were absolutely packed. There was no way he’d be able to wait for the twenty or so other people in the line to go before him, he had been right as soon as he stood up gravity hit him and his desperation doubled tenfold.

He crossed his legs and bounced on his heels as he stood a ways back from the line, unsure of what to do. He couldn’t wait it out and he was way too shy to ask to cut in line. It was in that moment he found himself wishing that Tony was there, his dad would’ve asked for him like he had done so many times before. As much as Peter had hated those instances he couldn’t deny that they’d saved his pants several times; he shook the thought away, memories of his dad saving him weren’t going to help him now, he needed another plan.

He knew there were no other restrooms in the theatre having been there before (and in this particular predicament on more than one occasion) so he decided to run out and go in one of the public ones in the park across the street. It was risky; A, because that was a fair distance to run with a full bladder that was so dangerously close to spilling over and B, park bathrooms in New York are disgusting; so disgusting he might find himself unable to use them when he got there. Still it was worth a shot and he was very quickly running out of time. His options had dwindled down to ‘stand here and pee yourself in front of forty people’ or ‘at least try and use a toilet with the added benefit of wetting yourself in private’.

Peter wasted no more time, opting with the latter, as he sprinted out of the theatre, across the street without waiting for cars to stop for him, dodging spryly in between them with little care. Luckily he didn’t get hit but it was pretty damn close and he was sure that Tony would have had a literal heart attack had he seen his shoddy maneuvers- but hey spidey senses saved the day again and he avoided becoming a Peter pancake.

Somehow, by the grace of god when Peter got to the small concrete building in the centre of the park the restrooms were actually clean. Well, not clean but not dirty enough to the point where Peter recoiled at the sight of them and his bladder decided that they were good enough for him. He was so desperate that he actually used the urinals as opposed to the stall because there just wasn’t enough time for him to make it into one. As soon as he clocked eyes on the wall mounted receptacles his bladder went into overdrive and started releasing prematurely. Thankfully avoided wetting himself (though very, very narrowly), making it through the ordeal with only a minor stain on the front of his jeans that he could pull his hoodie down to hide if he was strategic enough about it (which he would have to be to avoid his friends keen eyes). Maybe next time he would listen when Ned and MJ warned him against getting soda or at the very least he’d avoid getting one
which contents surpassed that of his bladder capacity.

Feeling relieved and one large soda lighter, Peter trekked back to the theatre (crossing the road in a much safer fashion this time when he realised Happy probably bore witness to him playing chicken). Once he got there he felt confident as he strolled back to the screen where he’d been not five minutes prior but he was surprised when a body suddenly blocked his way. It was Harry. Of course it was. “Where do you think you’re going little man?”

‘Who’s he calling little man, bitch I could- oh.’ Peter stepped back so he could look up at the older teenager, who towered over him to the point that Peter was practically chest height. Hmph. He was definitely going to get on Bruce about making him a serum to help kickstart a growth spurt, he didn’t care how ‘unethical’ or ‘dangerous’ it was. ‘Well yeah? This little man could whoop your ass in a second.’

Despite the angry bravado he was playing out in his head Peter answered Harry's question meekly. “Back into the movie?”

“You got a ticket?” Harry sighed boredly, pretending to study the back of his hand as though the conversation held no interest to him but Peter saw the glint in his eye. The snarky smirk that plastered itself on his face.

At first Peter rolled his eyes and reached into his pocket, before realising that he’d never in fact been in possession of the tickets. MJ had held all three on her. “What? Come on man you saw me go in with-“

“I didn’t see shit. Best you wait for your girlfriend to come back out.” Harry shrugged giving Peter a shit eating grin.

“Seriously?” Peter was in shock. He couldn’t believe someone would be that much of a dick to someone they didn’t even know. He couldn’t exactly argue with the boy though, there was a security guard standing at the other end of the lobby and Peter knew the second he kicked up a fuss that his age would immediately be called into question. So he didn’t have a choice but to walk away (or beat the guy up but he didn’t exactly want to do that either, as tantalising as that thought was).

What an asshole! Peter hadn’t even done anything to this dude- he just automatically didn’t like him! Okay, to be fair, that's what Peter has done to him before but he didn’t act on it. He just silently hated the tall stupid bastard. Luckily the movie was almost over so he didn’t have to wait long for his friends to reappear but he still felt like an idiot leaning against a wall in the lobby.
No sooner than Peter heard the movie ending, Ned and MJ were the first ones busting out from the doors and looking around frantically trying to spot him, which they did. MJ reached him first and immediately started launching her enquiry. “Yo, where did you go?”

“Did you throw up?” Ned joined in, running up behind her.

“Why didn’t you come back in?”

Ned elbowed MJ with a smirk. “I told you he didn’t pee his pants—“

That was when Peter cut them off. “Wow thanks guys- can I answer the first question now? No I didn’t throw up or piss myself thank you.”

“Okay okay jeez we were just asking. When you run out like that and don’t come back what did you expect us to think?” MJ held her hands up defensively. “Then why didn’t you come back in?”

“Ask your boyfriend that.” Peter muttered angrily as he started walking in the opposite direction, his friends following tentatively behind him. “He would let me back in without my ticket.”

Now MJ looked furious. “Ugh that dickhole! I’m so ratting him out to Mrs. Osborn when I get home—“


Both Peter and MJ turned to look at him with questioning looks on their faces.

“Peter dude, don’t you remember that kid who went to school with us? The one who always bragged about his dad being rich?” Ned continued, trying to jog Peter’s memory about the time before MJ joined them. “The one with the expensive car who bought three spaces so no one could park next to him.”

Peter continued to look confused for a moment before the realisation hit him. “Ohh you mean
Flash’s mentor?! Holy shit that was- well no wonder I didn’t like him straight off the bat!”

The pair then went back and forth listing all of the terrible things the entitled predecessor to Flash had been fabled to do before their time at the school; all of the tales led MJ looking unimpressed but it didn’t deter the two.

“God he’s such a dick and him kicking you out only proves it more.” Ned finished his rant looking amused but MJ certainly did not.

“Yeah. Wait until I get ahold of him.” MJ muttered under her breath looking decidedly murderous. Now it was Peter’s turn to tease her.

“Aww, you getting all defensive over little old me?”

“Yeah, so what? Clearly you can’t stand up for yourself and someone’s gotta do it.” The girl shrugged coolly, taking the wind out of Peter’s sails completely but a smile came back to her face at least. “It’s a good thing you left when you did. You would’ve hated the ending anyway.”

Peter shrugged. “I didn’t much care for the beginning or the middle either. Why what happened?”

“The-“ Ned started but looked towards MJ who was vigorously shaking her head. “We agreed not to tell you.”

“Did something happen to the dog?” Peter asked with a horrified look on his face. Of course the only character he would have formed any sort of attachment to was a furry one with four legs.

Ned closed his mouth, knowing full well he couldn’t lie to Peter but he’d also agreed not to outright tell him. “...Maybe-“


“Well he asked! And he guessed!”
While Ned and MJ were set about smacking each other and yelling Peter took out his phone, preparing to text Happy and say that he’d be heading out soon and that was when he noticed two things; the time and three missed calls from said bodyguard. “Oh fuck.”

Both of his friends stopped squabbling to look at him. “What?”

But Peter had paled and already started hightailing it out of the theatre muttering to himself. “Shit, shit, shit I’m DEAD-“

“What?! What happened?!”

“It’s eleven thirty! Dad’s gonna murder me!” Peter said as he ran towards where Happy was parked, his friends falling behind him as there were unable to keep up.

He was already out of earshot when MJ turned to Ned. “Did he just say-“

“He was only kidding, you called him daddy earlier remember?” He laughed nervously trying to cover up for his friend but he knew it was futile. He ended up sighing, resigning himself to the fact that there was no way that would get past the girl, all he could do was hope that she’d be gentle with her teasing. “Just don’t say anything until he’s ready to tell you.”

“My lips are sealed.”

Peter wouldn’t have heard this little exchange even had he been in earshot because he was too busy muttering a string of curse words as he pelted towards Happy’s car. Despite the short distance between his friends and the vehicle, Peter was panting heavily by the time he got up to the man’s window, that Happy had already rolled down when he saw the kid running. Much to Peter’s surprise he didn’t look stoic or mildly pissed off as he usually did, he was smirking slightly as he allowed Peter to catch his breath in between his rushed apologies.

“Don’t worry kid, I saved your ass. I already called Tony and told him you’d be home late.” The man said coolly, chuckling as Peter almost collapsed with relief; he had to hold on to the car door to stop his knees from giving way.

“Oh thank fucking god!” Peter sighed. He had prepared himself for the screaming and the threats of never being allowed out of the house again. “Oh my- oh my god Mr. Hogan thank you- thank
you so much- oh god I thought I was dead!"

“Well you’re gonna be if you sees you walking anywhere, I’ve been instructed to drive you all home.” Happy chuckled again, peering over Peter’s shoulder to wave Ned and MJ towards the car. “Get in Goonies.”

Peter was silent for the majority of the ride home, still coming to terms and getting over the sudden shift in the evenings events. He’d managed to work himself up into a panic for no reason and it takes a second for one to calm themselves down from that. He managed to bid goodnight to each of his friends respectively and he hopped in the front seat next to Happy for the rest of the ride home, something he didn’t usually do but he was feeling..kinda weird to say the least. Happy didn’t comment on it either though he did feel the need to address Peter’s lack of foresight.

“What happened to letting me know what time you were gonna be out huh?” The agent asked in an authoritative tone but he didn’t sound particularly angry as Peter had expected. Still the teenager shrunk down in his seat.

“I’m really sorry, I forgot.”

“That’s not good enough, kid. You know what your dad’s like. Hell I even get nervous now.” Happy added with a slight sigh which made Peter feel even more guilty. "And running out in front of cars like that? I get that you had to piss but Jesus Christ, kid.”

“I-I know it was dumb, I’ll do better next time I promise.” Peter said earnestly but he knew his word didn’t exactly mean anything, he’d have to prove himself later. Which he intended to do, he knew better than to forget something so important. If Happy hadn’t have saved his ass there wouldn’t be a next time. “Was he mad..?”

“No kid. He wasn’t mad.” For some reason unbeknownst to Peter, Happy visibly stiffened in his seat when Peter said that, gripping the steering wheel white knuckled. What the teen didn’t realise is that his phrasing was mildly reminiscent of the conversation he’d had while bleeding out in the backseat that night he’d been shot, when his only concern was whether or not Tony was angry with him. Had Peter made the correlation he would have addressed it but since he didn’t understand the man’s sudden change in attitude he decided it would be best if he kept his mouth shut. And so he did.

That’s why he didn’t question when Happy took a detour on the way home, though it confused him greatly as the man hadn’t mentioned stopping anywhere. His questions were answered though when Happy pulled into a gas station and muttered something about filling up the tank before
Peter took a moment of solitude to reflect on his bad decisions that evening; he’d forgotten to tell Happy what time he’d be home, he hadn’t texted Tony at all even though he’d promised to, he’d gone against the man’s warning of not seeing an R-rated movie and his reluctance to follow doctor’s orders led to him missing the end of said movie anyway- which he didn't even enjoy! He was paying severely for his last two choices now especially; the drink because his jeans were uncomfortably damp and his back was still aching worryingly (he'd have to remember to take his kidney medicine when he got home, he'd already forgotten that morning and after holding it that long he couldn't miss another dose unless he wanted Bruce to pimp slap him) and the movie itself...well maybe Peter hadn't been as unaffected as he had previously thought. He’d been okay when he was watching it and then after he left because he was around people, but now that he was alone in the car he suddenly felt pretty uneasy. The hairs on the back of his neck tickled and for the briefest moment he was convinced someone was breathing down his neck. Oh god..he hadn’t checked the backseat- Wait, no he’d just been in the backseat. But then again maybe someone- or something had snuck in when Happy got out. Oh god oh god oh god-

Peter built up the courage to turn around and found- nothing. Of course there was nothing. It had been the AC blowing that had tickled the back of his neck nothing else. After that revelation he realised that he was breathing heavily and his palms were sweating, not again. He’d really let himself get worked up over a stupid movie again? He sighed in frustration and pulled out his phone to distract himself; not only had he gone against his dad’s rules but he’d proved that he needed them in the first place. So much for proving to himself that he wasn't a baby.

He peered around the gas station, noting how utterly empty it was and that scared feeling came crawling back up his chest before he had a chance to stop it- What was wrong with him? The film hadn’t even been scary! Other than that scene with the zombie in the back seat..and that one in the empty parking lot.

Empty parking lot..oh god where was Happy? Why was it taking him so long to get gas-

“What’s wrong kid?” The man enquired as he climbed back into the driver's seat, making the skittish boy jump. “You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

Peter simply shook his head and tried to compose himself, masking his shaky breathing with an unconvincing cough. He stayed silent for the rest of the drive as not to embarrass himself further and he occupied himself with the usual thoughts of self hatred. As soon as he thanked Happy for the ride and apologised for the inconvenience of having to lie to Tony for him, he made his way as quickly as possible up to the common floor. He tried in vain to slip into his room unnoticed but he had to go through the living room in order to get there and of course, the one night he wanted it to be empty everyone bar from his dad was present there. Even with his silent spidey footsteps it didn’t take two seconds for them to notice him, though they lulled the boy into a false sense of
security by not acknowledging him straight away, allowing him to think he was some kind of ninja.

As he was creeping behind the couch Steve called to him without even turning around, making Peter jump again. “Your dad wants to see you down in the lab before you head to bed there, Sport.”

“Oh, uh, okay.” Peter said sheepishly. Steve smiled at him in a ‘don’t worry, you're not in trouble’ kind of way which brought the boy some comfort. Not much but some. Maybe Tony hadn’t completely let him off the hook about his lateness and was preparing to yell at him in the privacy of the lab as opposed to upstairs, where no one would hear him scream. Great.

“You were gonna go to sleep without saying goodnight to all of us? How rude.” Nat tutted at the boy on his way past and Peter elected to ignore her, save for throwing a dirty look in her direction which made the woman grin.

Peter sullenly made his way down to the lab to what he felt would be his death. He thought Tony would be super mad at him for getting home so late but to his surprise the man greeted him warmly. He was sat in the far corner of the lab, away from most of the machinery at an artists desk. As soon as Peter walked in the man looked back and smiled at him. “Hey bubs.”

“Hi.” Peter said quietly as Tony beckoned him forward to come and sit by him, which he did. Knowing that Tony wasn’t angry at him immediately put Peter at ease though he kicked himself for once again getting upset over nothing. The teen looked over the desk, trying to make heads and tails of all the white lines on the blue paper Tony was brandishing. “Whatcha working on?”

“Just drawing up some blueprints for the new collider, nothing fancy.” Tony hummed as he continued to sketch. Peter tiredly laid his head on his shoulder enjoying watching him work, the fluidity of the pencil strokes calming him down considerably. Even the noise the pencil made as it connected with the paper was somehow soothing and Peter felt himself relaxing for the first time since he’d left the house and he thanked whatever deity bestowed Tony with his seemingly magical calming influence. The man’s drawings were simple enough for Peter to follow along with the construction process but complex enough for him to have to pay attention to each note that the man added beside his diagrams. It still surprised him that Tony hadn’t gone digital with sketches yet. Of course he took his preliminary sketches and updated them, scanning them onto a computer so he could start working in 3-D on the holotable but it was a treat to watch the initial process.

They sat in silence for a while, Peter almost starting to fall asleep before Tony jostled his shoulder slightly to wake him up, with a chuckle. It wasn’t surprising that the boy was tired given how late it was but Tony wanted to have a talk with him first. “How was the movie?”
“Uh...it was, uh, good but..” Peter trailed off. He knew he should tell his dad the truth sooner rather than later. “Dad I..I kinda..”

“Not a fan of zombie movies huh?” Tony asked quietly with a neutral expression. Peter looked ashamedly at the ground. He didn’t even need to wonder how his dad knew what he’d seen, he already knew Tony was omniscient. “It’s okay bud, I get it.”

“I shouldn’t have..I know you said not to but..” Peter tripped over his words trying to come up with a decent explanation as to why exactly he’d elected to break Tony’s rule against horror movies but he couldn’t think of one. To be honest, he wasn’t entirely sure himself, other than to try and prove to himself and his friends that he could handle that kind of material which he’d shown that he couldn’t on more than one occasion. He couldn’t give his dad a good reason as to why he’d done it.

“Pete, we’ve all done stupid things to impress a girl.” Tony shrugged with a sly smirk but that smile soon faded when he saw how upset the teenager looked. Peter was too downtrodden to even protest that little quip about his crush on MJ which told Tony a lot. He didn’t have the heart to punish the boy or even he mad at all really. All things considered Peter hadn’t acted out at all since the patrol incident even with all of his smothering and the one time he breaks a couple rules he ends up paying for it with the repercussions of his own actions alone; the man had already accounted for a sleepless night so he decided to cut the boy some slack for once. “Wanna stay up with me for a while?”

The teen nodded, too tired to form a verbal response but also too worked up to go to sleep. Tony understood, having seen the kid in the same state many times before. “Down here or you wanna move this upstairs?”

Peter shrugged but lent in a little closer which signalled that they should probably move somewhere a little more comfortable. “Come on, upstairs it is. I know you’re sleepy.”

Tony brushed a hand through the teens hair as he encouraged him to stand up and the pair headed upstairs. As soon as they got to the living room (which was now thankfully vacated by their other housemates) Peter assumed the usual position, nestling in on the couch and tucking his feet up, hugging his knees to his chest. Tony set about their usual late night routine of putting on some mindless television and cuddling close to the boy; but even after a few episodes of the Big Bang Theory (which Tony detested with a passion but Peter usually enjoyed so he put up with it) and three cups of hot chocolate Peter still had yet to brighten up at all. He looked just as disheartened as when they first sat down and Tony saw the familiar signs that he was over thinking something. “What’s wrong bubs?”
“I don’t know..” Peter shrugged but immediately sighed. There was no point in lying to his dad anymore, he’d finally come to realise that after everything; and considering Tony seemed to be in a forgiving mood he didn’t mind opening up about how ridiculous he felt. “I just..I feel stupid getting freaked out by that kind of stuff considering..well everything. I can fight super villains but fake blood and guts scares me.”

“We’re all scared of something, Pete. It’s nothing to be ashamed of.” Tony said calmly as he set about messing with the boy’s hair in a way he was sure that would help him relax.

“You’re not.” Peter said quietly.

“That’s not true. I’m scared of a lot of things.”

Peter sighed frustratedly as though he was expecting that answer. “Me getting hurt and stuff doesn’t count. Every parent and superhero is scared of that- that’s like the whole point. Not like, big stuff like that I mean little things like- like-“

The teen seemed to be struggling to pluck an example out of thin air (and desperately trying to avoid mentioning needles) but Tony had one that immediately sprung to the forefront of his mind. A painful childhood experience that he had yet to share with anyone other than the real Jarvis. “The Brave Little Toaster.”

“Huh?” Peter said clearly confused.

“The Brave Little Toaster.” Tony said in the same tone of voice, offering no more explanation.

Peter sat up slightly so he could turn to face his dad, who was now staring off into the distance. “Are you having a stroke or something? What are you talking about?”

“That movie scared the absolute shit out of me when I was a kid.” Tony sighed. As much as it made him uncomfortable to admit to something so- well so juvenile and admittedly a little bit funny, if it would make Peter feel better about his fear of certain genres of cinema he was willing to talk about it. He’d almost shared the story with him that night he’d scared himself silly watching the Grudge but he’d managed to dance around the subject, but now seemed like the appropriate time.
“I was like you, I was taking things apart and making stuff before I could crawl and my dad figured since it was about electronics I would like it. But there’s this scene where the guy is taking apart the old blender and it’s like he’s performing surgery on this poor thing...the other appliances are just watching and singing about it and it’s all- god even now it makes me feel funny.” Tony finished with a shudder, the scenes from that old animation flashing in his mind, along with the tinny singing of all of those mishmashed characters. “It was like Sid’s room from Toy Story except with hairdryers and it was more like an LSD trip- god and those fucking cars were depressing as shit. And that movie had me convinced that all my tinkering with spare parts wasn't just- this innocent creative thing- I was some sadistic evil doctor making frankenstein's monsters out of these poor little sentient appliances that were just trying to get back to their master.”

Tony had completely lost peter at that point. The kid had absolutely no idea what the man was talking about but he appreciated the sentiment all the same. He was quiet for a while whilst he studied the man’s face, still seemingly remembering the movie from his early years that left him scarred in some way. Maybe that’s why the man was always so nice to his electronic creations, maybe he had some deep rooted fear that they were all sentient (cough, Ultron, cough). Then again, Peter couldn’t exactly judge, he still talked to his action figures when no one was around but that didn’t mean it was any less weird to hear his dad talking about some Alice in Wonderland type cartoon with a talking toaster with such unbridled fear in his eyes. “...You’re a weird dude dad, you know that?”

Tony seemed unphased by the comment. “I’m well aware.”

“Is that movie the reason you’re always so nice to your suits? Like nicer than you are to most people- and why you said sorry to the coffee maker when it broke last week?”

“Possibly. That and the whole Ultron thing.” Tony said simply. “And hey, don't you try and diminish my pain I'm still grieving. That coffee machine was there for me more than people. He deserved the funeral I held for him.”

That last part got a giggle out of Peter at least which in turn made Tony smile. “Thanks...for that weird anecdote I mean. It did make me feel a little better.”

“I’m glad.”

“Hey dad?” After after a few moments of comfortable silence.

“What is it, P?”
“Would you..I mean..you would tell me if zombies were real, right?”

The elder fought the urge to sigh at the question. Despite having not been angry at Peter for watching an R-rated film before, he really wished his son had picked one with a different theme; serial killers for example. Yeah, he’d still be scared shitless but at the very least he could convince the kid that he could be protected from such things. Why did it always have to be something fictional or supernatural with this kid? Always something that wasn't tangible enough for Tony to lie convincingly about, god he could only imagine what May had gone through with the boy as a little kid. She must've had to have been so strategic with bedtimes stories or she'd have been up all night consoling the child and dealing with his theoretical questions, not unlike what he was doing now. Tony could stop himself from sighing but he couldn’t fight the sarcasm that seeped into his voice when he answered. “It depends how much you’d panic, which by the sounds of it would be a lot.”

“I’m s-s-serious.” Peter said shakily and this time Tony did sigh. How was he supposed to be stoic and sarcastic when Peter looked up at him all petrified like that?

“There’s nothing to be afraid of. Even if they were real-“ The man paused to look at the teens face and groaned before continuing “-which they’re not, I’d never let them get you anyway.”

“Promise?” As childish as Peter felt clinging to the man (again) but he couldn’t help it he’d psyched himself out and Tony was comforting. If the man was willing to console him who was he to reject that?

Tony held up his little finger. “You think I’d let anyone hurt you? I’d like to see them zombies try and get to my intern-“

“Dad.” Peter rolled his eyes and elbowed the man lightly in the ribs.

“I mean son, yeah that too.” Tony hummed and resumed petting the boys hair, planting a kiss on his head. “My boy.”

Peter sighed softly settling himself into the man’s side, forgetting about the promise he made to himself about falling asleep anywhere besides his own bed as his eyelids grew heavy. “And I’ll protect you from all the evil singing blenders.”
“Thanks, kiddo.”

Chapter End Notes

Sidenote: technically Tony would have been 17 when the brave little toaster came out but I rewatched that movie the other day with my niece and I found it terrifying and I figured it would be funny for a young Tony to be spooked by a cartoon about sentient household objects given his future career path- So we're all gonna pretend he was like five or something lol (but I mean hell if you'd prefer to imagine a teenage Tony Stark crying over a talking toaster that's up to you bro)
Peter ended up falling asleep soundly that night and fairly quickly all things considered, barely stirring even as Tony got up and down a few times. The older man was glad as it was clear that the boy was in need of some good sleep, as was he, but sleep didn’t befall the genius easily these days. Not that it ever really had but especially not the nights where Peter seemed particularly vulnerable. Though part of him was happy that he could be there for him, it still reminded him of those nights spent in a chair next to the teens hospital bed, nights he was trying desperately to forget.

He’d been on edge the entire evening after Peter left but he’d managed to occupy his time (so that’s what you call it) with Pepper and then back down in the lab, but that call from Happy saying the boy would be home even later had sent him over the edge. In a twisted way the fact that Peter had come home and immediately needed comfort made Tony feel better, he hoped that it would deter the boy from going out so late again at least in the near future- but Tony knew he was wrong to feel that way. He shouldn’t hope for Peter to be so dependant on him, just to make himself feel better about his capability as a parent and he shouldn’t hope for the boy’s emotional and social maturity to be stunted just so he could feel useful; but he couldn’t help it.

Even though he knew it was sick he wanted Peter to be frightened; the world was a scary fucking place, fear is what would keep him alive. Anything could happen to a bright eyed, naive kid that didn’t think before he acted and saw the good in everything. He just wanted his boy to stay at home where it was safe. Of course he didn’t really want his son to feel like that, nobody would wish that on their own child but it was nights like that, when all the nasty images and ideas came into his head that he did feel like that. Bad thoughts soon flooded the man's mind once Peter fell asleep as they so often did without the boy there too keep him distracted at the thoughts away; though he was elated to finally turn off that mind numbing show and put on something a little more stimulating.

But even after a movie or two Tony still couldn’t get his mind to quiet down and he didn’t want his restlessness to disturb the sleeping boy curled up on the sofa beside him. He decided it would be better if he just got up and found something to throw himself into to take his mind off of things, if only to avoid waking Peter up with his constant fidgeting. He’d find something to do, whether that be work or drinking his emergency bottle of vodka he’d disguised in a Listerine bottle. Okay okay, maybe not the last one, just a swig. Okay no swig he’d go do some work then, god- what if he spat it out because it was technically Russian mouthwash-
He rose from the couch while he played a game of cat and mouse in his head about whether or not he should have a drink. He made sure to prop Peter up with pillows to substitute his now absent form so the kid didn’t go tumbling off of the couch looking for support. He was met with a slight dilemma though when he realised the teen had yet to even change out of his everyday clothes. He knew from experience that sleeping in jeans wasn’t comfortable but then again the kid looked perfectly content and he didn’t have the heart to wake the child up not when he looked so innocent; and was being so quiet. As much as he adored the kid, he never adored him more than when he was sleeping soundly and not filling the room with constant idle chatter (though that wasn’t true all the time, sometimes he needed the chatter, like white noise to drown out the negative thought). Silence really was a virtue, but maybe not when you were fighting the demons in your own head-and these particular demons were screaming about the curly headed boy he was currently looking at. On that note Tony hightailed it out of the common room and down the hall, preparing to go up to his office first to grab some things to work on and he was surprised when the lift doors opened before he even reached them, revealing someone inside it.

“Mornin’ Cap.”

“Hi Tony.” Steve said tiredly. He looked to be in a similar state of distress as Tony did. He was clearly sleep deprived and shaken about something, but he was also dressed in his nightclothes so Tony figured that he’d at least attempted sleep.

“Nightmares?” Tony said coolly, as though he was asking about something mundane like the weather. He found Steve preferred that approach and he’d be more willing to talk to him as opposed to if Tony made a big song and dance about it. That and Tony didn’t have the energy to do so, or the want, even on a good day.

“Yup.” Steve sighed simply. “Can’t sleep?”

“Nope.” Tony said in an equally flat tone. “Is Buck not..?”

Steve shook his head understanding the silent question Tony was avoiding asking. “Off the grid.”

Tony nodded understandingly. Nowadays Bucky was often used in some of S.H.I.E.L.D’s most secretive covert operations; seventy years of being a fugitive mass murderer meant that he wasn’t suited for high profile cases, both due to wanting to keep his identity, safety and most of all his privacy underwraps, but also he just wasn’t cut out for that kind of group work, not anymore. That meant Bucky was often unable to contact Steve for days, or weeks- sometimes even months at a time when he had to go deep undercover and it was times like this, when Steve was clearly red eyed from crying, unable to escape his own nightmares and bad thoughts, that Tony wished things could be different. He wished he could fix it to where Bucky could be within close proximity to Steve at all times for when either man needed each other but he didn’t have the power to do that
and it wasn’t..appropriate given their current housing situation. Tony was still wary of the man. Despite having come to terms with his own ill feelings towards him, it was hard not to see what Bucky did to his parents every time he looked at him, every time he had one of his own nightmares just as Steve had experienced…

Both Steve and Bucky fully understood and respected that, so there was no animosity it just..it just wasn’t the right time yet. And it wasn’t like Tony wouldn’t allow Bucky to stay with them, he often did as and when he could, for a couple of days or so here and there. Those would be the days when Steve would be too engaged to breathe down everyone else’s necks about work stuff or doing the dishes, so everyone benefited from Bucky's visits but none more than the blond. After a few days with Bucky, Steve always seemed brighter and happier (when Bucky wasn’t having his episodes of night terrors that was, then no one was well rested but it had been a while since they’d been bad) than usual, and that was enough for Tony to feel comfortable with Bucky being in his house.

But it had been a while since one of those weekends and Tony’s heart went out to Steve. He knew how much it sucked when he just wanted to talk to Pepper, especially after a particularly triggering dream but couldn’t because he was on a mission or whatever, so he empathised. But Tony was a man of little emotion (at least when it came to anyone but Peter) so he had to make light of the situation somehow. “Would you like a hug, Steven?”

That got the blond to crack a smile so Tony considered his job done, even if the smile looked a little strained. “Not from you, Anthony.”

“Uh, rude. Aren’t you the one who says hugs fix everything?” Tony put his hands on his hips pretending to be offended and he succeeded in making Steve laugh more.

“No it’s just there’s just one man I wanna be hugging right now and it ain’t you.” The blond chuckled but Tony didn’t fail to see how shiny his eyes were.

“Fair enough.” Tony said softly gracing Steve with a rare, genuinely warm smile that he usually only reserved for his son or his fiancé (ex-fiancé? He technically hadn’t asked her again after their break- but it was just a break right? So he didn’t have to do it again? Ughhh he was so not doing it again-) He settled for clapping a hand on Steve’s shoulder as opposed to the more intimate form of affection. “Could you do me a favour though?”

“Anything.” Steve said automatically.

“Tidbit is sleeping on the couch, can you keep an ear out for me?” Tony asked, knowing Steve
would likely be loitering around his own office or the general vicinity in which he’d left his snoozing son.

Steve nodded and smiled back. “Sure thing.”

The pair parted ways. Tony headed down in the elevator and Steve headed towards his office, passing through the living room, both feeling a little better knowing they weren’t on their own that night, even if they technically were.

Sure enough when Steve got to the living room he saw Peter curled into a little ball nestled in the very corner of the couch, sleeping soundly; he took a moment to audibly ‘aw’ at the kid and tuck his blanket around him just a little bit more snuggly before he made his way towards his intended destination.

He still had a couple mission statements to write as well as start on next months patrol schedule so the super soldier set about doing just that. An hour or so in and he was running into problems. He’d already finished the scheduling, that was a piece of cake as he was mildly overstaffed for the next month, even with covers for potential last minute missions (or ‘understudies’ as Nat dubbed them) he was still having to double up half the time. That was a nice change from his usually convoluted and time consuming, right scheduling where he had to spread agents thin just to cover a majority of the city; he hated doing that especially since what happened to Peter, he always wanted to pair people up...anyway, that part was easy but when it came to writing up his mission statement for the Lake Erie expedition he realised he still needed to get Tony’s permission and input on a couple of the citations he’d made. Just as he was wondering if it would be worth it to try and catch the man that night whilst he was still distracted (as opposed to trying to track Tony down in the middle of a work day, that man was like a child when it came to paperwork at times, as if Steve’s job wasn’t hard enough) to corroborate what he was writing in his report he heard a noise.

Not a loud noise, or a particularly alarming one so Steve wasn’t immediately concerned but it got his attention. It just sounded as though someone had dropped a remote or a phone on the ground in the next room. He figured that Peter had woken up and dropped one of said items of maybe knocked them in his sleep. Still, it wouldn’t hurt to check in and who knows, maybe Tony had returned and Steve would be able to grab him to help with paperwork before he could escape. Steve figured he could do with a break anyway and his back certainly agreed when he stood up. God he was getting old, those seventy years starting to show.

Just as he was stretching, trying to loosen the sore muscles, he heard another noise but this time it was decidedly more disturbing. It was clearly a whimper, albeit a very quiet one but it was unmistakable and it immediately set him on edge.

Steve dashed out of his office and back into the common room where he saw Peter on his side, still
curled in the fetal position but looking a lot less content than when he saw him a few hours prior. As Steve entered further into the room he suddenly jolted, flipping onto his back and wincing. His face was red and scrunched up, he was panting heavily and he...oh dear.

There was a telltale wet stain spanning Peter’s lower half, making a dark circle on his jeans (why hadn’t Tony had the wherewithal to get the boy to change into some pajamas, the dolt) and the couch underneath him. Poor kid, clearly it was a pretty bad dream to make him to that, whatever it was about. Steve’s automatic reaction was to rush forward and wake Peter up from whatever nightmare he was trapped in but he hesitated. He hated that he did so but he couldn’t help it, a million thoughts rushed through his mind as he stood there, momentarily frozen. He knew Peter would be absolutely mortified when he realised Steve had found him in such a state, especially due to him having an accident- but he couldn’t just leave him asleep- he wouldn’t. That wasn’t right...no, but maybe he could run and get Tony, let the boy’s father deal with the problem...that would be the most appropriate thing to do for everyone involved- right? But Steve knew Tony was likely already on his way, probably having been informed by JARVIS on the situation unfolding. And that would take too much *time* - he couldn’t just leave Peter in that state for that long. Maybe he could cover the boy back over with the blanket he’d discarded in the midst of his thrashing around so he could pretend he hadn’t seen then-

Peter let out another pitiful cry, this time flinching, seemingly trying to shrug something off of him, some one off of him, desperately trying to push some invisible force away. “Get off- get off! Please I don’t, I don’t wanna you can’t- stop it!”

Steve had no idea what the dream was about and he didn’t want to- the cries alone were disturbing enough and he couldn’t bear another second of it. Peter’s outburst made his mind up and Steve was already moving without thinking about it. He ran over to the side of the sofa and gently sat the boy up, sitting himself behind him for Peter to lean against him. He knew better than to go in and start shaking him by the shoulders, having learned the hard way when he was helping Bucky reacclimate to society- that was a sure fire way to get punched or worse, especially given the context of whatever dream the teen was having. He didn’t want to go in grabbing at him and potentially worsen the situation by carrying on his dream into real life. Instead Steve settled on gently hugging the boy and rocking him awake, trying to talk soothingly over the boy’s cries, that were slowly working their way up to screams. The quiet whimpers had broken out into full on sobs and Steve was starting to worry that their other housemates would hear the commotion and assume he was attacking the poor boy.

“Shh, shh, shh, Pete it’s alright. You’re safe buddy, it’s just me. You’re at home, you’re safe, it’s just me.” Steve hushed him and it took a moment but Peter finally seemed to pull himself out of whatever nightmare he was trapped in. “Open your eyes sweetie, you’re alright.”

“I said I’m sorry please don’t- please don’t hurt him please- ah!” Peter gasped and sat up abruptly, pulling away from Steve completely and the blond didn’t attempt to stop him, not wanting him to feel trapped. He hunched over, holding his chest assumedly because his heart was pounding along with his lungs, which were contracting violently leaving the boy breathless and shaking. It took
Peter a few seconds to realise where he was and who he was with as he turned around, his face still tear stained, having not noted himself that he had been crying. He peered up at the blond with a mixture of confusion and fear in his big brown eyes and it absolutely broke Steve’s heart. “S-Steve? W-where’s dad?”

“He’ll be up in just a second buddy, don’t you worry. Are you alright?” Steve asked tentatively. He bit back his urge to immediately wrap the boy in a hug because he didn’t want to overwhelm him but it was difficult to go against his instincts so violently, even if he was used to it after years of sharing a room with Buck. Fortunately Peter didn’t seem averse to physical touch as he leaned into Steve’s side and buried his face in the man’s chest, melting the man’s heart completely. Steve wrapped his arms around the boy and held him tightly as Peter continued to sob, still clearly stuck in the headspace he had been within the dream.

“I-I couldn’t save him- I tried Steve, I tried so hard b-but I couldn’t!” Peter sniffled wetly, his eyes still squeezed shut as the images replayed in his head.

“Who buddy?” Steve asked though he wasn’t entirely sure he wanted to know.

“Th-th-the dog!” Peter cried with newfound ferocity and started sobbing even harder.

“Oh Pete.” Steve sighed gently and hugged the boy a little tighter, rubbing his hand up and down his back trying to calm him down. The teen was such a softie when it came to animals so Steve could only imagine how distressing the dream was to him, no wonder he was crying like that. “It’s okay, it wasn’t real, it was just a dream. No dogs were hurt, I promise. You’re alright now, I’ve got you.”

Peter continued crying for a second before he froze- literally froze, going completely stiff in Steve’s arms. For a moment the soldier was scared he’d hugged him too tight and as he pulled away to check the boy was okay Peter immediately flew back against the sofa away from him. His eyes were transfixed on the spot beneath himself. The wet spot. Oh no, Steve had hoped the boy wouldn’t notice before Tony got down there- “Peter it’s okay-”

“Oh my god-”

“Buddy really it’s alright, it’s just an accident, nothing that can’t be fixed-”

“I’m so- I didn’t- I’m-” Steve wasn’t actually sure how it was physically possible, but Peter
went from bright red and crying, to pale as a ghost and back to a deep shade of crimson within a
thirty second time frame; and the way the boy was taking in breaths but not breathing out Steve
was panicking the child was about to rupture in some way. “I’m sorry!”

“Pete, look at me, it’s okay you’re not in trouble, no one’s mad, everything’s o-“ but Peter didn’t
look at him, he didn’t say anything he just jumped over the back of the couch and bolted from the
room, evidently just as the elevator opened at the end of the hall. Steve was too stunned to do
much of anything, he didn’t call out to Peter or even Tony as the man started screaming at him, it
all happened too quickly for him to process.

“What happened?! Jar said he was having a nightmare- what did you do to him?!” Tony bellowed
as he rounded the corner. Tony could only see the back of the sofa from where he was standing so
he had yet to make the connection between the crying boy he’d just seen fly out of the room and
the dark wet stain he’d left behind.

“I-I don’t know.” Steve said, rather quietly all things considered.

“Well what did you say?! He looked petrified!” Tony continued to rant as he crossed the room,
clearly torn between screaming at Steve and going to console his distraught son. Obviously he was
going with the latter but he still wanted some context so he knew what he was going into and he
had a lot of things rushing around his head in that moment.

“Well what did you say?! He looked petrified!” Tony continued to rant as he crossed the room,
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had a lot of things rushing around his head in that moment.

“Tony he..he had an accident.” Steve said quietly and he desperately hoped Tony would understand
what that meant without him having to explain it in any more detail.

Ah. That seemed to get Tony’s attention as he stopped halfway across the room and turned back to
face Steve. Apparently he did understand what that meant and he didn’t seem too surprised either.
“What?”

“Yeah..he was upset about the nightmare, something about a dog, but he was okay with me until he
noticed he’d..well you know, then he panicked and ran away.” Steve said simply, feeling more sad
than anything. Poor kid couldn’t catch a break and Steve knew exactly what it felt like to be on the
other end of all this; it’s where he’d been not a few hours prior when he’d come to the common
floor seeking a distraction from it all, only Peter didn’t have that luxury as his incident bore a
witness. “I tried to call him down but once he realised I saw he just..freaked out on me, you caught
the tail end of that.”

“Oh.” Tony said shortly, dropping his hands to his sides. Of course he had known Steve hadn’t
done anything to hurt his child- or if he had it hadn’t been intentional, but it did kind of knock the
fight out of him in an instant and he felt bad for yelling at his friend who so clearly was trying to help. “Well then, uh, sorry about that. Didn’t mean to be all accusing it’s just-“

“Dad brain. It’s okay, I get it.” Steve offered Tony a small smile as he rose from his seat, readying himself to set about cleaning the couch before a stain set in. As he moved to unzip the cushion Tony stepped forward.

“No, no, leave that, I’ll do it.” He said quickly and Steve simply quirked his eyebrow. Had Tony not been a genius with machinery Steve would assume he wouldn’t even know how to work a washing machine, having never cleaned up for himself in his entire life (though upon seeing Tony’s reaction to the news that Peter had an accident, he was pretty sure that he’d had to deal with this particular issue more than once before because Tony didn’t seem surprised at all, which only made Steve feel worse for the kid). “I’m his dad Steve, I can clean it up.”

“I’m not arguing that fact T, I just think your dad skills would be better applied to comforting him right now.” Steve said lightly with a shrug gesturing towards the doorway a mortified Peter had disappeared through.

Sighing Tony nodded and left in the direction Steve was pointing, wordlessly. He didn’t feel too guilty about leaving Steve to deal with the mess, it was just pee he’d cleaned up worse things. No, he was more concerned about his side of the clean up process. He was more than prepared to deal with whatever mood Peter was in, he had extensive practise with the scenario after all, but he knew things would be more complicated than usual thanks to Steve seeing. He expected Peter to be highly upset, obviously, it was just which flavour of upset he’d be that night; teary or angry. Tony was betting on the latter and call it fatherly intuition, he was right.

He didn’t bother to knock on Peter’s door before entering because he knew his son was expecting him and he was likely already in the shower. “Pete?”

“Go away.” Came a broken, but still furious sounding voice from inside the adjacent bathroom.

Tony sighed. Yep, he was right. Angry indignant Peter was always difficult to comfort but that didn’t mean he was going to listen to what he had said and actually leave him alone (even if that would make his own life a little easier). “P, it’s okay.”

“It’s not okay! None of this is okay!” Peter screamed and Tony could hear as the teen threw what could only be assumed were his soiled clothes angrily into his laundry hamper. “I told you not to let me fall asleep in the common room!”
“Hey, this isn’t my fault—” Tony pouted slightly, automatically slipping into his initial defensive reaction rather than using his logical side; he knew Peter was upset so he was trying to rile Tony up to so the man would leave him alone. Well it wasn’t gonna work this time Parker, your dad knows your tricks.

“Yes it is! I told you not to and then you went and left me!”

That last part tore at Tony’s heartstrings more than he cared to admit, he didn’t mean to make the boy think he’d left him..he just needed to get his own head straightened out. He was coming back..ugh, god damn abandonment issues rearing their ugly head at a time like this- I’m sorry, Pete. I’m sorry I left, I just went down to the lab for a couple hours. I thought I was gonna be back before you woke up. I wouldn’t have gone if I knew..well if I knew that would happen—”

“Well you should have known!” With that last exclamation the boy’s voice broke completely, being interrupted by a wracking sob.

“How was I meant to know you’d have a nightmare, bubs?” Other than the obvious, he had just seen a movie that left him scared shitless after all..dang it maybe it was Tony’s fault, he should have known better than to leave him that night of all nights. He knew the boy’s patterns and given how frightened the boy had been after the movie- he should’ve known the probability that a late night plus a scared boy plus three cups of coco (now that part was his fault- hell, even he wouldn’t have drank that much before going to sleep) would equal a wet bed- or, more awkwardly, a wet couch in this case. Throw a kidney issue, a tiny bladder and a deep sleeper into the mix and that was just asking for it. Peter was right, it was probably Tony’s fault.

“Because you know it’s still been happening!”

What? Oh he meant- so this wasn’t just an unfortunate combination of events? Peter had still been wetting the bed often? But how was he supposed to know that had still been happening? It wasn’t like the boy was exactly forthcoming with that information. “Peter I didn’t know that you were worried about peeing yourself, I thought—”

“Of course I was! Why else would I say not to let me fall asleep?!”

“I don’t know! I didn’t know that you were still having problems—”
“Hey! Language! I know you’re upset but don’t take it out on me!” Tony snapped back but he softened his tone again once he reprimanded the boy on the cursing. “I didn’t Pete. I knew you were still have accidents occasionally but I didn’t realise it was, well, a common thing. It thought it just went back to how used to be, happening a couple times a month at most—”

“Liar! I know you have JARVIS spying on me.” Peter sniffled bitterly. And thanks for reminding him that he’s always had a bedwetting problem Tony, nice touch there.

“No, I did but you asked me to stop remember? When we agreed that you didn’t have to talk to me about it anymore so long as you let Bruce know how it was going?” The conversation came soon after Peter had refused to wear diapers anymore once he deemed himself mobile enough not to need them; however Tony was made aware by JARVIS that the boy wasn’t quite over his issues at night and Tony had tried to gently suggest he wear them just for bed but Peter flipped out- like flipped out, some furniture may have been damaged in the process and he demanded that Tony stop his ‘stupid fucking computer’ from tattling on him. So Tony said he would back off, that he wouldn’t mention the bedwetting again so long as Peter would tell Bruce about how he was progressing when he visited the man for his regular kidney checks.

“Oh.” Peter said softly before he fell silent on the other side of the door for a moment as he considered Tony’s words. Clearly he was surprised that the man had actually adhered to the agreement, he figured Tony had just said that but was secretly keeping tabs on how many dry nights (or lack thereof) he was having. Or at the very least having Bruce tell him everything.

“So I didn’t know.” Tony said equally softly, feeling rather guilty for having not pressed the boy more on the issue. Peter had been struggling still and he’d assumed that it had just gone away without checking. He should at the very least have asked Bruce if Peter was still bedwetting but it had slipped his mind; after all had there been any issues or developments the doctor had already agreed to tell him so he figured it wasn’t a problem anymore...well he’d figured wrong and he felt really bad for his son. It explained why the kid was still tired all the time despite his iron tablets and the thought that Peter had been dealing with sleepless nights by himself because of that made Tony unbelievably sad. He should have known. He should have asked but he’d gone the easy route, the lazy route, the one that was easier for him. He’d learnt long ago that sometimes he needed to upset Peter by making him talk to him, even if it was awkward and embarrassing for both of them. He’d really let the kid down and now- well now Steve knew and Peter was even more upset than he would have been if Tony has just fucking talked to him-

Peter suddenly started crying audibly again on the other side of the door. “The one time I needed you to be a nosy asshole and know everything you suddenly decide to respect my privacy?! The one time I needed you to spy on me you didn’t and now- and now Steve saw what a baby I am and
As Peter was building himself up into a full on tantrum Tony heard the shower turn on and the teen slamming doors. Slamming doors harder than necessary and hard enough for an emotional super kid to break something or himself if he wasn’t keeping his strength in check. Yes they were made of tempered glass to counteract that but they were still glass for goodness sake. “Peter be careful, Jesus! Don’t break anything I don’t feel like cleaning up glass tonight-”

Tony’s phrasing suddenly reminded Peter of the mess he’d left in the living room after he ran away. “Oh my god the couch, who’s-”

“Peter it’s okay-” Tony said quickly trying to throw the boy off of his train of thought, knowing full well where it was heading.

“Please don’t tell me you let Steve-”

“Don’t worry about the couch-”

“How can I not worry about the fucking couch?!?” Peter screamed and Tony heard another crash which he sincerely hoped was not the teen falling in the shower.

“Stop yelling!”

“YOU STOP YELLING!”

Tony paused, trying not to let his emotions get the better of him but that was difficult when you had a five foot, superhuman toddler screaming at you from behind a locked door. “Okay, okay we gotta bring it down a notch here because I’m getting a headache. I get it you’re mad and you want me to leave you alone but I’m not going to while you’re upset-”

“Well I don’t want a hug and to be told everything’s alright either because it’s not!” Peter spat angrily. “I don’t want comfort because I’m not a fucking baby even if I act like it by pissing myself- I don’t fucking deserve comfort anyway- you should be yelling at me!”
“I’m gonna start yelling if you don’t stop cursing. One more strike and you’re out boyo, I mean it.” Tony said lowly, deliberately dropping his tone down to show Peter he meant business.

“Sorry.” The teen huffed, backing down but he was still obviously mad. “But go away.”

Tony sighed and physically took a step back from the door, determined not to let Peter push him into losing his cool like he was trying to. ‘It’s just a self defence mechanism. He’s not really a little shit he’s just pretending to be because he’s upset and he wants you to leave him alone. Stay calm.’ Tony repeated that little mantra to himself as he went over to Peter’s dresser and grabbed him some clean clothes, knowing the boy had more than likely forgotten to grab some in the midst of his panic attack. He stood silently outside the door for the duration of the boy’s shower (which he noted was a lot longer than usual, probably because Peter was hoping he’d give up and leave) and wordlessly handing Peter the clothes when he stuck his hand out of the door.

“Thanks.” Peter muttered quietly.

When he re-emerged, red eyed and pink cheeked Tony fought the urge to coddle him. He knew that was a bad idea especially when Peter had explicitly said he wasn’t in a cuddly, comfort seeking mood and he wanted to respect that; so he went with the more direct approach. “You done with your little temper tantrum?”

“Sorry.” Peter said, slightly more sheepishly than he had previously, casting his eyes down towards the floor.

“What do you wanna do now?”

“Kill myself-”

“Peter.” Tony growled warningly. His patience could only stretch so thin and he’d warned the kid about saying that before.

“Sorry.” Peter sighed. “I don’t know.”

“Lab?” Tony suggested but he was only met with a shrug. “Hmm, gym?”
Peter looked up at him with a surprised, somewhat skeptical look. “Seriously?”

“Yeah. Work some of that anger out that’s meant to be healthy and constructive right?” Tony asked genuinely, that’s something a therapist would agree with surely? He was trying to hone in on the knowledge he’d learnt from his own counselling sessions, but then again maybe that was encouraging bad habits if Peter had an addictive personality like he did-

“Yeah but I meant you offering to go down to the gym with me.” Peter chuckled as he clarified what he was really questioning.

“Are you suggesting I don’t work out?” Tony asked with a raised eyebrow and Peter shrugged again. How rude. “Hey now, you don’t get to look this good without working for it.”

“I never see you in there unless we’re group training.” Peter chuckled defensively.

“Well duh that’s the point of group training, you tend to do that together. I exercise frequently thank you.”

“I’m sure.” Peter smirked and Tony liked the fact that he could coax a smile out of the kid by encouraging him into some sarcastic banter; oh he was definitely moulding Peter into a mini Tony Stark. His smartassery certainly wasn’t a trait he minded the kid inheriting, so long as he remembered that Tony was king smartass around these parts; still, a worthy heir he shall make with a little more training.

“This is coming from the kid that still believed in Santa Claus until the sixth grade- just because you don’t see it doesn’t mean it doesn’t happen.” Tony laughed. “What are you tryna say, Parker? That you can outrun me?”

“Yes. Obviously.” Peter outright laughed before a look of realisation flooded his face when it dawned on him. “Oh no, I see what you’re doing. I’m so not getting competitive with you in the gym-”

“Why not? Chicken?” Tony asked teasingly but he let a smile befall his face as well. Frankly he was surprised Peter hadn’t caught on to the reverse psychology earlier, considering Bruce’s coaching sessions on the subject.
“Quit it! I know you’re just trying to cheer me up and besides you have a heart condition- and a lung condition now too.” Peter shook his head, rolling his eyes. But Tony didn’t fail to notice the sly smile that crossed the boy’s face as he turned away from him. “Besides if you wanna make me laugh you don’t need to try and match me on the treadmill, you can just tell some more of your stupid jokes.”

“Oh it’s on now shortass.”

Later that morning, after Tony had helped Peter work off some of his emotions (and nearly kill himself in the process, good god he was getting old), the other person involved in the incident from the night before was feeling decidedly less at ease with the whole affair. After cleaning the couch Steve was left with nothing to do, no way to help or undo what had happened and he felt rotten. He had held on to the hope that he and Peter would move on like they had after the time Peter got desperate when they were watching a movie together- by pretending nothing had happened. It wasn’t the blond’s favourite way of handling things, he preferred to talk things out but it was better than the alternative; which was what started happening the very next morning. Peter didn’t come down for breakfast and Tony made up an excuse for him to the others about how tired he’d been from his late night out at the movie theatre. At first Steve tried not to worry about it, as he figured the boy really was just sleeping in; after all he’d had a late night and a very rough, early morning so maybe Tony had been telling a half truth. But when Peter didn’t join them for group training after breakfast Steve couldn’t ignore the niggling feeling in the back of his head, and he couldn’t bite his tongue either.

“Tony, where’s kiddo?” Steve called across the gym when Tony emerged alone, being the last one to join them.

Tony had been off trying to convince said kiddo to come down to join them but Peter had out right refused and crawled up into the vents in the ceiling to escape the conversation; and the spider kid’s dad had spent the last twenty minutes arguing with him before finally giving up. But Tony wasn’t about to let all that on. “Oh he went over to see May early, said he’ll be back after lunch.”

“You mean he chose to skip group training?” Nat said suspiciously as she stood up after stretching. That didn’t sound like Peter at all. “I just figured you’d grounded him since he snuck into Zombie Hol-”

“Shh. You don’t know about that remember?” Tony hissed glancing nervously at the ceiling when he thought no one was looking. Up at the vents.

“You just said he’s with May why do you look so nervous? It’s not like he can hear us.” Bruce chuckled, not quite realising how on the nose he was.
“It’s not like the youngling to skip group training day!” Thor chimed in, looking confused and slightly upset. “Not since you let the little fellow start sparring with us, I was rather looking forward to showing him how to-”

“Look you can show him later okay he’s just-” Tony snapped, cracking under the pressure slightly having not slept a wink and after having fought with Peter for most of the day. “He needs a break today, alright? Kid’s gotta have a break but that doesn’t mean you load of slackers do so come on, get moving.”

That was Steve’s first incline that something was wrong and he was self aware enough to know that Peter was likely directly avoiding him specifically as opposed to the rest of the family. His suspicions were confirmed after they’d all headed to their respective rooms to shower and change after training, and he overheard a majority of the exchange in the kitchen from his bedroom thanks to his heightened hearing;

“Peter come down from there now!”

“*No!* You can’t make me!” Came an echoing screech from above his head.

“Oh really? I’ll have jar turn the heat on, I’ll smoke you out.”

“*Do it!* I’m dying anyway!”

“From what?” Tony said dryly, fully prepared for a ridiculous answer.

“*Shame!*”

“Oh for Christ’s sake- get your dramatic little butt down here now before I send Nat up to get you!” Tony yelled just as said woman walked through the sliding hall doors into the kitchen.

“What am I doing?” Nat questioned boredly as she grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge. She was more than used to being used as a threat when one of her idiotic male housemates were doing something ridiculous.
“Nothing.” Peter mumbled as he dropped down from the ceiling; it was one thing to be an embarrassing messy creature who liked to hide in small spaces in front of his dad but he wasn’t sure he wanted Nat to bare witness to his gremlin-like tendencies just yet. As he dropped down a cloud of dust and debris followed him, causing the teen to start coughing. “You really need to dust up there Dad-”

“Boy, come here.” Tony ordered the now powdered covered kid to step forward and he tried his best to pat a majority of the dust off of him. Even though Peter was adamant his asthma disappeared after the bite he didn’t want to take any chances (ignoring the fact that he was the one who now needed an inhaler, he was more concerned about Peter’s pulmonary health). “You know most people don’t usually need to vacuum their vents regularly because their pet Spider-people know better than to hide in them- can’t you stick to your own nests? Steve’s gonna have a field day when he sees the mess you’ve made.”

Of course Tony was referencing the dust cascading onto the carpet Peter was standing on but he felt him stiffen as soon as the words left his mouth. Steve had already cleaned one of the boys messes up that day and Peter was obviously reminded of that if the blush that rose to his cheeks was any indication. Tony felt bad about his wording but he couldn’t apologise without drawing attention to it and he doubted Peter would appreciate given their present company.

“So you didn’t go to see May then shortie?” Nat asked, quickly putting two and two together.

“N-no she’s got a chest infection, I don’t wanna give her any ger-germs-” Peter cut himself off suddenly and got an odd look on his face, scrunching his nose up and frowning. Just as Tony was about to ask what was wrong Peter turned his head away from him and answered that question with a loud, high pitched “a choo!” Which evidently was followed by a trail of white spider silk being flung from his wrist as he went to cover his nose, shooting across the room and sticking to the couch, a lamp and whatever else was in it’s path.

“Gross!” Nat laughed as she sat up straight again, having had to duck to avoid getting hit in the face with the web. “Mind where you’re pointing that shit!”

“It was an accident! I’m not good with dust!” Peter sniffed snottily as Nat continued to laugh. Tony rolled his eyes and, in true dad fashion (yes he’d gotten to this point considering Peter was an unlawfully messy eater), pulled a tissue out of his pocket and handed it to the teen.

“I didn’t know that was a thing! I’ll take some pepper with us on our next mission, you’ll be like a machine gun!” Nat cackled. “Look at this mess, Jesus.”
“We’ll get that in a minute, you sit down. Did you eat after we went downstairs?” Tony said, returning focus to the reason he’d dragged Peter out of his hidey hole in the first place (though it did occur to him he’d never seen the boy sneeze before and it was pretty hilarious, he would just find it more hilarious after he dealt with the kid). He didn’t fail to notice the teen swaying slightly, reminiscent of the time the boy had fainted in the lab and he knew the signs. He knew his son too well. Peter shook his head sheepishly in answer to the man’s question, just as Tony had thought. “Peter! I told you to fix yourself something when we left, for Christ sake you’re shaking- can’t you take care of yourself for five minutes?”

He didn’t mean to come across so snappy but he couldn’t help it. He hated it when Peter refused to perform basic acts of self care. ‘Who does this kid think he is- me?!’ If Peter had yet to eat that day that meant he was still running on the hot coco from the night before and that wasn’t nearly enough calories for someone with his metabolism; that and the exercise he’d seen the boy do that morning it was a miracle he hadn’t already passed out.

Peter hung his head ashamedly as Tony continued to reprimand him.

“No, you were too busy eavesdropping huh? Yeah that’s right, I heard you up there. No more vents for you.” Tony chided as he reached up into the medicine cupboard and retrieved a silver pouch that Peter instantly recognised to be the glucose solution Bruce made for when his blood sugars dropped below dangerous levels. “Eat this-”

Peter grimaced and tried to muster up his puppy dog eyes but he wasn’t quick enough. “But dad they’re gross-”

“Now, Peter. I’m not arguing with you.” Tony said firmly, tearing open the packet and handing it to his reluctant son. Peter squeezed the goop into his mouth with a shudder and had to forcefully bite down a gag. Though he was being slightly dramatic Tony knew that the gel wasn’t the best tasting (he’d made the mistake of licking some off of his finger once and almost threw up) so he was nice enough to grab the boy some apple juice as a chaser. “Good boy. Now stay down here while I fix you some real food, I won’t hesitate to send DUM-E up in the ceiling to get you.”

Peter pouted but he stayed put as Tony set about making him a sandwich, which was a rarity in and of itself so he wasn’t about to argue; not that he could of made himself food if he wanted to, he was too shaky to be trusted with wielding a knife on his own. It was almost amusing to see Tony doing such normal everyday tasks though and Nat seemed to mirror Peter’s intrigue, especially when Tony started cutting his sandwich the wrong way.

“No wait!” Peter cried just before Tony sliced the knife horizontally across the bread.
“What?” Tony asked genuinely confused and slightly alarmed by the boy’s outburst. He was even more confused when he saw Nat shaking her head in agreement.

She chuckled slightly. “He doesn’t eat sandwiches cut down the middle.”

“Only triangles!” Peter nodded furiously in agreement.

Tony was bewildered. “What the- since when?”

“Since always!”

Tony was mightily confused, he’d never noticed that before but it must’ve been a well established fact if even Nat was agreeing and taking it seriously instead of making fun of the kid for being ridiculous. Admittedly Tony felt slightly guilty about never noticing, but he wasn’t too upset because why the fuck does it matter? All food ends up the same way after you chew it why does it matter what shape it’s in?

Nat could sense his internal debate on whether or not to continue slicing the sandwich horizontally anyway and interjected. “He won’t eat it, T.”

After a long pause, Tony turned to Peter and asked quietly: “...Why are you like this?”

The teen just shrugged and crossed his arms, as if he was daring Tony to test his theory. But Tony wasn’t about to do that, not when the child’s blood sugar was so low. He could go about pushing that boundary at a later date but as for right now he cut the sandwich in the Peter appropriate manner and handed the plate to the teen.

While Peter was digging into his sandwich like a peanut butter addict and Tony stepped out momentarily to grab a vacuum and Nat took the opportunity to question the boy’s sudden change in routine. “So why you skipping meals now?”

“I’m not..” Peter muttered but his refusal to make eye contact was enough to tell Nat that he was lying.
“You skipped breakfast. That’s skipping a meal and no doubt you’re gonna run off at lunch or Tony wouldn’t be making food now, so what gives?”

Peter simply shrugged in reply.

Nat was right. As soon as everyone else started filing into the living room Peter ran off, heading down towards the lab as opposed to into the vents this time. Steve was clearly distressed about this when he realised that Peter had managed to evade face time with him once again but when he tried to broach the subject with Tony the man simply brushed him off. “You know what he’s like Steve just give him some time, he’ll come around.”

Steve relaxed a little as Peter did grace them all with his presence at dinner, likely because Tony had forced him to but it still made Steve optimistic that maybe Peter was feeling better. But all the optimism soon faded when he greeted the boy in his usual manner.

“Hiya sport.” Steve called when Peter entered the room but the kid didn’t even look up. He didn’t straight up ignore the man (he was humiliated but he wasn’t impolite) but he didn’t acknowledge Steve until after he sat down; even then he only managed to squeak out a sheepish ‘hi’ in response before pressing his lips together tightly again.

Clint noticed this as well, being the one sat beside the boy (luckily for them all Thor was absent for this particular meal or he would have been the one to see the exchange and he likely would have announced it loudly). When he was sure no one else was paying them any attention he leant in close and whispered so only Peter (and Steve- superhearing) could hear. “You okay kid?”

Peter nodded but somehow he managed to make even such a simple gesture unconvincing. Clint frowned, unknowingly mirroring Steve’s expression from across the table. “You sure?”

Peter nodded again but Clint didn’t drop it, not in a bad way though as he lent in and whispered in Peter’s ear again; but this time Steve wasn’t able to listen in as Bruce asked him something, distracting him but he could still see Peter’s reaction to whatever it was Clint was saying. For a second the boy went wide eyed and shook his head fervently but Clint said something else that changed his tune, leading to Peter visibly relaxing and nodding. Clint clapped him on the shoulder and they both returned to their plates ignoring the eyes on them around the table.

Steve frowned sadly, but he didn’t push Peter more. He understood why the kid was so upset he
just wished he knew how to comfort him without making the tension worse. Tony was little help either even when Peter’s behaviour continued to the next day. Or the day after that. Eventually five days went by with Peter barely able to spend more than half an hour in the same room as Steve; he skipped as many meals as possible which led to him eating at random times, he got up super early every morning (though Steve wasn’t convinced he was sleeping at all, given the instances where he did see Peter the boy looked exhausted) so he could go down to the gym before Steve did and he even stopped accompanying him on his early morning runs. He was spending almost all of his time in the lab, which wasn’t super unusual as it was a working week after all and Tony needed him, but one night Bruce caught the child literally trying to sleep down there. He couldn’t even sleep on the same floor as Steve anymore?

Tony had been wrong, the more time that passed the more Peter seemed to recoiled into himself in Steve’s presence to the point that he actually started to \textit{flinch} if the man so much as spoke to him.

That recent development was what bothered Steve the most, he couldn’t bare the thought that Peter’s avoidance had somehow developed into a fear of him. Was Peter worried that Steve was mad at him for not talking to him? Of course he wasn’t but it would make sense that the used to be soft spoken kid had reverted to his old ways, or somehow convinced himself that Steve hated him for his selective mutism. Was that his fault? Had Steve reinforced that idea by not going and talking to him? Steve was known for having personal talks, often awkward and uncomfortable, but he’d have them anyway; like that time where he tried to have a talk with Peter after he thought MJ was short for Mary Jane and he and Ned were trying to score weed off of someone at school and he \textit{freaked the fuck out} now that had been an awkward conversation. So maybe now, since (on Tony’s advice) Steve had left the boy alone, Peter thought that he was mad at him or something. Oh gosh, he didn’t know, he didn’t know Peter as well as Tony did, he didn’t know what the boy was thinking. All he knew was that he hated the tension that had built in the household.

Everyone was aware of it and in turn Peter had started slowly acted odd with each member of their family one by one; the only people he was truly freely interacting with like usual were Tony and Thor, for obvious reasons.

But after one instance where Peter literally turned and ran in the opposite direction when he saw Steve coming down the hall, the blond had enough. He called Tony out of a meeting (which Tony was more than happy to have a reason to skip) to have a serious talk about the whole thing. “T, this has gotten way out of hand. He’s running away from me now.”

Tony breathed deeply through his nose. As much as he had hoped the issue would resolve itself it was clear it hadn’t, though he still had the belief that it would. Still at this point even he couldn’t deny it was getting ridiculous. “I know Steve but you know how he is.”

Steve made an exasperated noise because that was the same line Tony had been giving him for a week now but the brunette was quick to continue so Steve didn’t start ranting at him. “I know it’s
“Hard but- look remember back when he had that stomach virus? And he was skittish around you for ages after that because he was so embarrassed about puking everywhere-”

“Yes I remember but that was almost a year ago Tony, things are different now- *we’re* all different now, can’t you see that?” Steve said sadly. He didn’t need to be reminded of how the boy’s behaviour had reverted to the early months in their relationship; he was well aware of how it seemed like one incident had set Peter back months of progress. All that time Steve had spent getting close to the boy seemingly wasted- but he wasn’t thinking of it as a loss of investments. It was just hard when success in Peter’s case hadn’t been linear and there wasn’t anything he could do to help.

“You’re right.” Tony nodded and sighed. “You’re right. And I’ve tried to talk to him about it but he shuts down on me too Steve and I don’t want to push him too far, not when I’m the only one he can talk to right now-“

“Then let me try. Let me just talk to him about it, I can-“

“I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“Why not? Not talking about it hasn’t worked. No wonder the kid feels ashamed if we’re all being hush hush and taboo about it- he’s gonna think that it’s something to be embarrassed about-“

“No, he’s ashamed because he’s fifteen years old and one of his childhood hero’s saw him piss his pants. Now I’m not saying that’s something to be embarrassed about, especially given his particular circumstances, but can’t you see that it’s not abnormal for him to be a little sensitive about it?”

“Obviously Tony, I’m not completely oblivious.” Steve snapped bitterly. He wasn’t in the mood to be patronised, he understood why the kid was upset, of course he did, that didn’t mean that he couldn’t try actively to fix it; instead of just sitting back and waiting like Tony kept suggesting. He’d tried that. It wasn’t working. “I’m not expecting him to want to have an in-depth discussion about it I just want him to know that it’s okay-“

“He knows it’s okay. I’ve told him it’s okay. What do you think I’ve been doing, beating him for it-” Tony growled angrily. Clearly he felt that Steve was suggesting that he was or wasn’t doing something to help the situation, or maybe that he wasn’t helping Peter with his little problem.
“That’s not what I meant, don’t take it that way- how is you getting defensive over your parenting going to help the situation huh? How can you expect him not to react defensively when you still do?” Steve growled back. “I meant I want him to know that it’s okay that I know about it-”

“Know about what?” Came a voice form just down the hall as Clint stepped out of the elevator still with his bow in hand. For some reason JARVIS had let him out on the wrong floor but he understood why as soon as he saw the two housemates most infamous for butting heads, well, butting heads. Again. Ugh. Couldn’t the stupid computer have sent Bruce up there to help instead?

Tony was clearly displeased by his arrival during the conversation. “Oh god, no. No, we’re not having a family meeting about this. Piss off Robin Hood-”

But Steve clearly had a different opinion. “No wait, Tony he might have some advice on how to-“

“Peter is my son, I know how to handle this-”

“Clearly not-”

“Excuse me?”

“Is this about him wetting the bed?” Clint interjected, once again causing the two bickering men to look at him, this time with matching expressions of confusion. “Yeah I know about it, it’s kind of obvious. I figured Steve saw something of the like and that’s why the kids been avoiding you.”

“Ugh Peter is gonna kill me when he realises every fucker in this building knows.” Tony grunted grouchily and wiped his hands tiredly over his face.

“It’s not a big deal-”

“We know.” Steve and Tony said simultaneously, albeit in different tones.

“Then if you know just talk to him about it. It’s not rocket science.” Clint said as though it was the most simple thing in the world.
“I want to but the rocket scientist said it’s not a good idea.” Steve muttered under his breath making Tony’s head snap towards him.

“Seriously? Why is everything always my fault?!” First Peter blamed him for peeing on the couch now Steve was blaming him for trying to protect said couch pee-er- he couldn’t win!

“Because as you just said you’re his dad -”

“Oh wow, really? It's like that is it?”

Clint decided to interrupt again before it became a verbal slinging match. “Look, Steve just pull him aside and have a word with him, let him know it’s all good but don’t make a big thing about it-”

“It is a big thing to him that’s what I’m saying. It’s all very well and good us saying it doesn’t matter but if he’s upset about it and we all tell him he shouldn’t be how do you think that’ll make him feel?” Tony said, trying to point out another side of things that he was sure everyone else had over looked. Peter already had an issue thinking that his thoughts and feelings didn’t matter or they they were stupid or that he was stupid- he didn’t want Steve or anyone barreling in and undoing all the work they were doing on that front. He was trying to show the kid that it was okay to feel that way, just so long as he made the distinction between feelings and reality. So telling someone who’s upset about something not to be because ‘it’s not a big deal’ even if that is true, was generally not a good idea. “Yes, Clint’s right, you’re right, it would be easier to just talk to him but this is Peter we’re talking about. Nothing is ever straightforward with him and he’s not great at the whole being open thing and he can be stubborn as a mule-“

“You know, sometimes I wonder if you two are really biologically related-“

“Shut up Barton. Just give him time and space and things will improve or he’ll talk when he’s ready to. If he’s avoiding you, that means he doesn’t wanna talk and you know what, he doesn’t have to. He’s entitled to a little space every now and then. ”

Steve considered Tony’s words carefully for a moment before he tried to present his argument in a different way, a way that Tony probably couldn’t understand as the boy’s father. “I appreciate that you know him better than anyone else T, I really do. If I didn’t I wouldn’t have asked you what to do in the first place. I also respect you as his father and I don’t want to undermine anything or cross any lines but you’ve gotta remember; me and Peter have a different dynamic that you and him do-“
“Obviously.” Tony said dryly. “Great observation, Clint get him a cookie-”

Steve elected to ignore Tony’s sarcasm and continue as though he hadn’t spoken. “So how you would handle it may not be the best way for me to handle it. He’s comfortable with you so he’ll eventually come to you to talk but I don’t think he will with me. And remember when he used to do this to you too? He wouldn’t talk about things until you nudged him over the edge and now look where he’s at. Maybe I’ve gotta do the same thing.”

“So it might be better for uncle Steve to break the ice-” Clint added, trying to be helpful though he ought to have been more mindful of his turn of phrase. He hadn’t meant to make an ice pun but nonetheless Steve shot him a dirty look and Tony chuckled at the blonds expense. “Sorry. And look, Tony, you’re definitely the resident Spider-kid expert no one’s disputing that- but you can’t be a control freak all the time, you know?”

“Correction, yes I can.” Tony said patronisingly; so patronising that Clint found his hand tingling with that wonderful memory of slapping his stupid, smug face. “I’ll tell you the same thing I told Fury-”

“No. You can’t. You gotta let us all interact with him naturally, have our own relationships with him. Even on just a teammate level and we’re all waaaay past that. You tried to separate us before and look what happened- Steve nearly dropped a tanker on his head.”

Steve cringed at that last part but Clint’s point seemed to strike a chord with Tony; not that he was about to let that on, he wasn’t going to admit that Clint Barton was right twice in one day. He’d have another heart attack if he did that.

“Well I’ve given my advice and you know what? If you chose not to listen to me, that’s on you. Do whatever you think is best.” Tony said simply, which was as close as Steve was about to get to receiving Tony’s blessing. As he began to walk away though, he turned back to deliver one final threat to Steve (he had to, this was his kid they were talking about after all, it was obligatory). “But when it all ends badly I’ll be the one dealing with the kid and just so you know Steve, you’ll be moving out before he does so don’t fuck this up alright?”

“He’s not being serious Steve it’s not that dramatic, it’s just some wet pants.” Clint was quick to soothe when he saw Steve’s horrified expression. He knew from experience what the man was going through; after Peter was made aware that he was the one who found his wet underwear stashed on the ship, the kid had been the same way with him for a while. Peter avoided him for a couple weeks too but he supposed it was easier for him as they had the weekends apart, so they both had a reason not to see each other. But it got better on its own, just by acting normal with him
in the meantime and letting Peter get over his embarrassment gradually—though that didn’t seem to be working for Steve. Clint wanted to share that information with the soldier to make him feel better but he knew better than to break his promise to Peter (and Tony for that matter) about keeping the whole thing private; after all, it wouldn’t be great if Peter started up the behaviour with him too, he was running himself ragged just staying out of Steve’s presence.

As much as Steve wanted to believe Clint, he was starting to worry that it really was that dramatic. That he’d really messed up with Peter by letting it get to that point and that maybe there had been irrevocable damage done to their relationship. God, why had he let it go on for so long? Stupid Tony.

He was conflicted as to what to do. On one hand Clint seemed to agree with him and he was a father himself and he had the similar uncle type relationship with Peter, so essentially they had the same perspective but Tony was also right. He knew Peter better than anyone and it wasn’t like he was a typical teenager. Peter felt things very deeply and was just a generally complex kid, which Steve had always admired and that’s what he believed made him a great hero. But he was a hero with a minuscule self esteem and event like, as Tony had pointed out, one of his childhood hero’s witnessing him in one of his most vulnerable moments was probably earth shattering to him; it would be to anyone let alone a boy like Peter.

Steve didn’t know what to do but just as he was slipping into a pit of despair he finally his phone started buzzing in his pocket. Buzzing with a notification that he had been anticipating for weeks. Bucky was calling him, finally. Good timing Buck.

Steve eagerly answered the call, ducking into the privacy of his quarters just in time to hear that familiar, cocky voice. “Greetings, Cap’n.”

“Hey, Buck.” Steve answered, trying desperately to keep the sadness out of his voice but he should have known his oldest friend would sniff it out in a heartbeat.

“Uh oh I know that voice, what’s the matter?” Bucky said, concern creeping into his tone.

“No it’s nothing, how's the mission?” Steve said automatically but he did little to mask how defeated he sounded, as much as he wanted to he didn’t have the energy and he was terrible at hiding things when Bucky was around. Even if it was just a phone call his voice alone made Steve too comfortable, so his brain had lowered his defenses and allowed him to sound as sad as he felt. But he didn’t want to admit to what was wrong, even if Bucky could tell something was. He always felt guilty dropping his home troubles (especially ones that he’d caused no less) on Bucky’s shoulders when he was busy with work things. It hardly felt proportionate for Steve to moan about arguing with family members or how he was struggling to learn how to use a new app on his phone, when Bucky was out in the field, putting his life on the line. Not that that was anything out
of the norm for them but still. Then again, this wasn’t just a run of the mill issue, this was a big deal. This was Peter.

“Stevie. Don’t you think I know you better than that?” Bucky said knowingly, and Steve could visualise his expression just through his alone; that ‘don’t serve me water and tell me it’s wine’ face.

Steve sighed defeatedly, knowing there was no use in lying and to be honest he really needed to get some of this off of his chest; to get some advice from a (somewhat) neutral third party. “It’s about Peter.”

Bucky’s voice changed again, immediately flooding with concern, but a lot more urgent than it had been. “Is he okay? Is he hurt-“

“No no, nothing like that.” Steve said quickly. He felt guilty remembering he’d started the conversation that night Peter was shot with the same sentence and he cringed. “Well kind of but not physically, I don’t know I’ve messed things up..”

“What happened?” Steve went on to explain the whole situation in fine detail, Bucky listening tentatively the whole time; he let Steve tell the whole story first, only making noises of acknowledgement before he put his two cents in.

“Poor kid.” Bucky sighed sympathetically. “Steve this ain’t on you though, you haven’t done anything to make him scared of you he’s just embarrassed and that’s how he’s dealing right now, and honestly I don’t blame him. I’d hide if I peed in front of Captain America too.”

That last part was an obvious joke as Bucky had in fact done that very thing before but Steve wasn’t in the mood to find humour in anything. “But what do I do? I don’t wanna make it worse, Buck. I’m so scared of upsetting him more.”

“Go with your gut. You’re always right about these kinds of things.”

“That’s not true. Last time I went against Tony’s advice we both ended up wanted fugitives and now you’re-“

“Steve. Are you comparing politics to bedwetting?” Steve could practically hear the smirk on the
other man’s face.


“Well that’s a terrible analogy.”

“I mean, neither one of those are any fun.“ Steve said desperately trying to draw a reasonable comparison because to be honest he didn’t know why he used that as an example in the first place, considering he had a plethora of other arguments with Tony to choose from.

“Eh well that depends on who you ask babe-”

Steve scoffed and stumbled over his words a few times as he tried to suppress disgusted laughter. “Don’t be gross!”

“Made you laugh though didn’t I blondie?” Bucky smirked, even though Steve couldn’t see it he knew darn well that he was.

“Yeah yeah, you win.” Steve agreed shaking his head. Of course Bucky could make him smile at a time like this and of course it would be through the use of crude humour.

After a moment Bucky resumed a more serious tone however, as he gave his advice on the original point of the conversation. “Look you’re good with kids. And you’re good with me and I’m ten shades crazier than Peter so you’ve got this. Don’t overthink it so much.”

“I can’t help it, I’m just so scared of doing the wrong thing and making it worse.”

“You’ve got this.” Bucky repeated for added emphasis. “Peter loves you. I know things are awkward right now but it’ll pass I’m sure of it. If you wanna try and talk to him go for it, by the sounds of it things are already pretty bad so I doubt you’ll make them worse. If you talk to him at least you can say you tried. I know if it were me I’d want you to talk to me.”

The pair went on to talk about other things, such as Bucky’s current mission and when he would be home and Steve left the conversation feeling a lot more confident in himself. With Bucky’s
encouragement he decided to go with his instincts whilst also balancing everyone else’s advice. He wasn’t gonna go after Peter, he wasn’t going to force the boy into conversation if he wasn’t ready and he wasn’t going to fabricate an artificial scenario where the boy would feel pushed into anything. He wanted to give Peter a sense of control back which was likely what the boy was craving. Who could blame him?

However, Steve also decided if a situation arose where he felt that he needed to talk to him he would, such as if the boy needed help in anyway or if something particularly jarring happened such as the boy flinching or running at the sight of him again. If something big happened Steve was going to take the opportunity to open up a dialogue, so long as it was an appropriate time.

He was given that opportunity that very night, though it was decidedly more public than he had originally hoped for.

It was dinner time and as per the new routine it was the only time everyone bar Tony had seen Peter all day, the teen electing to sit at the far end of the table next to his dad instead of his usual seat. No one chose to comment on it and Steve kept up as usual; he greeted Peter normally with a friendly smile and warm words and this time his diligence seemed to pay off. He was given a small nod and a wave in return as Peter ducked into the room and sat himself down.

Steve couldn’t help but grin when that happened and both Tony and Clint gave him looks that said ‘see?’. As promising as that greeting had been Peter was still mostly silent for the duration of their meal but Steve didn’t mind much, he was just happy to see the boy eating.

However the calmness around the table was soon disrupted, namely by Thor recounting a particularly crude and inappropriate story that had everyone (other than Steve and Bruce of course, who seemed to be the only mature ones) rolling with laughter. That in itself wasn’t what caused the disturbance but Peter accidentally knocking his glass of water over was. Steve didn’t even think, automatically reacting by getting up and seeing to the mess as he usually would without their current awkward status crossing his mind. He stood up immediately grabbing a cloth and started wiping up the water.

Peter seemed more startled than ever. “Oh god, I’m sorry-“

“It was an accident buddy, nothing that can’t be fixed.” Steve trailed off towards the latter part of that sentence and the second the words left his mouth the tension in the room rose to above uncomfortable levels. Everyone fell completely silent as they knew what those words were reminiscent of and what they implied. Steve froze mid pose, still wiping the table, as did everyone else. There was a solid five seconds of no one moving or saying anything, not even breathing. The atmosphere was so awkward even Thor was affected, grimacing slightly.
It was pretty obvious to everyone that Steve’s accidental phrasing was a natural segway into a conversation that Peter had been avidly avoiding and the teens face reddened as a result, lighting up like a Christmas tree. So Peter did what came naturally to him, what he’d been doing all week. He ran away. Well he at least tried to.

The second Peter pushed his chair back away from the table, ready to scrabble up and make his escape to the sanctity of his bedroom, Steve positioned himself next to him so he couldn’t get past essentially blocking him in. Though initially Steve was worried this went against his own self imposed rule of forcing the boy into conversation, he felt this was the right time to talk to him; whilst Tony (and Clint for that matter) was there for back up- for both Steve himself and Peter to hopefully help make the whole thing easier on both of them. And frankly? Steve just wanted this to be over with. Maybe he needed to push Peter into talking, at least a little bit, or at the very least push him into looking at him for more than a millisecond.

But the awkward silence was too much for the teenager and as soon as Steve blocked his path it was obvious the embarrassment started to overwhelm him. His already bright red face grew darker and his chin wobbled slightly, though he tried his damndest to stop it from doing so. His eyes were also starting to look suspiciously shiny, all tell tale signs that he was about to burst into tears and good god Steve couldn’t take that. He wasn’t about to make the boy cry again, as much as he wanted this whole thing to be over he could never justify making a child cry. So he quickly got out of his way again to let the boy past. He didn’t want to leave it completely though and he opened his mouth to say something, intent on calling out to the boy this time instead of just letting him run off, but the words just wouldn’t come.

That was when, surprisingly, Tony grabbed Peter’s wrist, firmly pulling the boy back into his seat. It shocked everyone, especially Peter but no one more than Clint and Steve. After the conversation where Tony had so adamantly voted against making Peter talk he seemed to have changed his tune pretty quickly.

“Sit.” Tony said lowly, looking Peter in the eyes with an expression no one but the boy himself could read. His voice was serious but not angry. “You can’t keep avoiding this.”

Clearly Peter had had his own conversations with Tony regarding the stalemate that had broken out between the two. Once Tony was convinced Peter wasn’t going to make a break for it he let go of the teens arm and looked expectantly towards Steve, waiting for him to take the floor and get the dialogue rolling.

Only Steve wasn’t sure what to say, which was surprising. He always seemed to know what to say, kind comforting words for every situation- that was kind of this thing. But no amount of his Ted talks or seminars could have prepared him to handle such a sensitive topic, not with someone he
was so close to. And he didn’t want to just come out with a cheesy, generic statement, he wanted to handle it the right way, say the right thing. After another ten or so seconds of no one saying anything Tony opened his mouth to break the ice, but a certain redhead jumped in for him.

“Look Pete it’s not a big deal.” She said casually.

Peter..Peter did not react well to that. As if it wasn’t clear enough that everyone was aware of what was going on, Nat’s input had obviously been the last nail in the coffin and he immediately broke down into angry tears. “Great, so everyone knows?!”

He slammed his hands down flat on the table, knocking over everyone else’s glasses with the force (other than Bruce who had the reaction time to grab both his and Nat’s glasses before they fell into their laps- Clint wasn’t so lucky) and stood up again, this time determined to leave the room no matter who grabbed him.

But someone did grab him and this time it wasn’t Tony, it was Steve. Upon seeing Peter cry he’d mustered up the courage to handle the situation head on like he had intended to all along, his instincts kicking in before he could overthink his actions. He grabbed Peter’s wrist, a lot more gently than Tony had mind you but the boy’s dad flinched as though he had to fight his innate response to punch Steve for touching his son when he was upset (fucking dad brain, man, you can’t switch that shit off). Regardless of Tony’s reaction Steve didn’t let go and turned Peter to face him.

“Please, Pete. Please don’t run away again.” He asked, almost pleadingly and despite himself Peter sat back down.

After a short pause whilst everyone collected themselves and drinks were cleared up (and everyone took a brief second to laugh at Clint’s pants that had been dampened in an unfortunate area by his glass) Steve decided to try again. “I understand how embarrassing this is for you but let’s just talk about it openly here for a second. There is nothing to be ashamed of-

Once again Steve’s wording made the boy snap. “Why does everyone have to talk openly about my issues?! W-why does this have to be a big group discussion- It’s not fair all you guys get to have your secrets a-a-and things we know but just don’t t-talk about why can’t I be extended the same courtesy?!”

“Because you’re a kid and it’s our job to take care of you, collectively as adults and because we all care.” Clint was the one to answer Peter’s list of questions, which was surprising to the rest of the group considering the man tended to stay quiet during somewhat awkward or emotional
discussions; him talking seemed to surprise Peter too as it made the angry teenager take a step back and listen, if only momentarily. “We don’t want you to be scared or embarrassed or to hide things from us. If something like this happens when we’re on a mission or something and your dad’s not there to help, we want you to be comfortable coming to all of us about it.”

The insinuation that Peter would need help or that there was a likelihood of him wetting the bed again seemed to rile the teen up with newfound anger and he was automatically on the defensive again before Tony could intervene. “Well I’m not and I’m never gonna be! I’m not even comfortable with dad knowing and I- and I don’t need help! I’m fine and I’m old enough to deal with it on my own- and it’s not even a problem it was a one time thing!”

“Peter-” Tony stood up as Peter pushed himself away from the table intent on running out of the room again but he wasn’t about to allow him to do that. As much as he didn’t think this was the best way to go about it, they’d started the intervention now they couldn’t exactly back out of it without making things worse; if Peter left now he’d be even worse than before and avoid all of them, Tony wasn’t about to let that happen again.

“No!” Peter yelled when Tony took a step towards him. What his dad hadn’t accounted for was upon drawing Peter’s attention to him the teenager would realise just how mad he was at his dad in all this too. ‘Ah shit, didn’t think that one through, huh Stark?’

“And you- I can’t believe you told them that it- that I- ugh! I just can’t believe you-“

“I didn’t-“

“Liar! I know you talk to Bruce about it then he talks to Nat and then she probably tells Clint and- just- mm- why the fuck can’t I just have a little privacy around here?!” Despite the cursing, it was obvious Peter’s anger was dissipating again, making room for the tears of shame to start running down his cheeks though try as he might to stop them. He was also struggling to articulate himself, his stutter shining through due to all of the emotion in the room and he just wanted to run and hide. He was so frustrated and humiliated- he just wanted to be alone, was that so much to ask? It was taking everything in him not to bolt out of the room, by force if he needed to, he wasn’t opposed to punching whoever tried to get in his way- no that wasn’t true, that was just the fight or flight response and the teenage boy in him, he couldn’t really do that but he just wanted to get away.

“Peter we haven’t been talking about you, I swear.” Bruce provided, hoping to calm the boy down some.

“We haven’t.” Thor nodded in agreement. “In honest, little one, we didn’t need to discuss it.”
Everyone turned to the god at that point wondering where the hell he was going with that observation, with a mixture of confusion and anger on their faces; Clint and Tony both looked prepared to punch the god in the face should he put his foot in it and upset the boy even more but the rest of the room looked intrigued.

“W-what’s that supposed to mean?” Peter sniffled, trying his best to sound indignant but at that point this voice was barely above a meek whisper.

“It means we’ve all been there before, had our own issues with such things. It’s not difficult to recognise the signs.” Thor shrugged lightly but Peter scoffed.

“Oh yeah sure. Is this the part where you all tell made up stories to make me feel better?” He sniffed and wiped his sleeve across his face but he did sit back down.

“Would that help?” Steve asked genuinely and Peter gawked at him. “Not made up stories but..well I wouldn’t be opposed to sharing some stuff if that would make you feel-”

“No, no, no, that’s too cringey this is awkward enough as it is.” Peter shook his head and lent his elbows on the table in front of him, before burying his head in them. “This whole thing is starting to look like a bad episode of different strokes- oh my god this can’t really be happening-”

“Look it’s not that dramatic. None of this has to be.” Tony said, rubbing Peter’s back and he was surprised when the teen didn’t shrug him off. “We’re just talking, bubs.”

“We should have had a conversation about this a week ago, I’m sorry I let it build up like this-” Steve started.

“And why did you? You’re always going on about how we all need to talk more and you can’t even do it.” Peter said accusingly but he felt bad when he saw the guilt in Steve’s eyes. Still he was hurt and he felt the need to explain himself, like he was being put on trial. “I-I couldn’t bring it up because- ‘cause, well, I wanted to puke every time I saw you b-but I was waiting for you to come and talk to me and say it wasn’t a big deal and give your little bullshit speech back then- like you always do ..b-but you never did so I thought..I don’t know what I thought. Well I do but it’s not nice and you’ll all yell at me if I say it.”

“You’re right. I should have done that. I should practise what I preach but that’s what I’m trying to
do now.” Steve nodded in agreement despite the guilt the boy’s words caused him, like a knife in
his gut. He knew he should have gone and spoke to him earlier, he knew it. But that wasn’t going to
help things now, mistakes were made but he could make up for them and he wasn’t about to drop
Tony in it with the teen either even though it was technically his fault Steve didn’t talk to him
sooner. It wasn’t like Tony had set them up on purpose he looked just as upset as Steve felt about
what Peter had just divulged. “I’m really sorry Peter. I wanted to come and talk to you but I wasn’t
sure what to say at first and then..Well you were already pretty upset and I didn’t want to make
things worse. I’m sorry I made you feel that way.”

“S’okay.” Peter sniffled. “It’s my fault for bein’ so—”

“Hey now, none of that.” But now the metaphorical floodgates were open and they’d gotten the
whys of why the conversation hadn’t occurred before they could get down to the conversation
itself, the part that all parties were clearly dreading most. “What happened is nothing to be
ashamed of.”

Peter went silent again, blushing that familiar startling shade of red and stared at the table to avoid
eye contact; all as to be expected. It was obvious he was upset to have the private conversation be
broadcasted to the whole of the household but as Peter had quite rightly pointed out, everyone
knew anyway. It would only be more awkward if they suddenly moved the conversation elsewhere
anyway, they were in too deep. Steve continued.

“You had an awful dream, that’s reason enough to have an accident—” Peter visibly cringed at the
term ‘accident’ because that’s what adults used to describe what happens to small children during
potty training and he hated that word. It was entirely too cutesy to describe a fifteen year old— a
fucking fifteen year old who was about to turn sixteen, pissing himself.

Though Steve noticed his face didn’t let the reaction deter him. He wanted to destigmatize the
whole thing and he couldn’t do that if he changed his approach to one more vague. He knew that
pussyfooting around it by avoiding mentioning what happened to bring them there would only
exacerbate the situation so he couldn’t back out now. “—and you might think I’m making it up to
make you feel better but it’s true when I say I’ve definitely been there. On more than one
occasion.”

“Same here.” Bruce said tightly as he was clearly uncomfortable admitting it but he wanted to back
Steve up and make Peter feel better so he forced the admission out of his mouth. The other men bar
Tony nodded. He only nodded along when Nat elbowed him in the ribs.

“What? You didn’t nod either!” He whispered angrily.
“Because I haven’t but I can tell Peter about the hotel in Majorca if you like-”

“Don’t you dare -”

“Ahem.” Steve cleared his throat at the two bickering. Now was not the time people, serious conversation going on here. “See? PTSD is no joke- nightmares are no joke. Whether it’s sweat or pee I think it’s safe to say we’ve all woken up wet and terrified more than a few times. It’s kind of part of the job at this point.”

“Or blood if the person you’re sharing a bed with decides to lash out in their sleep and smash a lamp over your head.” Bruce smiled lovingly at Nat who squinted at him.

“I said I was sorry.” Nat hissed but she managed to make Peter chuckle by miming a recreation of the nocturnal attack behind Bruce’s back when he wasn’t looking.

“But besides that you have a kidney condition. Which again makes it understandable, even if you hadn’t had a bad dream.” Steve said, slightly more gently as he implied that they were all aware it may not just have been an isolated incident. “That alone would be explanation enough but add a nightmare on top of that and you’re asking for trouble.”

It was Bruce’s turn to join in comforting the boy once medical talk had entered the conversation; he tended to use numbers and statistics when it came to such matters, much like Peter did, falling back on facts sometimes made emotional topics easier to talk about. “And if we’re talking about the physical side of things, taking your age into account here; about 20 percent of five-year-olds wet the bed, 10 percent of 10-year-olds, and about 0.5 to 2 percent of 15-year-olds. In terms of medical things, that’s a pretty high percentage of the population still have issues with nocturnal enuresis into early adulthood. So that means at least four kids in your grade probably still wet the bed regularly, statistically speaking.”

That last part seemed to get Peter’s attention the most as he tried to imagine what people in his class would have the same issue as he did. He bet Flash was a bedwetter, that would explain why he was so angry all the time. The thought made Peter smirk slightly.

“You know all that off the top of your head?” Nat asked Bruce with an amused look on her face but that line of questioning was cut off by Thor jumping in on the conversation.

“My brother used to regularly wet his combinations far beyond what would be considered your age
and he didn’t have a kidney issue to blame—though in fairness he now claims that it was to do with him being a first giant and the heat of the blankets messing with the ice in his bladder or some load of tosh—”

“Loki was a bedwetter?” Clint asked with a smirk but Steve gave him a dirty look.

“Clint the whole point of this conversation is to make Peter feel better and you’re turning the talking point into a joke or something to laugh at someone for—”

“When he’s an asshole super villain who mind controlled me yeah, you can bet I’ll laugh at anything that causes him embarrassment or pain. That doesn’t mean I’m laughing at the bedwetting itself I’m laughing at him specifically.”

“Yes well he’s dead now so no matter.” Thor announced rather unnecessarily which made everyone except Clint mildly uncomfortable. They were well aware of that fact so there was no need for Thor to clarify, especially when they all knew how upset he got when it was talked about; come to think of it, the new matter-of-fact way he spoke about Loki had been a recent development. A very recent development, over the last few weeks in fact. Before Thor had always become belligerent if his brother was so much as mentioned in a negative way (which had caused many a fight between him and Clint in particular, but Tony as well) and would only talk about his early childhood memories of him. His sudden change in tone was odd and slightly concerning, and it definitely hadn’t gone unnoticed but then again Thor was a weird guy. No one really questioned it, no one other than Peter that is...the teen also noticed that Thor had just used the present tense for his brother and he hoped that the man was, you know, doing okay. Like, mentally. “I was just sharing so Peter understands that it’s not an uncommon issue among the youngest of a species.”

“Bruce had that part covered Thor, but do tell us more dirt on your brother I’m enjoying this—” Clint continued but Steve growled frustratedly.

“Guys.”

“I don’t do it all the time.” Peter suddenly blurted out, causing all the adults to stop and look at him; though the exclamation was sudden no one commented on it as it seemed Peter was finally opening up and contributing to the conversation. Everyone stayed quiet and allowed the boy to continue, fearing that any words of encouragement might have the opposite effect and cause him to shut down again. “I...I just don’t want you guys to think it’s like...a thing or something. I mean- I did- once but it was just because of the dream and- and I don’t think my kidneys liked the soda I drank at the movies very much..”
With that last admission Tony and Bruce both gave Peter a look which made the boy duck his shoulders down; somehow despite the looks with murderous intent he managed to continue.

“I- I’m not a bedwetter I just- I just happened to wet the bed, i-if that makes sense..” By definition of course, those two things equated to the same outcome but it was an important distinction for the kid so the adults all nodded in agreement as though it made perfect sense and the classification was very different. And of course, a few of them knew that Peter was lying about that fact, knowing he was actually having issues on a regular basis but they were never going to say it.

After a moment of silence and awkward nodding Peter turned his attention back to the blond he was supposed to be addressing. “Steve I’m sorry I got so..weird with you about it. I just..I’m really sorry I should’ve come and spoken to you instead of-”

“And I should’ve come and spoken to you, but we know for next time huh, Sport?” Steve smiled softly and Peter nodded and offered a small smile in return. “Do I get a hug to make up for the ones I’ve been missing all week now?”

Peter rolled his eyes and scoffed slightly but he did get up out of his seat and hugged the man, which made Steve feel so much better. Words were one thing but to have a hug as confirmation that he hadn’t ruined his relationship with the boy was another and it did wonders for his broken heart. That was until Thor decided to get up and cross the room to join in, practically winding Steve, so he was no doubt crushing Peter too.

“Thor! Jesus!” Steve managed to strangle out and he saw Nat grinning over the gods shoulder as she got up too, adding to the dog pile.

She looked over to the other three men who were still seated. “Come on guys get in on this-”

“Please don’t- you’re suffocating me!” Peter cried out from under the pile of bodies but he was still laughing so everyone took that as a good sign, a sign that he had oxygen at least. Eventually he managed to wiggle his way out and everyone let go, though Nat made a point of obnoxiously kissing Steve’s cheek just to make him blush.

Peter dramatically patted down his clothes as though he was covered in dust from the vents again and sighed. “Okay- okay that’s enough love, this is all entirely too cringey and I’m gonna vomit if we don’t stop talking about our feelings.”
“That’s my boy.” Tony beamed proudly.

“See dad? Now was that so bad?” Clint chuckled, clapping a hand on Tony’s shoulder.

“Yeah okay I get it, next time I’ll have them have a heart to heart sooner rather than later.” Tony grumbled, admitting defeat. “After all whatever would Peter do without Steve? He needs someone who understands his sandwich preferences.”

“Huh?”

“Well apparently he only eats them if they’re cut-”

“Into triangles.” Everyone chorused like it was public knowledge. Like saying who was the current president or that the sky is blue. Everyone knew this weird piece of information but him? Was this real life? When did this become a thing or was it all some elaborate prank-

“What the actual fuck?!”
*Minor drug mention in this chapter*

I proof read about half way but it got late and my girlfriend demanded I come to bed- so sorry for any typos that appear in the second half of this chapter. XD It's kinda jumpy, more so a bundle of ideas I kinda stuck together but I don't know I kinda enjoy this chapter

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Oh my god- there you are!” Steve cried the second Peter came into view, swinging between gaps in the trees. He was covered head to toe in dirt and various other things from the dense underbrush and branches he waded through during their most recent expedition.

“Sorry! I-I got lost after I lost sight of Clint and I kinda fell out of one of the trees-” Peter called as he jumped down and jogged the rest of the way over to where the group were situated. Luckily Peter had found them thanks to Hulk clearing a grove during the fight. Man, Peter hoped Tony would keep up with his Anti-deforestation policy, there was a lot of logs strewn about the place-

“Are you okay?” Steve asked concernedly as he took in the boy’s rugged exterior. Tony was also concerned, of course, but he was staring scornfully at his son who had been ten minutes late to their scheduled rendezvous. If it wasn’t for him being able to make visuals on him when he was doing aerial surveillance he would’ve teared down half the forest. Sure he could’ve swooped in, picked the boy up and brought him straight there but no. He wanted to see if Peter would find his way back and he had, but barely.

Peter glanced down at himself. He hadn’t realised how filthy he’d gotten the suit. He’d fallen more than just the once and it showed, but he wasn’t about to admit that and worry everyone any more. Aw man, the suit was filthy! He’d be cleaning that thing out for a week! “Yeah I feel fine, I couldn’t scan myself because of the incognito mode on my suit but-”

“Oh god.” Clint gasped from behind him and Peter turned around.

“What?”
“Uhhh, Pete you might wanna look at your back.”

Peter craned his neck and span around slightly on the spot, like a puppy chasing its tail, trying to see what Clint was talking about. He wasn’t in any pain what was he- “My wha- oh my god.”

How hadn’t he noticed before? His suit was shredded to pieces (testing out a new light weight, breathable material for lower risk expeditions- it was good for high impact stuff like punches and bullets, but it tended to tear pretty easily- it was definitely back to the drawing board on that one boys) leaving most of his back and embarrassingly a lot of his underwear exposed. But that wasn’t the concerning part, the bit Clint was now struggling not to laugh at was the fact that Peter was covered in thorns- like, covered. Barely an inch of his skin was free from the pointy black things, making him resemble more hedgehog than boy.

He vaguely remembered getting caught up in a bush at one point but he never thought to check the damage. He was too focused on taking out that tank and besides- it hadn’t even hurt, but now that he’d seen them he could definitely feel it. They were everywhere, long black spikes jetting out of his skin in some very uncomfortable places. Peter was glad he hadn’t sat down next to Nat on that log a few moments before because he certainly would’ve felt them then.

Tony held his hands up and backed away, immediately starting to crack up with laughter. “I’m out.”

“But dad they’re-“

“Not my problem. I’m not spending my afternoon picking thorns out of your butt, Bruce can do that.” Not only did that sound tedious and awkward as fuck, needles of any sort were really not his thing. Nope, he’d leave that up to the resident medical professional; as soon as resident medical professional had regained consciousness.

“No wait- I can do it myself I could just reeeach- ow!” Peter tried his best to spin around in a circle and reach the thorns but he couldn’t; not a majority of them anyway and the ones he could grab he couldn’t see so he had no idea what was going on back there. He was flexible but not that flexible. After a few moments of desperately trying to resolve the issue himself he gave up. “What am I gonna do?! Bruce is knocked out after switching and I can’t sit in the car like this!”

“Guess you’ll have to stand then huh?” Clint snorted and even Steve started to smirk a little, though it was obvious he was trying desperately not to. “We could always tie you to the roof.”
“This is not funny they- ow!- hurt!” Peter yelled as Clint decided to oh so helpfully pull one of the ones sticking out of the boy’s shoulder when he turned away and he immediately started laughing at the boy’s reaction.

“Well look, just keep still and I’ll get em-"

“No- Ow! Get away from me bird brain!” Peter yelped and jumped away from the man again, facing his back away from the group. That was when Nat sighed and stood up from her perch on a log.

“Come here, curly.” She said flatly, already reaching into her utility belt as she started towards him, which made Peter very nervous.

“W-why? W-what’re you gonna do?” He stammered nervously and took a step back but she grabbed him by the shoulders and turned him around.

“Just chill, I’ve got you.” She murmured as she (unbeknownst to Peter, who was now propped up, like he was about to be frisked, against a tree) pulled out a roll of duct tape.

Quicker than anyone had the chance to say ‘oh my god Nat you crazy fuck, stop’ the woman had ripped off a piece and stuck a strip to the boy’s lower back where the needles were the most concentrated, making sure to cover the tips of each one. She then put a hand on the boy’s shoulder to both steady herself and him then said sweetly; “You’re gonna feel a slight pinch.”

“What are you- OW JIMINY CHRISTMAS WHAT THE HELL!” Peter screamed as Nat yanked the tape away, ripping out all of the thorns it had come into contact with along with it.

“There. Just like getting waxed.” She hummed casually, ignoring the teenager’s cries and the laughter from the men around her.

“Yeah well, I never planned on getting my butt waxed.” Peter groaned as he rubbed at the sore area.

“TMI.” Nat smirked. “But look see? Way quicker than pulling them out one by one.”
But Peter wasn’t thrilled by her ingenuity, in fact he was mortified by it. He really wasn’t having a
good day and that had really taken the biscuit.

“This day just keeps getting worse. First I wake up-” Peter managed to cut himself off just before
he admitted to something even more TMI; that he had woke up wet after a three day dry streak with
had devastated him, and as if that wasn't bad enough; “-late..Th-then I break my phone again, then
my ionic redactor blows up and I still have no idea why- and now this!”

Everyone just kind of let Peter rant, mostly because they didn’t want to add to what seemed to be a
long list of problems that day and also they were still struggling not to laugh at Peter the
Porcupine. Steve however soon stopped laughing once he realised just how long it had taken Peter
to get from point A to point B. “Peter it shouldn’t have taken you so long to find us, didn’t you
follow the coordinates?”

“I thought I was but I guess this compass is janky.” Peter said, shaking the broken piece of
machinery violently as though that was supposed to make it work. Tony had taught him well.

“That’s not a compass.” Steve said after he confiscated it.

“It is too.”

“No that’s an old pressure gauge, the numbers have just worn off, see?”

“Oh.” The boy said quietly. Now he felt dumb- well, if he didn’t feel dumb before when he turned
himself into an hors d’oeuvre by sticking a thousand toothpicks in his back. Now he felt double
dumb. Today was not his day.

Clint took the gauge from Steve and turning it over in his hands. “Where did you even find this
thing? It’s older than you.”

“Dad’s desk.” Peter shrugged.

“Hey!” Tony called from a ways away in the woods from where he was doing god knows what.
“Keep your grimy little hands off my shit you little troll!”
“Make me!” Peter called back before returning his attention to Steve, who still looked very concerned.

“Peter do you always rely on Karen to get you places?” Steve asked, giving Peter a concerned look.

“Maybe.” He said coolly. Why wouldn’t he? She was more reliable than his sense of direction and usually there was no reason not to. He would’ve used her this time but their mission had required them to cut off all forms of telecommunications and go on complete black out. Peter wasn’t even allowed to switch Karen on in case her signal was intercepted and blew his cover, he had to wait for Clints cues via arrows just to know what was going on; Hence why he had been stuck in the middle of the woods not knowing where anyone else was in the first place. He hadn’t been given the okay to use his navigation system so he had just hoped for the best and followed the direction he thought he last saw Clint.

The archer had left a trail of arrows as soon as he noticed Peter was no longer in the trees behind him, but that didn’t help much considering he hadn’t noticed for a quite some time; long enough for Peter to get himself completely turned around. He just hoped the kid hadn’t been picked off by a secret ambush or something or Tony would’ve killed him. Luckily not, he’d just been ambushed by..well, an actual bush instead.

“Has Tony never taught you how to fend for yourself?” Steve asked. Uh oh that was his serious voice. “What if we weren’t here and you had to get somewhere without your suits help? You wouldn’t be able to track us so what would you do?”

...I’d befriend a wild deer and live amongst their herd for awhile- ow.” Clint clipped him round the ear for his stupid suggestion.

“Idiot.”

Peter gawked at him. It hadn’t actually hurt but how dare he! Only Tony got to do that! “Steeeewe! He hit me!”

“Clint don’t hit him.” Steve sighed as the pair poked their tongues out at one another. “Peter I think it’s time we give you some extra training on how to survive on your own in an emergency situation.”
“What like, maps and stuff?”

“That too. Can you make a fire?”

“Not without a lighter or matches but I’m an engineer, I’m sure I could figure it out-”

“Do you know what plants are safe to eat and which ones are poisonous?” Nat chimed in.

“Nope, but I could probably google it.” Peter shrugged.

“And what if you didn’t have you phone.”

“I’m a teenager, I’d already be dead.” Peter said sarcastically and Steve gave him an exasperated look.

“Right. Well we’re gonna do something about that- but first let’s get you de-spined.” Steve sighed as he looked at the boy in front of him.

Peter was confused when he said that, he thought he’d just had all the thorns pulled. “I thought Nat just did that?”

“Oh honey no, there’s a lot more where that came from, it’s gonna be a long night.” Nat smirked as she span the roll of duct tape on her finger.

The very next day Steve came down to the lab and announced to Tony that he thought it would be a good idea if he took Peter out into the field to do some basic survival training with him; and by out in the field he meant a literal field. Or desert. Or forest. “I think it would be a good idea, just to give us some piece of mind that he’d be able to keep himself alive if he was ever stranded for some reason.”

“Look Steve I agree with you there but Peter’s not exactly great with..” He trailed off as he looked behind him, where Peter was tuning two different machines with each hand, making himself look like the poster boy for nerds. That was a pretty apt description of him honestly, and usually Tony
was all for that, but not when he was trying to look for something that would him more faith in the boys ability to survive without aid from technology in an emergency situation. “He’s a city boy-

“JUST A CITY BOY!”

“Oh dear god don’t start-”

“BORN AND RAISED IN SOUTH DETROIIIT~”

“Peter!”

“HE TOOK THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN GOING ANYWHEEEEERE~”

“PETER!” Tony bellowed over the top of the boy’s scream-singing. He should have known better to use that phrase, he’d made the mistake before; only last week he’d had to ban Peter from the lab for a day when he wouldn’t stop singing ‘Total eclipse of the heart’ when he asked him to turn around one too many times while taking measurements. He was only just getting over the headache.

“Sorry.” Peter said sheepishly, though he didn’t look particularly embarrassed because Steve was cracking up with laughter behind Tony and he enjoyed making people laugh too much.

“No more sugar for you!” Tony snapped, pointing an accusing finger at the teen- now that got his smile to drop. Tony one, Peter zero.

Tony took a deep breath before he turned back to Steve, resuming his usual calm tone of voice seamlessly. “He’s not built for camping Steve.”

Steve knew that. He was well aware of the boy’s aversion to certain things, such as sleeping in foreign places or just unfamiliar situations in general- especially if those situations involved getting dirty. Peter was known for being a bit of a neat freak, not too much, not to where it had become an issue; but enough to where Steve could count on him to be his cleaning buddy when everyone else got too lazy to help. That combined with Peter's recent sleeping habits Steve figured that Tony’s first reaction to his proposition would be a resounding no.
With all that in mind Steve felt he’d come up with the perfect solution to help ease Peter into the whole thing. “Well that’s why I thought we’d stay in a cabin, that way we can explore the wilderness during the day and get some exercises in- then kiddo can still sleep in a place with a roof, four walls and running water. Everybody wins.”

“I don’t know- pint size what do you think?” Tony called back, to where said pint size was now suspended from a bar on the ceiling and he dropped himself down using a web; remaining suspended in his signature pose he decided to join in the conversation still upside down. Nothing out of the usual there.

“It sounds like fun! So long as it’s nothing like the one you dragged me to last time and you agree to deal with any bugs that are in the cabin.” Said the kid literally hanging from the ceiling. It amazed Tony how Peter could never see the irony in his fear of insects.

“Are you included in that? Because I deal with you on a daily basis-”

“Ha ha ha. So funny.” Peter laughed sarcastically as he dropped down, flipping himself right side up. “I’m serious.”

Tony sighed but held up his pinky and beckoned for the boy to come closer so he could whisper to him knowing Steve would give them the privacy not to listen in even though he could. He was right, the blond set about inspecting some random display on the wall to give the pair some semblance of privacy. “I’ll be on pest control so long as you promise me no more caffeine binges especially on this trip.”

Peter shuffled from foot to foot seemingly weighing his options so Tony added a little more incentive. “Unless you wanna deal with the creepy crawlies yourself and have Steve find out what you’ve been doing to stay up late- not to mention Bruce-”

Peter’s eyes went wide showing he’d made his mind up. “Okay okay fine, I promise. But I don’t..I don’t want everyone finding out about the..”

The teen trailed off but luckily Tony knew exactly what he was referring to. Understandably Peter didn’t want to say it out loud, especially given the fact that Steve of all people (as polite as he was being, with all of his humming and pretending to be distracted) was currently in the room with them.
“We’ll find a way to work around it. You said it’s getting better now though, right?” Peter nodded sheepishly.

Since the whole couch wetting incident Peter had gone to farther lengths to both hide and prevent his nightly accidents from his housemates, including his dad, going so far as getting a washing machine in his bathroom and lying to Bruce about it during his weekly checkups. He’d told Tony that his accidents had gone down to once or twice a week at most (and luckily Tony had believed him and stopped asking, by some miracle) when really that wasn’t the case at all. It had barely improved.

He’d taken to, as Tony had pointed out, binging on contraband caffeine to help him stay up later to avoid the problem- though he thought he’d been stealthy enough for no one to find out he should’ve known his dad would catch on to him. Besides the energy drinks he was also setting alarms every few hours to wake him up to go pee, though sometimes he snoozed them when he was too tired or he’d even sleep through them some nights. Those were the times he could count on waking up wet but he couldn’t just stay up all night. He’d had tried that countless times in the past, even when he was younger and had the same issue before, it just doesn’t work. It’s not sustainable long term, even if it worked for a single night here or there. Well to be fair neither was what he was doing now but he was trying his best. Maybe he should be honest, even with just Bruce, despite the embarrassment; maybe there was a medicine the doctor could give him to stop it or something...

Whilst Peter was considering telling their resident physician, he certainly wasn’t about to tell his dad. Not only would he be mad (especially after the whole family talk about the stupid thing- god that was embarrassing and he really didn’t wish to repeat it) at him for lying, he didn’t want the man to treat him like a baby for it. Or worse, secretly start judging him. He knew his dad wouldn’t say anything mean (or at least he hoped he wouldn’t) but in Peter’s eyes, it had been too long since the shooting for him to be able to blame it on that. He didn’t want Tony looking at him like this broken little thing anymore, not when things had just started getting back to normal.

No, he wasn’t telling his dad. He’d let Tony think it really was getting better. One way or another Peter was gonna make it get better anyway, without his dad’s help, so he wasn’t really lying. He was just stretching the truth. A fake it till you make it kinda deal. He didn’t need help, he was a big boy, he could handle it on his own.

“Then it’ll be easier to manage and you know that no one will make a thing out of it if something does happen. That’s why we had that whole intervention. I’ll make sure Steve picks a place with a washing machine.” Tony smiled gently, which unknowingly only made Peter feel worse for lying to him...he made it so difficult when he was being all nice and understanding- fuck you Tony, why couldn’t you just be a standoffish asshole like usual?

Peter nodded again but looked like he was gonna die or cry from embarrassment so Tony ruffled his hair and stood up, gesturing for Peter to follow him back over to where Steve was. He was
Tony sighed and turned back to Steve, who was currently inspecting a pencil pot like it was the most interesting thing in the world. “Okay Steveo, pick a place and I’ll get things sorted.”

“Excellent! It’s been a while since I’ve taken some time off to do something fun.” Steve grinned excitedly before he made an effort to conceal his expression. “Though of course it’s still, you know, work…”

“Steve you’re allowed to be excited at the prospect of making s’mores.” Tony smirked. Steve was grinning like a little kid on Christmas and Tony couldn’t help but encourage him. It was nice to see him smile like that, it had been a while. God he was getting soft, what was fatherhood doing to him?

“Wait- s’mores? Why didn’t you lead with that- that’s all you had to say! I’m in!”

“Of course, I forgot the way to Peter’s heart is through his stomach.” Tony said dryly.

Steve shuffled slightly where he stood. “You know, if we could get the clearance I was thinking we could make this a family affair-”

Tony cut him off, adamantly shaking his head. “Oh god, no no. That would make it a vacation-”

“Did someone say vacation?” Came a voice from the vent that made everyone jump.

“Barton what the fuck?! Get out of there!” Tony yelled.

“Hey I was just seeing if Peter’s got anymore candy stashed up here but all I found was some blankets and a- What is this thing-”
“DON’T TOUCH IT!” Peter screamed which made Steve and Tony jump again and give him suspicious looks.

“What’s in there?” Tony asked expectantly as Steve crosses his arms to show Peter that his dad had back up.

“N-n-nothing- why is he allowed in the vents anyway?!” Peter stammered in an attempt to divert his dad’s attention back onto Clint. It worked.

“He’s not- no one is- why do the morons I live with suddenly think it’s okay to go crawling around in the vents?!”

“Who says it’s sudden? I’ve been doing it for years.” Clint said calmly, his voice now echoing from a slightly different direction. “You ain’t the first kid-”

“Well stop it! Both of you! And don’t go leaving stuff up there it’s a health and safety hazard!” Steve yelled and both pouted like a couple of kids (though of course they couldn’t see Clint doing so). Where was Peter going to hide his candy and his... other things, now?

“Fine but only if I get told more about this vacation!” Clint called.

“See what you’ve started Steve?” Tony turned angrily to his blond, former parenting partner. “And wait a second- since when are any of you allowed in my lab? Skedaddle.”

“Oh come on, it’ll be fun!” Steve said.

“Fun? When are family vacations ever fun? They’re designed to be the complete opposite. You’re forced to spend time together in a place that most likely doesn’t even have WiFi and you slowly go crazy, realising you hate each other then you go home and wonder why you ever agreed to go in the first place.” Tony deadpanned but Steve’s enthusiasm didn’t waver despite his friends constant nihilism.

“See? Fun!”
“Aww please dad? We all need a break after everything that’s been going on round here. Just one weekend? It is summer break after all.” Peter said sweetly, adding the puppy dog eyes that he knew Tony was defenceless against and surprisingly, Steve joined him in his begging tactics. Of course his rendition of Peter’s signature look wasn’t nearly as cute but those big blue eyes were actually pretty persuasive. God damn it.

"Can't we just go to Disney World or something?" Tony tried to bargain but the weaponised puppy dog eyes he was being attacked with only intensified.

“Ugh, Fine. Honestly, the things I do for you two.” Steve and Peter high fived one another as Tony wiped a hand tiredly over his face. “Now scram Spangles, we’ve got work to do. You too Clint.”

“Aw,” Came a sad noise from the vent that was quickly followed by the sound of the archer crawling away.

Steve announced at dinner that night what his plans were for the following weekend and everyone seemed enthusiastic about it but none more than Clint; Peter hadn’t noticed before but he wasn’t the only one with slightly animalistic tendencies. It turned out Hawkeye wasn’t just descriptive of the man’s fighting style with his birds eye view and silent takedowns- he also had some mannerisms related to his ‘theme’ as Ned had called it. Other than his affinity with the vents as Peter had discovered earlier that day, when the archer found out their weekend away would involve wilderness training he practically flipped his shit. Apparently the woods was the man's natural habitat and Nat whispered to Peter that she was convinced he would go feral if they would let him. Tony could hardly say no to the trip now, not when everyone was so excited about it, so he reluctantly agreed to get the sign out papers done in time for the next weekend to roll around.

After Peter had gone to bed that night Nat went to ask Tony if he’d considered asking Pepper to join them since it was going to be a whole family thing; but he immediately cut her off without letting her finishing and tried to move the conversation along to something else. It took her a second to realise why he had been so dismissive. “Ohh, does kiddo not know you two are bumping uglies again?”

“Do you have to be so crude?” Steve.

“What? Peter’s in bed and you guys sealed all the vents, it’s not like I’m corrupting him with my ‘foul language’.” Nat mocked Steve's voice right in front of the man which made his expression sour even more, before returning her gaze to Tony. “So is that it?”
“I haven’t spoken to him about it yet, no.” Tony said, his somewhat tight even though he was trying his best not to let on how uncomfortable her line of question was making him. He felt like a murder suspect under a hot lamp, everyone's eyes on him like that. “He knows that were friendly again of course but I haven’t gotten around to telling him that we’re back together.”

“Why not?” Steve asked confusedly.

“Because I haven’t and that’s my choice.” Tony said snappily, showing his friends that he wasn’t about to have that conversation and shut it down. He had his reasons, namely he wasn’t sure how Peter would handle the news. As much as he knew the boy liked Pepper they hadn’t interracted much yet (that wasn’t for want of trying, both P’s had repeatedly asked to spend time with one another but Tony wasn’t quite ready for his two worlds to unite yet. That was his biggest fear in all of it, that they’d unite against him. And he just- he just wasn't ready yet, okay? He didn’t need to justify that to anyone, especially not his housemates.

Steve held his hands up to show his surrender. He recognised that tone and he backed away quickly. But Nat didn’t know when to shut up. “Oh come on, can’t you ask her to tag along? I’d like not to be the only girl for once.”

“You’re a girl?!” Clint asked pretending to be utterly shocked and Nat smacked him.

“I should hope so.” Bruce said lightly.

“Hey, no one’s judging ya Brucey, it’s 2017 afterall-”

“You’re an asshole.”

“In answer to your question Nat, no. I’m sorry you’ll just have to deal with us boys on your own for a weekend.” Tony sighed.

The weekend rolled around quickly and everyone decided to head to their destination late Friday afternoon so they could take advantage of the full three day weekend they had booked off. Steve didn’t pick a safehouse too far away; it was still in New York at least but it was a fair drive. Luckily Tony bagged himself an easy car ride with just Peter and all their gear- if easy meant listening to a mix of both epic and trash music and stopping every hour. One time was because the teen saw some ducks and wanted to feed them the grapes he’d brought with him (“Since when do you have fruit as a snack?” “They’re not for me I brought them in case we saw some ducks-
they’re healthier for them than bread- and we did!”). He also had to put up with the long, stress
ridden phone call from May; after her fretting on the phone about Peter wearing bug spray for
twenty minutes Tony made Peter put him on speakerphone.

“Ma’am you realise your nephew is a superhero right? He’s fought bigger foes than mosquitos.”

“Oh I know he’s a superhero, same way you know how he became one in the first place. So unless
you can promise me with 100% certainty that there aren’t anymore radioactive bugs going around I
don’t wanna hear it.” Well. That shut him up and Tony immediately regretted opening his mouth
because he made himself May’s next intended target. “And you mister man- have you got your
inhaler with you this time?”

“Yes...” Tony said somewhat sheepishly. There she goes making him feel like a little kid getting
scolded again. Next time she was bugging Peter he’d leave his son to it without getting caught in
the crossfire.

They all arrived in one piece to the safehouse. It wasn’t an overly large or extravagant affair,
though it was definitely a significant improvement to the last one they'd visited (an indoor
bathroom for example); there were just enough rooms for everyone to have their own bar from,
ahem, Bruce and Nat who were sharing. There were basic amenities, running water, electricity and-

“Oh my god they have a Wii!” Peter yelled excitedly as soon as he clocked eyes with the console.

“Peter the bathroom is right down the hall.”

“Ha ha oh my god you’re so funny- grow up Clint.”

“Says the one who’s excited over a Wii. I mean damn, we drive all the way out here to get you
enthused about nature and you-”

“Thor! They have Mario Kart!”

“Aw hell yes!” Thor threw the things he had been carrying in favour of jumping over the back of
the couch to join Peter cross legged in front of the small television. Unfortunately Thor had thrown
his bags directly into Bruce who was walking behind him. Luckily Mr. Green didn’t make an
appearance but Nat gave Thor a pretty shade of purple bruise on his jaw. Oh well, it was worth it as
soon as they booted up the game.

Despite having mocked Peter for his excitement Clint wanted to play too and that meant there was one spot left. Tony had disappeared momentarily (likely to help Nat and Bruce finish unpacking their bags since the rest of the group had seemingly forgotten their adult duties) so that spot went to Steve. It took awhile for the man to get used to the controls, which meant he came last every time-at first. Not that the blond was particularly competitive when it came to video games, he was just happy to have been included and that Peter had the patience to show him what he was meant to be doing, but after a few games he started getting the knack of it; actually over taking Peter and coming third as opposed to fourth on their fifth track.

“Come on youngling! You cannot lose to this ice man that’s absurd!” Thor cried looking disappointedly at his gaming partner.

“Yeah Pete, that is pretty bad.” Clint snickered.

“Hey, hey now, don’t be mean. Steve won fair and square and you guys should be proud of him for picking it up so quickly.” Peter ‘scolded’ his older counterparts which caused Steve to smile.

“Thanks, Sport.” He bumped shoulders with the boy.

“Welp, I’m bored now, you guys suck.” Clint announced as he got up to go check on Nat, who had yet to reemerge from her room; Peter didn’t see but as he did so Bruce gave the man a look that said ‘I wouldn’t do that if I were you,’ and shook his head at him.

“Spoken like a true loser.” Thor chuckled.

“I came first you idiot.”

“Yes, well, I had yet to unlock my true potential as I wanted to make you feel like you’d actually accomplished something-”

“Be nice or it’s going off.” Peter warned, giving Thor a pointed look.
Thor sighed dramatically. “And a worthy adversary you were birdman.”

“Whatever loser.” Clint grinned as he walked away.

Thor growled angrily and pointed after the man but Peter simply shrugged. “He’s not playing anymore I can’t threaten him by turning it off.”

However Clint having given up on the game now meant there was an extra remote and Tony had just so happened to reappear. But before Peter even opened his mouth, without taking his eyes away from his phone Tony gave the boy his answer. “No.”

“Come on, Dad.” Peter said teasingly as he waggled the controller in front of his father's face in an attempt to entice him into joining.

“I’m busy.” Tony said flatly, only reacting by moving his phone so he could see the screen instead of a white plastic rectangle.

“Come on pleaseeease?” Peter begged, going as far to pout and wobble his bottom lip.

Tony sighed. How was he meant to say no to that face? “Fine. One game, then I need to get back to these emails.”

“Yay!”

Tony grumbled as he moved seats and grabbed the remote before he saw what character he was playing as and he looked over to Clint with a smirk on his face. “Princess Peach? Really?”

“What’s the problem Tony, I thought you liked blondes?” Clint cocked his head innocently, knowing full well that Tony couldn’t clap back without Peter catching on to how upset he was by the comment; then that would raise questions. Questions Tony had made clear he wasn’t ready to have Peter ask yet.

So Tony settled with flipping the Hawk the bird and returned his attention to the game he was meant to be playing. Peter showed him what buttons to press and tried to give him advice but he
brushed the teen off. It was a racing game, you go around in a circle, it was hardly difficult. Except that it was because not even twenty seconds into the round Tony dropped to last place and started making noises of frustration, the likes that Peter had only heard when something was going very, very wrong in the lab.

“What’s wrong with this stupid thing?” He grunted as he made dramatic turning motions with the plastic wheel which sent his corresponding character sideways, scraping their car across a wall instead of going, you know- *forwards*.

“You’re turning it too much.” Peter chuckled at the man’s steering. Had he been driving a real car Peter was pretty sure any and all passengers would end up with a pretty severe case of whiplash.

“No I’m not! The sensors are too sensitive!” Tony yelled and smacked the controller. “Mines busted this isn’t fair.”

“I didn’t have a problem with it.”

“Shut up Barton.” Tony grumbled and continued spamming buttons that weren’t actually doing anything since he didn’t have any power ups to use. “Who hit me?!”

“Sorry.” Steve smiled sheepishly.

“Nice one Steve! You’re over taking Thor!” Peter congratulated the man. It seemed he’d finally gotten the hang of a video game after a literal year of Peter trying to find one he liked that had graphics above 8-bit and Peter couldn’t be prouder of him.

“Yeah because he cheated.” Tony grumbled as he started *rhythmically* spamming buttons, as opposed to randomly like he had been, despite the fact that had little to no effect on the character he was controlling on the screen. Did he really think that was doing something?

“He didn’t cheat, Dad, that’s the point of the game.” Peter snickered. He had no idea his dad would get so competitive over a video game, maybe this was why the man had always refused to play with him until now. It was highly entertaining to see a grown ass man get so upset over *Mario Kart*.

“Well it’s not very sportsmanlike.” Tony grumbled. Then the game ended and he saw his spot on
the leaderboard. “What?! No way did I come last to you sorry bunch.”

“Ehh well it seems you did my friend. Come now, young Peter finally came above fourth place!” Thor clapped Peter on the shoulder and beamed at him.

“I’m twelfth?! There’s only four of us!”

“You’re forgetting the NPC’s.” Bruce chimed in. “But you’re fourth out of you guys, so that’s better right?”

Tony looked like he was contemplating hurtling the plastic wheel at Bruce’s head when Peter smiled sheepishly at him, ducking his head down. “Sorry dad, I tried to let you over take but you were going the wrong way-”

“I wasn’t going the wrong way Thor threw a yellow thing!”

“You mean a banana peel?” Clint smirked from his perch on the couch.

“Yes I mean a fucking banana peel - Shut up Barton! And how dare you try and let me beat you! I don’t need your charity, Parker.” Tony hissed and threw his controller beside himself angrily.

“I don’t mind, I don’t wanna see you have a bitch fit over it.” Peter snickered but promptly stopped and looked apologetically at Steve. “Sorry Steve.”

“No Pete you’re right, this is most definitely a bitch fit.” Steve agreed looking just as amused by Tony’s childish behaviour. “Hey were you letting me win young man?”

“No! That was all you Steve!” Peter shook his head back and forth quickly. He totally had been but he wanted Steve to build his confidence up- and hey, he was still better than Tony apparently. Seriously, how was someone who discovered a new element that bad at a simple racing game?

“We’re playing again!” Tony declared with newfound vigor as he snatched his remote back up.
“I thought you said just one game?” Bruce asked slyly.

“Well that was before I realised I live with a bunch of cheating bastards! Steve swap remotes with me!” Tony demanded and the blond obliged, rolling his eyes. He didn’t fail to notice as Nat snapped a picture with her phone of Tony Stark with a neon pink Wii remote wheel, as she passed by on the way back to the confines of her room. “Besides I was just getting the hang of the controls.”

After another few rounds Tony was forced to stop playing on doctors orders (Bruce was worrying that he’d give himself another heart attack if ‘Jack Frost and the Space Pirate’ beat him again). The other three men continued to play until they lost Steve after their brief break for dinner, which Nat had elected to skip, claiming she had a headache, which Peter found odd but whatever.

Since it was no fun for Thor and Peter to play against each other, they opted to start playing a co-op platformer game. It wasn’t nearly as forgiving as the usual Mario Brothers style platformers they were used to and it took a concerted effort not to die on the very first level. The pair ended up having to restart the entire game several times but they enjoyed the challenge- up to a point, where Thor started getting peeved at the mechanics. It was nearing eight o’clock before they managed to get past the part they’d been stuck on and the rest of the household had actually become rather invested in their gameplay; mostly they were getting their entertainment from Thor’s increasing levels of frustration (though it was nowhere near where Tony’s had been) and Peter’s contrasting undying patience. After a little while though, Steve noticed Peter had become pretty fidgety; not that he had been sitting at all still before, often moving around to mirror the character on screen, but it had become a lot more frequent and random. It was pretty obvious what was bugging the boy.

Steve poked Peter on the shoulder. “Break time kiddo.”

“I will in just a second, we're almost done with this level.” Peter said around his tongue that he was sticking out as he concentrated on reaching the trapdoor just as Thor stood on the button to open it.

“You said that ten minutes ago. Come on, pause the game.”

“It doesn’t pause Steve, it’s a platformer.”

“Well you guys can restart the level in a minute-”
“We’re down to our last life, Steven! If we die now we’ll have to go all the way back again!” Thor said accusingly as Peter had been the one who made them lose their last three lives for various minor errors that could’ve been avoided had the boy been paying better attention. Well it was difficult to focus on dodging fireballs when you were trying to avoid peeing your pants, with an audience no less.

Still Thor was right, they couldn’t afford to take a potty break now, not when they were so close. “I’ll go in a minute I swear.”

“Uh huh.” Steve hummed suspiciously but he couldn’t say much else without Peter kicking up a fuss. He shared a look with Tony who seemed to share his sentiment. The boy would have to learn on his own to get up when he needed to.

Another ten minutes went by with Peter’s squirming becoming increasingly more obvious and he kind of gave up trying to be surreptitious about it. He had to focus all of his energy on the task at hand, he couldn’t afford to waste it on trying to stifle his wiggling. He could be embarrassed after the Gorgon was defeated.

“Peter come on! Get your head in the game!” Thor urged him, when the boy failed to dodge yet another attack and had to use his last health potion in order to perform his special attack- which evidently he had mistimed also and ended up wasting as he watched the ball of blue energy sail past the monster it was meant to hit. Dangit.

“It’s getting bad alright?! Real bad- I’m trying here!” Peter snapped back, his patience finally starting to breakdown along with his bladder control.

“Guys come on, time for a break-” Bruce tried to interject but the two (mentally) youngest rejected his attempt.

“It’s a boss fight!” They both said in unison.

So Steve decided to take initiative before it was too late. He reached forward and snatched the remote from Peter’s hands. “I’ll play then- you go pee.”

Peter and Thor both looked at the blond as though he’d gone completely insane and gawked in horror. “Steve no! You’ll get us killed!”
“Keep fighting me on it kid.” He simply shrugged and continued to hold the controller as far away from Peter as possible, though the boy wasn’t making any attempts to snatch it back; that was too risky. One mispressed button and the Gorgon would easily kill Peter’s avatar leaving Thor’s alone and defenceless without it’s tank. This was practically a hostage situation and Peter was not about to negotiate with this terrorist! “The quicker you go the quicker you can get the remote back.”

Peter didn’t have time to argue, both for the sake of their game and his pants. “Ugh- Thor don’t let him kill me!”

Peter made a mad dash to the bathroom and back in two minutes flat, wiping his still soapy hands on his shirt as he ran back in.

“Better?” Steve chuckled.

“Yes now gimme!” Peter said urgently, making grabby hands at the controller but Steve didn't it to him. “Please!”

“There we go.” Steve smirked triumphantly and sat back down, allowing Peter to return to his spot and rejoin the game.

“Hey Steve you didn’t do half bad.” Peter commended the man on the good condition his character was in, better than he had left it actually. Well, colour him impressed.

He still ended up dying though, but it didn't matter. He managed to stay alive just long enough for Thor’s character to build up enough mana to obliterate the Gorgon and win the game. Apparently everyone was pretty over excited about it because as they were all congratulating the god on his technique Nat came out of her room looking absolutely murderous.

“Will you guys stop. Yelling.” Nat said in a low and threateningly quiet voice, which to Peter was much scarier than her yelling. “Some of us are trying to sleep off a migraine.”

“Sorry Nat.” And “Yeah, Sorry”’s resounded around the room, which fell silent until the woman slunk back into her room and slammed the door. So much for having a migraine, that sound was loud enough to send Peter’s earbuds ringing and he gripped the side of his head.

“Someone’s in a bad mood.” Clint griped but Steve gave him a disapproving look.
“Is she okay?” Peter asked concernedly he hadn’t seen Nat in such a bad mood in well- ever. It was concerning for someone who often showed so little emotion to have such an outburst. He’d seen her angry before, sure, a bunch of times but she had never been quite so upset, not with members of their household.

“She’s fine bud she’s just feeling a little..sensitive at the moment.” Steve said trying to dance around the subject by finding a word that he thought was vague enough to hold little meaning but unfortunately his choice of vocabulary lead to the teenager coming to an entirely different, entirely wrong conclusion.

“Oh.” He said quietly.

After an hour or so Peter started yawning so Tony sent him to go shower and get ready for bed. Not five minutes after he went to follow orders Nat came into the room looking decidedly less mad but really perplexed. “Guys.”

They all turned around to look at her. “Is Peter..okay?”

“Why?” Tony asked quickly, her tone alarming him as he sat up.

“Uhm, well the kid just handed me a bar of chocolate with a note saying he’ll give me some space for a couple days because he knows he’s annoying.” She explained, brandishing the two described items in her hand and everyone looked just as confused as she did. The boy had been fine not moments before? “Did I say something to him?”

“Uh no but I think I did..” Steve said guiltily which caused everyone to turn to him.

“What did you say?”

“Well I didn’t want to tell him about the whole..you know, SI situation, so I just told him you were feeling a little sensitive right now..” In reality Nat was feeling ‘sensitive’ because she was in a spot of bother with internal affairs after a division she was in charge of had ran into issue conducting a mission. It was a bureaucratic problem, something she had little experience with and Tony had tried his best to help but ultimately the decision was down to her; leading to more than a little stress for the redhead. Obviously they hadn’t told Peter about it because it really wasn’t something the kid need to concern himself with or would ultimately even understand, but Steve was wishing
he’d found a way to explain it in layman's terms.

“Oh for Christ’s sake.” Nat snorted, though the men in the room looked mildly uncomfortable. She turned to Tony. “You mean you didn’t tell him that’s not a problem with me?”

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“Of course I didn’t, why would I?” Tony said defensively.

“I don’t know, it never came up in conversation?” She chuckled, being honestly flabbergasted by the absurdity of the whole situation.

“Why would that come up in conversation? It’s no one’s business but yours and well, Dr Romanov now I guess.” Bruce’s ears flamed red at Tony's new nickname and the connotations of baby making that came along with what he'd just said. “Besides Peter won’t even talk to me about male puberty, not that I particularly want to- do you really think we’d talk about periods?”

“I don’t know what y’all talk about.” She shrugged casually.

“Do you want me to tell him?” Tony asked awkwardly.

“Oh fuck no.” She said with mock horror at the very suggestion. “Free chocolate and he’ll stay out of my way for three days a month? You think I’d pass that up?”

“You know, come to think of it, I’m feeling a little sensitive-” Clint laughed.

“You’re all a bunch of children.” Steve shook his head. “You shouldn’t lie to him about things like that. It could make him have trust issues in the future-”

“We’re not lying we’re just not telling the truth.” Nat shrugged and started eating her candy. Steve looked as though he was about to argue that point but he gave up, it was her decision ultimately after all. “And besides, I think the trust issues train has left the station with that one.”

“Tell me about it.” Tony grumbled.
Bruce went to steal a chunk of Nat’s chocolate but she slapped his hand away. “Uh uh! This is mine, it’s helping my cramps.”

“You don’t have any cramps!”

“You don’t know that.” She shrugged sassily through a mouthful. “Man, May has that kid trained well. I could get used to this.”

They didn’t mention anything about it when Peter returned after his shower but they did notice how the teen could barely keep his eyes open. Instead of heading to his designated bedroom though he settled himself on the couch next to Tony and leaned against him. No one thought much of it considering it wasn’t exactly unlike Peter to demand snuggles when he was tired but Peter ended up fighting sleep on the couch until Tony silently pulled him up and went into his room to talk him into relaxing enough to actually go to sleep.

But again, no one thought too much of it, figuring the boy was just nervous sleeping away from home for the first time in awhile and in a place so unfamiliar. Not long after Steve and Nat retired to their rooms also, Steve parting with a warning about how early they were getting up the next morning and to not stay up too late.

The only people who remained out in the living room were Clint, Thor and Bruce, surprisingly. For once Tony had decided to retire to bed early and for once Bruce hadn’t. The three men sat around talking late into the evening- well, as late as people who had to get up at six o’clock the next morning could and they may or may not have decided the crack open a bottle of Jack once the coast (i.e. Tony) was clear. It was around eleven when their conversation lulled but it wasn’t due to a lack of things to talk about; they were interrupted when a small curly headed figured appeared in the doorway with an odd expression on his face.

Thor, being the first one to notice, called out to the teen who looked as though he was looking for something. He was peering around the room with a confused, vacant stare. “Good evening young one, what are you doing out of bed?”

Clint and Bruce turned around and were greeted by the same sight. It had barely been an hour since the boy had been sent to bed so they found it odd that he was up again so soon. They found it even odder that Peter completely ignored Thor and continued walking through the living room right past all of them, without so much as looking in their direction. The three men exchanged confused glances with one another, silently asking if they’d all bared witness to the boy’s lack of acknowledgement, but ultimately they brushed it off wordlessly; they each figured the boy was still half asleep. As he made his way into the restroom at the other end of the hall no one questioned why the child looked so confused. Peter had a slight habit of forgetting where things were his first few nights in new locations. They’d all bore witness to this several times, so they all
counted themselves lucky that he hadn’t needed steering in another direction, lest they find themselves cleaning up a puddle the next morning.

Shrugging the minor interruption off, the trio went back to their topic of discussion, talking about how Steve’s most recent blunder had lead to to Bucky getting pulled from one of his missions and they were wondering if it had been deliberate. Bruce was in the middle of giving his theory when they heard odd noises coming from the bathroom.

“I don’t know, don’t you think it’s a little convenient that this happened right before he was due to go up to Ottawa for that-” There was a loud crash that emanated from the other room, sounding as though a collection of small objects had been dropped onto the tile floor. They’d later come to find out that Peter had knocked the contents of the countertop into the bathtub.

There was silence for a moment as all three men perked up at the noise; they waited for Peter to call out that he was sorry or that he was okay but he didn’t, which they all found equally concerning. “Pete? You alright in there?”

When the kid still didn’t answer Clint was the one who rose from his seat, fatherly instincts kicking in. Just as he was about to reach for the door handle it opened, revealing a slightly disheveled looking Peter.

Again, the man expected a slew of apologies or at the very least a look of recognition but the teen stared right through him. Before he even got the chance to open his mouth Peter continued walking, almost trying to barge through him as though he hadn’t even noticed he was there. “Uhh..Pete?”

Bruce and Thor had taken note of the boy’s despondent stare by that point and were surveying the scene with both amused and concerned stares. Clint was quick to back track and place himself in the boy’s path once again, realising that he had something clutched in his hand. “What’ve you got there bud?”

Clint moved slowly and deliberately, quickly catching on to the situation; he’d learned from experience not to wake someone when they were sleepwalking and he didn’t want to startle the boy but he had to make sure that he hadn’t taken a fancy to something he could potentially injure himself on. He gently grabbed Peter’s wrist and attempted to open his hand, and for the first time his eyes focused and he looked directly at him, though the teen didn’t look happy. He wined indignantly and jerked his arm away, clutching tighter at whatever he was holding.

“Hey, it’s okay- can I see? Can you show me what you have?” Clint surmised quickly that he was
going to have to be even gentler, especially when his dad brain jumped to the worst possible conclusion that Peter had a razor or something equally dangerous in his possession. His quiet tone and gentle prompting seemed to work though, as Peter opened his hand and he was immediately relieved to see that all Peter bore in his grasp was a slightly squashed tube of toothpaste.

“Oh Pete, how about we go put that back huh? You can brush your teeth in the morning.” Clint chuckled and attempted to take the tube away but as he did Peter blinked blearily a couple times, his eyes darting between gazing up at Clint and what now appeared to be his prized possession; as soon as the man took the tube out of his hand his chin started wobbling and had anyone else seen the face he was making they would have assumed Clint had just kicked a puppy. It immediately made the man’s heart race and he was quick to rectify his mistake. “Oh, no, no, no- it’s okay! You can have it back! You can keep it!”

“Well get on with it man.” Thor called from the couch, still clearly enjoying the show.

“I’m thinking.” Clint hissed through gritted teeth. He whispered despite his grievance with his two drunken asshole friends because he was scared if he spoke to loudly he’d set off the bomb that was a sleepwalking spider-child.

“Well I don’t see you two jumping up to help, I don’t wanna get punched by superkid!” Clint snapped, slightly more aggressive than he had intended to which he regretted immediately as Peter flinched away from him and closed his eyes. “Hey, I’m sorry. No, no Pete, I’m sorry I didn’t mean to shout.”
“M’cold.” The kid sniffed, keeping his eyes shut; he also started swaying slightly and looked visibly to be relaxing more, which Clint took as a good sign.

“Yeah? Let’s get you back to bed then huh, buddy? Nice and warm.” Clint said gently as he placed an arm around the boy’s shoulders and started to lead him back towards his room. Luckily Peter didn’t resist at all, if anything he started leaning towards Clint- a little too much in fact as he started to trip over his own feet.

“You know this would be a little easier if you opened your eyes?” The man chuckled but he was met with zero response. In fact he wasn’t convinced that Peter hadn’t completely fallen back to sleep and was just balancing somehow. He decided to cut his losses and just carry the child the rest of the way. “I’m gonna pick you up now, okay bud? Don’t freak out on me, I’m not gonna hurt ‘ya. I won’t drop you, I promise. But good god- Please, please don’t start swinging.”

But Peter didn’t seemed to be concerned at all that he’d just been effectively whisked off his feet without being consulted, as he wrapped his arms around the man’s neck and relaxed, still clinging to his tube of toothpaste as though his life depended on it. Clint managed to get the boy back to his room and tucked comfortably (and safely) into bed without incident, though he was still unable to pry the tube off of him.

When he re-emerged, his friends were still laughing. “Shut up, that wasn’t funny he could’ve hurt himself.”

“We’re not laughing at that part.” Bruce spluttered.

“Yes we’re laughing because you looked absolutely petrified.” Thor chortled, only making the archer furrow his brows more.

“Well I’m sorry but Lila has left literal scars on me and she doesn’t have fucking super strength. Excuse me for airing on the side of caution. Next time one of you can put Spider-Baby back to bed.” The man huffed as he threw himself down on the couch but now that it was over with he did smirk slightly himself, seeing the funnier side.

“If there is a next time.” Bruce put forward. “Tony’s never mentioned him sleep walking to me before.”
“Me either, some warning might’ve been nice. Dear god I hope he doesn’t make a habit of it, he gets into enough trouble when he’s awake.” Clint shook his head, reaching for his glass to finish off his drink quickly. The last thing he wanted was for the kid to sleep walk again and accidentally have his first taste of alcohol- that would lead to Tony snifffing it out (if he hadn’t already, maybe that was why he went to bed early) and that would open up a whole other can of problems. Drunk sleepwalking spider kid? Nah, that was where Clint tapped out.

“I don’t know. He didn’t seem particularly interested in mischief, he was more concerned about his upcoming battle with Steve’s arch nemesis.” Thor chimed in, drinking from his own glass. He only continued his thought when Clint and Bruce gave him quizzical looks. “Tooth decay.”

The next morning everyone rose bright and early (two of them with a mild hangover) and everyone busied around the cabin to get ready for the day. Steve had set out a full itinerary of the exercises they’d be doing that day and they were all excited; even Nat had perked up looking at their timetable.

“Morning.”

“Morning, T.” Steve called from his usual spot over the stovetop. “Kiddo up yet?”

“No, I let him sleep in a little. It took awhile to get him to sleep last night he was up pretty late.”

“Yeah tell me about it.” Clint grumbled causing Bruce to almost spit his coffee out.

“What was that?” Tony asked.

“Oh nothing, nothing.” He said quickly, but he took the opportunity to try and do some digging into just why all of a sudden Peter had decided to reenact the walking dead in the middle of the night. “Was he nervous about sleeping or something?”

“Yeah, had to give him some melatonin to get him down.” Tony hummed, a little glumly. The kid was so worried about wetting the bed (though he didn’t admit to that much, Tony knew that’s what it was bothering the kid, after all it wasn’t exactly hard to figure out) that he just refused to go to sleep then complained that he couldn’t- two pills of pharmacy grade sleeping medicine metabolised within minutes and he was out like a light.
Bruce and Clint exchanged glances. “Has he ever had that before?”

“No.”

“That explains it.” Bruce said quietly and Clint nodded.

“Explains what?” Tony asked but Clint diverted him.

“Why do you have melatonin anyway? Though you were on a no pill diet- bar the life dependant ones obviously.”

“They’re non prescription, I can get them over the counter.” Tony rolled his eyes.

“You can also get methadone over the counter.” Thor said though everyone was pretty sure he didn’t know what he was talking about. They weren’t convinced he even knew what methadone was, he’d probably just heard Steve mention it at one of his addiction seminars and thought that made it applicable to Tony too, despite drugs of that kind having never been his particular poison.

“Yeah, and you can get pregnancy tests too but does that mean I’m expecting?” Tony said trying to match the man’s logic and point out how flawed it was; but clearly he just made him more confused because Thor was suddenly looking down at Tony’s abdomen as though he expected a bump to be there.

“Yay! I’m gonna be a big brother!” Peter called from his room having stepped out to grab something. He appeared in the doorway in only his underwear and one of Thor’s hoodies that he’d stolen.

“Good god no! No you are not! One mini me is enough to handle I’m not about to go through all this again.” Tony said with a look of pure horror on his face. “My heart couldn’t take having two of you waltzing around-”

“But I’d be a great big brother!” Peter whined.

“Not happening. I’m not creating a whole other human just so you can fulfill your fantasies.”
“Well you won’t let me get a dog!”

“No I won’t, you’re exactly right. Because dogs take a lot of time, patience, resources etcetera. So following that train of thought- why would I have a baby?”

“I mean, I assumed Pepper would be having the baby but hey you do you-”

“Watch it.” Tony snarled. Even though he knew Peter that he was in fact seeing the woman again (though they had no plans on procreating) that didn’t stop his heart from racing at the joke.

“Aw come on- please ?”

“No! Do you think I have the time for all that?!?”

“You make time for me!

“Exactly! You take up all of my spare attention. I’m surprised you’d even wanna share that anyway.”

“Well when you’re busy I’d have someone to hang out with and I could help out too! I’d teach her everything I know.”

“Well that wouldn’t take long- her?” Tony asked once he realised the pronouns Peter had assigned this purely hypothetical infant.

“Yeah, I want a sister!”

“You don’t get to pick-”

“Oh come on yes you can I’m sure you could figure out a way to-”
“Peter this isn’t happening! Go get dressed!”

“Hey you’re the one who asked what I want for my birthday-”

“Clothes! Now!” Once Peter had returned to his bedroom to get to an appropriate level of clothed Tony refocused his attention on the three snickering men in front of him. He didn’t fail to notice the sly looks they gave each other when Peter had shown himself and something told him they weren’t only laughing at their ridiculous baby conversation or the boy’s Ninja Turtle themed underwear. “Did something happen last night?”

“Well now that you mention it-”

Clint was interrupted when they heard Nat screech from the bathroom. “Which one of you fuckers took the toothpaste?!”

Chapter End Notes

Bit of a rant- Okay a lot of a rant. Feel free to skip this but I had to get this off my chest.
I had to delete a couple comments recently. Not because they were insulting my writing, because quite honestly I don't mind that. I'll take criticism in any form not matter if its constructive or rude, but I got a couple suggestions for chapters and frankly I'm just not comfortable with them and I didn't want anyone else stumbling across them either. I am not, nor will I ever be, comfortable with writing Porn. It's not my thing, let alone in this story so it just won't be happening- yeah I might joke, or hint to it every now and then, but only for comedic purposes or to highlight the awkwardness of teenage life (like talking about sex with your parents for example). I'd never go into graphic detail. Like, I get it just generally wanting to read smut or whatever, but I don’t know what gave the impression that I’d be willing to write that kind of thing- Also, I didn't think I'd have to say it given the tags and the context of this story between a FATHER AND SON (yeah he’s adopted but it's that type of bond, ite?) but here it goes;
THIS IS A STARKER FREE ZONE.
I'm never gonna write anything about Peter and Tony being anything more than father and son or mentor and mentee. I ain't judging anyone for their taste in fanfic, far be it from me because like, damn, I'm writing about pee half the time- but if you've come here to read about Tony and Peter doing the nasty you've come to the wrong place. This ain't it chief. There's plenty of those fics out there (that I personally try to avoid like the plague but Tumblr is a dark place when you're looking for Spider-man and Iron-Man content, trust me folks) so go forth and enjoy all of that- just not here.
Also just a side note, this isn't an ageplay or regression fic, I just tend to write Peter
acting a little younger than he is sometimes because- well that kids been through a lot and I think it's cute. If you chose to interpret it like that that's totally fine, I don't have a problem with that so long as you don't ask for me to write in Petr calling Tony daddy because THEN THE STARKER FANS WILL SWARM AND THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYNA CLEANSE THIS FIC FROM.
So just so it's clear from now on;
No sex stuff (I admit that may have been my fault by hinting at Steve and Bucky in the earlier chapter but come on now, I have Nat and Bruce shacking up together and it didn't cause all this hubbub-but I digress)
No sex stuff involving minors and their parental figures (whether that be their biological, adoptive or figurative ones or even other minors 'cause like damn that's weird- I even considered making Peter ace in this AU just to avoid that whole thing, that and I think it would suit the storyline and I'm all about ace representation, but then again there's no need to label the sexuality of a fifteen year old)- will be included in this fic. Period.
Sooo yeah, rant over. Sorry about that. Back to scheduled programming. And to the other lovely humans who don't comment gross things thank you sm.
Scout Master Steve

Chapter Summary

This was the first half to one long chapter but it was getting to be like fifty pages long so I decided to split it (for once, thank christ), hence the abrupt ending :p

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m hungry.” Peter whined.

“You’re always hungry.” Tony said flippantly.

“True but now I’m extra hungry and we don’t have anything edible left.”

“And who’s fault is that?” Clint asked with a quirked eyebrow referencing Peter and Thor’s gaming binge the night before where the pair had eaten everything that wasn't the component of a cooked meal. Peter just shrugged as though he had no idea what the archer was hinting at.

“Yeah we are a little low on supplies.” Steve agreed as he glanced over to the empty kitchen cabinets but he wasn’t nearly as accusatory as Clint; he was the owner of a super fast metabolising stomach too he knew what it was like to be hungry. Besides, now that Thor and Peter had gotten rid of all the junk food he could replace it with healthier options and they had no room to argue. “Me and Nat were gonna head into town this afternoon after we got back anyway. We have enough to get us through today and tomorrow, meal wise though, we’re just low on snacks.”

“That doesn’t help me now.” Peter whined dramatically as he threw himself upside down over the back of the couch. “I’m wasting away!”

“You had breakfast two hours ago.” Bruce laughed. “I know even your metabolism isn’t that fast.”

Peter simply pouted in response. He had only eaten some eggs and one slice of toast. Yeah, before the bite that would’ve been more than enough for him- he didn’t even used to eat breakfast but now that left him starving after barely an hour. He could swear his metabolism was getting worse the older he got. “Hey, maybe I’m hitting a growth spurt!”
“You wish.” Nat smirked as she ruffled the boy’s hair. She was in a slightly better mood than yesterday but Peter was still wary of her because of what he thought she was currently dealing with; so for once he didn’t clap back. Oh, Nat could get used to this, she was gonna milk this thing for as long as possible.

“There are some of those microwavable french fries in the freezer, I think.” Steve suggested helpfully- hey if he wanted all of the junk food out of the house he could try and get all of it in one go. Then he could just claim they only had healthy options in the local town and start afresh, it was the perfect opportunity.

But Peter made a disgusted face like someone had just offered him a bowl of mint ice cream (everyone had been there for that particular rant- “MINT IS FOR TOOTHPASTE AND CHEWING GUM AND EVEN THEN IT'S DISGUSTING IT HAS NO PLACE CLAIMING TO BE A DESSERT!”). “Ew gross no, they taste like ass.”

Before Steve could reprimand him on his language Tony jumped in with his usual response to any crude remark Peter made. One that was a lot more effective than simply telling him not to say such things. “And how would you know? Actually- scratch that. I don’t wanna know what you get up to in your spare time.”

It worked since Peter immediately went bright red and gave his dad a dirty look- and he wasn’t the only one.

“Anthony! Not appropriate!” Steve hissed and crossed the room to slap the man with the tea towel he was holding, which only made Tony cackle more. He’d succeeded in angering Steve and embarrassing Peter after he said something stupid, simultaneously- double points for him. “Pete, could try actually cooking, you know, instead of filling up on empty calories. With a metabolism like yours-“

“I know, I know- but you see Steve, that requires effort and I have a limited supply of that because I’m what we call in the trade lazy.” Peter emphasised the last word by mimicking a rainbow forming with his hands. It wasn’t his fault, if they had gone out at the time they said they would he would have been distracted from his stomach. He was bored and hungry. That was a deadly combination.

“Only when it comes to taking care of yourself.” Tony grumbled. “God it’s like having a tamagotchi and I could never keep those things alive either.”
“I have an idea.” Clint grinned evilly as the rest of the room turned to him. “Steve wanted Peter to get some experience with the wilderness right? So why don’t we go hunt ourselves a little snack?”

“Don’t even say that! That is so not funny Clint!” Peter said angrily.

“Who said I was joking? I saw some rabbit holes on our way in-“

“Clint don’t tease him with that.” Bruce shook his head disapprovingly.

“I’m not-“

“Enough Barton.” Tony snapped, shuttling it down before it got bad. He enjoyed bugging Peter more than anyone but not when it came to animals. This was the kid that had been begging to go vegan for the past four months since he was shown a documentary on the meat industry in school (Steve refused to let him). Only a couple weeks before JARVIS had informed Tony that Peter had brought an injured bird he found home, but luckily he gave the bird to Thor instead of trying to keep it as a pet. Now that he thought about it, he’d never actually spoke to either one about that, he’d forgotten. Huh. He wondered what happened to that bird. “No bunny killing talk in front of Snow White. You know how he gets.”

Tony was surprised though, that one person in the room hadn’t jumped to the boy’s defense, knowing about his affinity with animals. Tony glanced over to where Thor was sitting and the man was just...staring at the wall. He had his phone in one hand that he kept periodically peering down at it then back up at the blank wall. “Thor?”

The god didn’t look up but it turned everyone else’s attention to him. “Thor, you okay?”

Thor heard him that time, his eyes snapped up and he looked over to where his family were staring at him with a mixture of concerned and confused looks. “Hm? Oh yes, yes I’m quite alright.”

But Tony wasn’t convinced. Though Thor’s face returned to his usual smile it looked too false and came back too quickly for Tony to believe it was real. He walked over to where the blond was sitting in the corner of the room. “Everything okay there?”

Thor followed Tony’s gaze down to his phone which he quickly put into his pocket. “Uh yes-everything’s fine I’m just..waiting for a reply..”
Though it struck him as kind of odd Tony shrugged. Thor wasn’t known for texting and when he
did he usually tried to convey messages through emojis alone and it irked Tony to no end. He also
couldn’t think of who the man would be texting anyway. Tony wasn’t too involved with Thor’s
personal business, bar from knowing his usual hang outs and group of associates, of which there
were few; even he gave the man some privacy around certain things, though it was his job as head
of household to keep tabs on everybody and keep them out of trouble. Still, Thor was pretty open
regarding most things so he figured that if the man wanted to keep something to himself he had a
good reason to. Unlike his son Tony knew when not to pry. So he just graced Thor with a small
smile and hand on the shoulder before he walked back over to where Peter was now threatening to
take away all of Clint’s hunting equipment.

“Peter give me that back!”

“No! Not until you say it!” The teen was hiding behind Steve who had stepped in to try and defuse
the situation but ultimately was just acting as a human shield for their smallest member.

“You never touch an Archer’s bow- didn’t anyone ever teach you that?!” Clint growled angrily.

“Didn’t anyone ever make you watch Bambi growing up?!” Peter yelled even more angrily as
though Clint had a line up of baby deer to orphan right at that very moment.

“Peter give that back, you can’t hold other people’s stuff hostage.” Tony sighed and held his hand
out for the teen to hand over the contraband. He remained calm on the surface but really he was
worried about Peter accidentally injuring himself on the thing. It wasn’t just a normal bow after all
and the teens fingers were mere millimetres away from some buttons that he really, really
shouldn’t press indoors. Or ever.

But Peter clutched the thing tighter than ever and held it to his chest, which made everyone gasp
for a second as they waited for exploding arrows to be sent around the room. Luckily that didn’t
happen. “No! Not until he promises not to kill any animals with it!”

Tony sighed again and turned back to Clint. “Good god, Clint just tell the boy-“

“I already said I won’t! I was just kidding!” Clint sounded equally exasperated.

“Then promise him.” Tony gripped the bridge of his nose. Wording is very important when it
comes to children he would have assumed Clint would already know that.

“Fine. Peter, I’m sorry I was just joking, I promise that I won’t kill any animals for the duration of this trip.” He said earnestly, despite his growing frustration. “Now give me my bow back before you hurt yourself.”

Peter’s expression instantly changed back to his usual smily one as he handed the weapon back to Clint, still standing in his safe spot behind Steve. “See? Was that so hard?”

“Touch my bow again, Parker, and that promise won’t extend to you. I won’t hesitate to squish a certain little spider-“

“Steve, he’s threatening me!” Peter cried petulantly and pointed accusingly at the angry archer in front of him. Oh he made a good show of acting petrified, ducking back behind Steve and hugging the man as though Clint was about to go through with the totally empty threat. Tony saw through the act from a mile away, as did everyone else but Steve didn’t, he was convinced that Peter was genuinely terrified. Man that kid had him wrapped around his little finger ever since they’d gotten back to normal and he knew it. Little brat- but a smart little brat, Tony had to hand it to him. Peter certainly knew how to play to his strengths.

“Clint. Don’t you dare, threaten him he’s just a kid-“

“Are you serious?!” Clint asked incredulously.

“Does it look like I’m joking?! You scared him!”

“He’s laughing, Steve!”

But of course Steve didn’t see the teen laughing at his expense, he just continued to berate Clint for his behaviour. “Honestly you have kids of your own, you ought not to have left it somewhere the boy could find-“

“Well my kids no better than to touch other people’s things because they don’t have sticky fingers like him-“
“Hey! It’s not my fault they’re sticky that happened after the bite!” Peter cried indignantly.

“It’s an expression you idiot!”

“Don’t call me an idiot!”

“You’re both idiots.” Tony sighed again, god he was running out of air this morning, maybe it was a good thing he’d brought his inhaler (that he ‘didn’t need’) after all. “Steve lets just head out already, the kids are getting stir crazy.”

Tony was only half kidding. He wasn’t surprised Peter was being annoying considering he hadn’t been able to run off any energy all morning. They’d had to delay their departure whilst Tony’s drones did a thorough scope of the area to highlight any possible hazards; not because Tony thought there were any secret bands of terrorists hiding out in the tranquil forests they’d be venturing into, but because he had to include possible threats in his report later. This was technically a S.H.I.E.L.D training weekend after all, he had to stick to protocol if he wanted to avoid getting into trouble.

“Are your robots finally done?”

“No but I am. If we don’t take the Spider-puppy for a walk soon he’ll start tearing up the carpets.” Tony said dryly but Peter giggled anyway and made a show of baring his teeth. “Come on go get geared up.”

Everyone quickly dispersed to do just that. After waiting for so long they were all anxious to get up and go. Everyone but Thor, who didn’t move. Before Tony and Steve got a chance to question him he suddenly stood up and started walking towards the front door, summoning Mjolnir into his hand as he went. “I’m sorry but I must go.”

“What?” Steve and Tony said simultaneously.

“I’ve got- urgent business to attend to I’m sorry- I may return later but- I just have to go.” He was already at the door as he gave them his odd, vague answer.

Tony and Steve both followed him into the hallway quickly, giving each other nervous confused glances. “What’s wrong?”
“Nothing you need to be concerned with, I swear it’s just something I need to check up on. No need to worry. Once I’m assured that everything is as it should be I’ll contact you I swear.”

“You can’t just leave and not tell us where you’re- Thor!” Steve yelled but the god was already a dot in the distance, having ascended skyward without giving Steve the courtesy of letting him finish. He turned back to Tony. “What the hell was that about?!?”

“I have no idea.” Tony said somewhat calmly. He was more confused than concerned. As Thor had said there was no need to worry; not that he fully believed him because if there was nothing untoward going on the man would have just been honest; but Tony figured he could handle it by himself, whatever it was. He wasn’t getting any alerts on his own phone, not from S.H.I.E.L.D or Jar so from his side of things there was either nothing wrong or nothing he could do anyway.

“Track him!” Steve demanded frantically.

“I’m going to mom, Jesus- stop yelling at me.” Tony snapped. “He’s a big boy Steve he can do what he wants, his flight path is heading back to the tower, look see?”

Tony presented Steve with the evidence on his phone but it didn’t make the blond look anymore at ease. “Well why didn’t he just say that? And why the sudden urgency?”

“Why are you asking me? I have the same amount of information as you do, Cap.” Tony shook his head, why was he supposed to have all the answers when he had just witnessed the exact same thing as Steve did? He could understand Peter thinking he knew everything but come on, Rogers. “Jar hasn’t sent any security alerts so it can’t be that big of a deal- Besides he doesn’t owe us an explanation he’s an adult.”

Steve looked like he was going to ask some follow up questions, but Bruce poked his head around the back door, where the rest of the team had congregated outside to gather their equipment. “Was that Thor leaving?”

“Yeah.” Tony said simply.

“Is everything okay?”
The bearded genius just shrugged casually whilst his blond counterpart gawked at him. “How are you being so calm about this?”

“Oh please Steve, you make it sound like Thor doesn’t go flying off randomly on a daily basis.”

“Yes well, but he looked upset that time-“

“Maybe Fury called him back or something, you know he’s been looking for Jane so it could be that. If he wanted to tell us he would have been now can we just drop it? I’ve left a message for JARVIS to give him and if he doesn’t get back to me before this evening I’ll send Hap to do a welfare check-“

“A lot can happen in an afternoon Tony.” Steve said gnawing his lip worriedly.

“Oh my god- Fine by three then, happy? God how do you do this job if you’re this much of a worrier?” Tony huffed and pulled out his phone to set a reminder, just to give the other man some piece of mind. “Now can we please just get going?”

“Okay..” Steve said, clearly still unsure about the whole thing.

“Don’t worry.” Tony said as though that would actually help. Telling someone to worry is just as helpful as telling someone to calm down.

“Yeah I’m trying.”

“Yes you are trying, very trying-
just ask my patience.” Tony muttered as he went to grab his own stuff. As much as he understood Steve’s worries, he also understood what it was like to have something going on that you couldn’t tell anyone else about. If Thor wasn’t talking there must be a reason and although Tony was also itching to find out what was going on he wanted to give the god some space. He just wished that people had extended him the same courtesy regarding private matters.

They gathered outside with the others after grabbing things from their respective rooms and the vehicles they’d arrived in and Tony didn’t fail to notice the sheer volume that Steve seemed to be carrying. “Steve why do you have that much stuff? We’re only going out for six hours.”
“Well a lot can happen in six hours. It’s best to be prepared.” The blond brushed him off as he had to side step just to get through the doorway and outside thanks to the bulk of his bags.

“Where did Thor go?” Peter asked as soon as Tony approached him and he looked more worried than Steve had been.

“He had to run home bubs, he said he might be back later.” Tony said lightly.

“Oh.” Peter said quietly and he suddenly looked really sad. “Is he okay?”

“He’s fine, but he did say you get to have his share of the s’mores if he’s not back in time.” The lie came to Tony quickly but apparently it wasn’t convincing enough because Peter gave him a skeptical look.

“Okay now I know something is up- Thor would never volunteer his food! He’d tell me to ‘defend his honour’ or something.” Well at least the boy was smiling.

“Yeah well this time he said he wanted to save Bruce from himself.” They both chuckled. “You got everything you need?”

“Uh huh, Steve packed one of my bags for me before we got here and I got everything else on his list.”

That struck Tony as weird but he didn’t say anything, assuming Steve was just trying to be helpful. He just hoped the blond wouldn’t try and pull some shit and make them sleep in the woods- like that time he faked a home invasion just to see how the team would react under stress. Yeah that didn’t end well..Nat kind of stabbed him, but no one could say it was undeserved- and hey, they passed his little ‘test.’ Steve told them so on their way to the hospital.

Speaking of Steve he wouldn’t let them leave without insisting they bringing Thor’s stuff along with them as the god hadn’t specified when he would be coming back. And by they he meant Clint. “Can’t I just leave it in the car?”

“No. Come on Clint, teamwork.” From the way Steve was talking Tony had a sneaking suspicion
that he blamed Clint for Thor’s sudden departure somehow. He himself couldn’t see why Steve assume that considering the pair hadn’t had any major fights (that morning anyway) but hey, Tony didn’t mind Steve giving the man a hard time after he’d teased Peter about rabbit homicide that morning. Just a little Karma for you there, Barton.

“If it’s about teamwork then help me, why do I have to carry all of it by myself?” Clint argued.

Steve shrugged before he walked away. “You said you wanted to bulk up a little. It’ll be good for core strength.”

Steve stood in the centre of the circle that had formed in the backyard behind their cabin and clapped his hands. “Okay troops-“ All the adults groaned. “-First things first, equipment check.”

That went on for a solid fifteen minutes, namely because Steve insisted on everyone checking individually- apparently he didn’t trust a group of superheroes with keeping themselves alive for a single afternoon. Five minutes of that time was spent by Clint and Tony arguing with the man that they knew how to pack a bag and didn’t need their mother checking they had everything. And then there was another five minutes where both of them had to go back inside and grab some things they’d forgotten, much to Steve’s delight and their contempt.

Finally they set off down the trail just before midday, before the sun rose too high and it got too hot to function. It was much later than expected so they made headway quickly. They planned to hike a ways up the into the hills into the dense woodland that covered it, as Steve had deemed it the perfect place to get some practical training in. The view from the cabin was pretty awesome, even Peter had to admit and he figured if nothing else he had the opportunity to take some good photos for MJ. Of course they couldn’t go anywhere before Steve had smothered Peter in an inch thick layer of sunscreen and doused him in half a bottle of insect repellent (per May’s instructions- but the blond didn’t know that, he was just equally as neurotic). The teen didn’t complain much since he was used to that kind of treatment, but Tony protested once he was sure that Peter would end up sliding away like some kind of slug if Steve didn’t stop covering him in lotions and potions.

Peter was pretty thankful for that because his sensitive nose was starting to burn from all the chemicals and he was worried some sort of chemical reaction might occur and blow him up. And who said he’s a hypochondriac?

“Jesus kid, I could smell the citronella a mile away.” Bruce laughed. “Be careful not to stand in the wind or the bears will find us.”
“Are- Are there bears here?” Peter tried to ask calmly but his voice betrayed him.

“Maybe. Why, are you scared?” Steve asked genuinely but Peter saw how the other team members, including his dad, smirked

“N-no.” Damn, stupid stutter, showing him up like that.

“Then why do you look like you’re gonna pee your pants?” Nat smirked.

“Shut up Tash, I do not.” Peter growled and gave the woman the nastiest look he could muster, before he regained his composure. “I’m not scared I just would like to be prepared.”

“You’d be an idiot not to be afraid of them.” Tony commented. “They’re literally twice your height and their jaws are twelve hundred psi per square inch-“

“I’m not afraid- I just wouldn’t wanna hurt it if one did attack me.” Peter cut him off because his rambling was actually starting to freak him out quite a bit. Why did Tony know that off of the top of his head? Maybe he had the comparison for when he was talking about the strength in the joints of his suit but still- why did he feel the need to tell Peter that?

As much as he loved animals from afar Peter really didn’t want to get up close and personal with a wild bear. Unless it was a baby one, but even then he’s like it at least far enough away for him to get a head start at running.

“Nothings gonna attack you so long as you know what you’re doing. Bears are territorial, if you stay out of their way they’ll stay out of yours.” Steve said in an attempt to calm Peter's nerves.

“Like Nat.” Bruce chimed in.

“Yes. Just like Nat.” Steve agreed. “I’ve plotted some known bear territories on this map see? Now can you tell me where we are on here?”

Steve showed Peter the map he was holding, allowing the boy to find where they were. “Uhm, That big red circle marked ‘BASE’ is kind of a give away so- there.”
“Good! And what direction did we walk in?” Steve went on like that for a while, keeping Peter beside him as he lead the way asking for the boy’s opinion on what route to take to get them to their next marker. The teaching got less and less guided (and less and less patronising thankfully) as time went on and Steve actually allowed Peter to lead the way for a while; until the boy suggested they went the wrong way of course, Steve was quick to take the reigns again then. Peter didn’t mind though, he actually made the mistake deliberately because he was getting bored. He didn’t want to spend his time looking at a piece of paper the whole time he wanted to go nature spotting- now that was where Clint’s area of expertise came in.

Even after joking about hunting earlier, the man had an extensive knowledge of all the creatures they came across and Peter was much more interested in hearing that than learning how to make a compass (he already knew how to do that Steve, let the kid look at squirrels).

He managed to avoid drinking for all of an hour before Steve was thrusting a canteen into his hands and giving a lecture on how hydration would be the first thing to kill you in a survival situation. It was pretty hot too so Peter immediately took a couple swings before he managed to stop himself. He knew he had to be careful of his fluid intake if he wanted to avoid peeing in the woods, so he’d been extra conscious of that the entire time; but it looked like that would be difficult because another one of Steve’s lessons was how to find safe water to drink.

“First of all finding your water source. I know you can just climb to the top of a tree and look but let’s say you can’t in case you’re spotted by the enemy. What would you do?”

“Uhm..” Peter thought for a second before he answered. “Listen to see if I can hear anything?”

“Good answer.” Steve nodded. “Out here that would probably work, but let’s say you don’t have the luxury of a stream or a lake nearby like we do, then what would you do?”

Peter thought again but he shrugged, genuinely not knowing the answer.

“Do you still have that straw I gave you?” Steve asked and Peter nodded, reaching into one of his pockets to pull out the bulky plastic tube.

“Ohh I’ve seen these before.” Peter hummed. It was one of those life straw things that filtered stagnant water and made it safe to drink. He’d seen a segment on good mythical morning where they drank all kinds of gross stuff to see how it worked.
“These are a little more advanced than the ones you get commercially. This one can filter out pathogens, chemical waste and even radioactive material. Standard S.H.I.E.L.D issue.” Steve rambled like a salesmen at three am on QVC trying to sell someone a slapchop.

“Cool so you guys could, like, drink my blood? Theoretically, obviously.” Peter said and Steve just looked at him like he was insane.

“Why would we ever want to do that?”

“Yeah I know Bruce is pale and has an aversion to going outside but he’s not an actual vampire. He’s just antisocial.” Nat quipped.

“I don’t know- you said radioactive and I’m all- well you know. If you were that thirsty you just might. Like you said Steve, survival situation.” Peter shrugged. He didn’t know why his brain worked that way, he blamed Tony.

“Can imagine if we had Hulk out? We could use him for a month before he even started to get anemic.“ Clint laughed.

“You guys are twisted.” Bruce wrinkled his nose. Apparently he didn’t like the idea of his friends using him as a water fountain for some reason. “Can you just listen to Steve please? Enough about me becoming a Capri-sun.”

“Oo now I want a Capri-sun.” Peter said distractedly.

“Well there aren’t any out here kiddo.” Steve laughed as he went to continue talking about how to actually find drinkable water instead of cannibalising your teammates but Nat jumped in again.

“Yes there are I saw some in Tony’s backpack.” Nat said.

Tony turned to Peter before the kid could even ask for one. “For later.”
The boy pouted and Steve sighed at the interruption. “Well not naturally. You’re not gonna find a juice box bush, so unless you want to start seeing mirages of Capri-suns after two days without water you might wanna listen to me.”

Everyone apologised and he continued. “You wanna look for contour lines in the earth. Sometimes this will lead you to a creek or something of the like but other times it won’t. But, if you’re lucky you’ll find a naturally occurring drainage system. Keep following that down and you’ll eventually hit a soft spot in the ground.” Steve then crouched down and dug at the earth until Peter could see water begin to seep out of it and pool in the bottom of the hole he’d created. “Dig that out and hey presto. You’ve got water.”

It didn’t exactly look drinkable yet though, and Steve used the cap of the top of his flask to collect the dirty water before pouring it into an empty water bottle. The noise it made as it filled the plastic container made Peter’s lower stomach twinge a bit and he shuffled on his feet. Stupid bladder, he didn’t even have to go yet, why did it have to have such an attitude all the time?

Once Steve had filled the bottle high enough to the point that the straw would reach he demonstrated how it was safe by drinking some himself. “See? Completely clean and it doesn’t even taste that chemically.”

He then handed the bottle to Peter, which turned out to be a big mistake because a certain someone failed to read the writing on the side of his straw.

“BLEGH! Oh god uregck-“ The second he took a sip his face immediately soured before he started gagging and spitting the mouthful back onto the ground. For a second everyone panicked that he was hypersensitive to the chemicals used within the straw that purified the water but no. After Peter recovered enough to speak he admitted his own error. “I sucked the wrong end.”

“Great job Steve! You couldn’t have showed him which end to use first?! Now he’s gonna get giardia or cryptosporidium and I did not bring enough pedialyte for a super kid to get that.” Bruce fretted

“Chill out doc he spat it out-“ Clint said as Peter continued to choke and spit onto the ground.

“What’s that?!“ The boy snapped his head up, still clutching at his throat, bent over double.

“And now you’ve scared him. They’re parasites kid but you’re gonna be-“
“Parasites?!?”

“Pete you’re fine.” Tony interjected seriously. He knew how Peter got and he really wanted to avoid a panic attack occurring so he grabbed the boy by his shoulders and forced him to look at him; after giving Bruce a look of disdain of course. “You’re fine, one sip isn’t going to get you sick and besides, your immune system could fight any parasites off in a heartbeat.”

“Really? You’re not just saying that so I don’t go and make myself puke?” Peter said quickly, his chest clearly rising and falling faster than it should be.

“I mean, I would really prefer if you didn’t do that anyway, but no I’m not just saying it. I mean it. You’ll be fine just drink plenty of water- from your canteen from now on. The demonstration was good though Steve I’m very impressed.” Tony said dryly giving Steve a look filthier than the water Peter just drank and the blond gave him an apologetic smile.

So Peter did start drinking even more to compensate for the possibility of just ingesting a parasite that would equal to eating a whole pack of laxatives and chugging a bottle of ipecac syrup (yes he’d googled the parasites Bruce had named despite Steve’s no phones rule, and yes he severely regretted doing so- he was never going to get those pictures out of his brain); that and he was desperate to get the gross, earthy taste out of his mouth and thankfully Tony was kind enough to give him one of his Capri-suns to help. His stomach wasn’t the one that started protesting about the liquids he’d put into his system- thank god - his bladder was. It was still an uncomfortable situation but not nearly as uncomfortable as the anxiety ridden teen had been worried about.

Still once the parasite panic was over it made way for a new worry. Now he had to pee. Dammit. He was trying to avoid that at all costs. They’d been out for a few hours already so he guessed they’d be taking a break soon, or at the very least he hoped so. It had felt like a few hours but he hadn’t thought to check the time when he sneakily had his phone out. “Hey Steve?”

“Hm?”

“What time is it?”

“What time do you think it is?” Steve asked back, flipping the question on its head and Peter just shrugged because what kind of answer was that? Steve went on to use the question as an opportunity to teach Peter how to tell the time using the sun’s positioning, which usually the kid would have found pretty interesting but not when he was trying to estimate how long it would be
until he got to a place with indoor plumbing. “So what do you think kiddo?”

“Uhh, it’s about two- Wait no- two thirty? Two forty-five?” Peter asked. Even though he’d barely been paying attention it seemed that a combination of him half listening and his own internal clock lead to him getting the right answer.

“That’s right!” Steve grinned at him, before going on to talk about something else, something to do with marking travel lines on trees, which lead to him and Clint having an argument about the best methodology.

“Steve using that paint shit is stupid, what if it rains?”

“It’s waterproof and I’d rather not hack at the bark of the trees- both for the trees sake and the fact it could lead to us getting tracked-“

“What’s the point if they wash off or they’re tampered with?! How will you find your way back then?!”

“Good golly, chill out Hansel and Gretel-“ Bruce said, trying to calm the situation but apparently he’d hit a nerve with Clint.

Though everyone else was confused apparently Nat understood the reference. “Hon, don’t call him Hansel it’s a long story-“

“What the fuck did you just say Banner?!“

Whilst the rest of the group was distracted by the argument and attempting to mediate, Tony dropped back to talk to Peter. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Peter said, just a little too quickly to be deemed anything less than suspicious.

“Then why did you ask what time it was? You don’t actually feel sick do you?” Tony asked, his tone ebbing into concern as he looked the boy up and down. He had been half lying when he told the boy his body would handle any parasites, in truth he had no idea and he was really hoping that
the kid wasn’t about to start vomiting like something out of The Exorcist. He’d seen enough of that
to last a lifetime.

“No no, I’m fine.” The teen shook his head. Tony wasn’t completely on the wrong track, the water
Peter had consumed certainly was bothering him. “It’s just hot.”

Tony nodded. The boy wasn’t wrong, it was bordering on ninety five degrees and Tony was
conscious of Peter overheating. He was at higher risk given his speedy metabolic rate and he was
starting to wonder why he’d agreed to let Steve take them on an outdoor excursion in the middle of
the summer. On one hand whilst it was good to show methods of survival when the environment
was in one of its most unforgiving seasons, it certainly was not worth his boy getting heat stroke
over. “Keep drinking and stick to the shade kiddo.”

Upon overhearing that the teenager was overheating Clint abruptly stopped arguing with Steve and
walked to the back of the group. He reached in his pocket and pulled out a small spray bottle for
the kid to take but Peter was automatically hesitant. “Uhh, I’m good on bug spray, Steve only
spritzed me again like an hour ago, but thank you.”

“It’s just water kid.” Clint chuckled. “I know you don’t need anymore of that stuff, you reek.”

“Thanks.” Peter said both seriously and sarcastically as he misted himself with the bottle. Though
he thought water was the last thing he needed it was actually really refreshing, especially when the
light breeze hit his face and cooled him down instantly. No sooner than he made a noise of
contentment Tony snatched the bottle off of him to use himself. “Hey!”

“What? I’m dying here.”

“You could’ve said please instead of just yoinking it out of my hand.” Peter grumbled. The
insistent twinges in his bladder were starting to make him irritable but Tony mistook that for
something else.

“Uh oh, is someone getting hangry?”

“No.” Peter pouted but his stomach soon protested that fact by making a loud grumble. He’d
forgotten that he was ‘starving to death’ after they left the cabin. What was with his body trying to
embarrass him today?
“Snack break.” Tony called forward and everyone came to a halt without argument. Especially Clint who groaned as soon as he set his load of bags down.

“Okay, seriously can someone help with these now?” He said breathlessly as he started rubbing at his back.

“You getting soft on us old man?” Nat asked as she sat down beside him, but there was no real teasing evident in her tone. That was simply Nat language for ‘are you okay?’

“I don’t know about soft but the old broken spine is definitely not happy right now.” He groaned as he held his lower back and twisted, making it crack loudly.

“You sound like a bag of uncooked spaghetti.” Tony commented. “Steve take Thor’s shit.”

The blond nodded looking a little guilty for having forced Clint into carrying it in the first place. “Have you heard back from him yet?”

“No not yet. I’ll call him before we head off again.” Tony soothed before their current blond worked himself into a panic about the other resident blond. “Don’t worry about him, he came, ate all the food and then left. That’s just what vikings do.”

Steve went to ask something else but their conversation was cut short by an odd, but familiar popping sound was heard to their right. Certainly not something you’d expect to hear in the middle of a forest. “Peter what the hell?”

“What?” The kid asked.

“That’s your snack?”

“Yeah?” He was genuinely confused. Wasn’t that why they’d stopped? He was hungry dang it.

“A jar of jelly?”
“...I wasn’t gonna eat the whole thing..”

“Yes Peter because that makes it more socially acceptable to eat pure grape jelly with a spoon.” Clint deadpanned.

“Well we ate all the bread at breakfast and I- you know what? I don’t have to justify myself. Leave me alone.” Peter said grumpily as he stuck a heaping spoonful of the sticky, unnaturally purple jam into his mouth.

“Hey kid?” Nat said.

“What?” He said snappily, with the spoon still jutting out the side of his mouth. He expected her to join in on the mockery but to his surprise she was holding up something equally as unusual. A jar of peanut butter.

“Wanna share?”

“I like the way you think, Romanov.” Peter grinned as he moved to go and sit beside her.

“Likewise, Parker.” She grinned back and the pair clinked their metal spoons together like they were at some kind of fancy tea party- as opposed to making PB&J’s. Without the bread. In the middle of the woods.

“What the fuck is wrong with the people I live? I’m starting to think there’s something wrong with me if this is the kind of company I attract into my life.” Tony shook his head and stared at the ground like he was having an existential crisis.

“What you mean awesome people?” Peter giggled but Tony just shook his head again. That’s when he noticed that Bruce had yet to retrieve any food from his bag and he had an odd look on his face.

“What’s the matter Bruce? You not hungry?”

“Uhh..no..” The doctor said quietly, holding his backpack close to himself in his lap.
“What did you bring?” Steve said flatly.

“No.” Bruce said tightly and clutched his bad meow protectively.

“No?” Clint chuckled.

“You made fun of them, so no.”

“Bruce what is it? It can’t be much worse than- oh for god's sake!”

Steve was the one to shake his head this time as he looked at the white jar (what is it with these people and jars? Does no one bring trail mix anymore?). “Really Bruce? Marshmallow fluff with your blood sugar?”

Bruce just smiled sheepishly and retrieved his own spoon. He’d intended on using it for the s’mores later but his craving for sugar had gotten the best of him. “Hey, at least I have crackers. I’m not an animal like those two.”

“You can’t sit with us.” Nat said bitchily, quoting Regina George from Mean Girls and Peter nodded his head in agreement.

Once their (albeit weird) snack break was over, the group all stood and went to continue down the path Steve was leading them on but Peter stopped Clint from grabbing his bags. “What’re you doing kid?”

“Grabbing your stuff for you, what does it look like? Well, other than the nicest robbery ever.”

“You don’t need to do that-“

“Dude. I have super strength and you have an achy breaky back. Let me be useful for once.” Peter shrugged lightly and continued relieving Clint of his baggage ignoring the man’s protests.
“You’re useful a lot but my achy breaky back thanks you, kid.” Clint grunted in pain as he attempted to stand up but ultimately sat back down again. He begrudgingly accepted Peter’s hand up and struggled to his feet.

“Are you okay?” Steve asked guilty.

“No thanks to you and your alliance to the club of big blond bastards.” Clint snapped but he dialed his tone back once he saw how upset Steve looked. “I’ll be fine.”

“You need a hand Pete?”

“Nope.” Peter popped the P as he situated the extra bags onto his back with ease. The weight barely felt like anything even though it had doubled, but he did feel slightly unbalanced just from the way his mass as a whole had shifted. It wasn’t the weight itself throwing him off it was having to be aware of the extra space he was now taking up and he giggled to himself imagining that he must resemble a snail with all that piled on his back.

He was a little wobbly but in fairness he felt a little less than stable on his feet anyway since his bladder was now consistently pounding in his abdomen and he was having to make a concerted effort to clench his muscles just to keep its contents from leaking out. He’d been okay when he was sitting down (with the added benefit of food as a distraction) but gravity wasn’t playing games with him today.

It was getting pretty bad and he knew he should speak up but what were they going to do? Everyone would just tell him to go find a bush or something and he really didn’t want to do that-not just didn’t want to, he couldn’t. He’d freeze up the second he tried because he wasn’t nearly desperate enough yet. So if he spoke up now and was told to go behind a tree it would just lead to an even more embarrassing conversation of explaining that he couldn’t yet.

He was better off just waiting until he was desperate, which was never something he thought would ever cross his mind but here he was. Deliberately waiting until the last minute was something Tony usually told him off for doing- even though he usually didn’t notice he was doing it- but this time it couldn’t be helped. He wasn’t going to put himself through the torture that was his bladder locking up because that hurt.

It wasn’t long before he did start getting desperate though, thanks to all that extra water and juice he’d been consuming. In all honesty he was surprised no one had called him out on it yet, or at the very least asked if he needed a break. How long had it been since he last used the bathroom anyway? He went not long before they left but that was hours ago and in Peter pee time that was
ages ago. Once he started thinking about how long it had been he started panicking, which only made the situation that was developing even worse as it caused his bladder to fill twice as fast. It got to the point where he had slowed down significantly and was lagging behind the rest of the group, instead of at the front with Steve where he had once been.

No one thought much of it initially, figuring the kid was just stopping to look at animals like he had been doing on and off- he was always ten steps ahead or ten steps behind and that pretty much summed the kid up in all aspects. But when Tony happened to look back and saw Peter standing stationary with his legs crossed he sighed to himself. He should have realised earlier but he’d been distracted by the whole Thor thing.

“Peter, come here for a sec.” Tony called back, which sent the kid back into ‘pretending I don’t need to pee’ mode as he shuffled towards where Tony was standing.

“What is it?”

Tony dropped his voice down so no one would overhear and pointed into the trees just off of the path they were walking. “Go on.”

Peter shifted his feet a few times and blushed at the ground. Tony thought he was just being shy but really the boy was trying to manually check if he was desperate enough to attempt it yet by jostling his bladder around as seeing how it would react to the stress. He wasn’t sure that he was- sure he really had to go but he wasn’t to the point of almost leaking yet and that was usually his breaking point before he could force himself to use an ally or something whilst on patrol.

“Peter, go.” Tony stressed. He should’ve known this would happen, why couldn’t Steve had picked a state park or something that had actual bathrooms stationed around it? Sure there was the risk of those being deemed unusable by the fussy teenager but it would have been a slight improvement.

“Not yet.”

“Peter-“

“I can’t, Dad!” The teen hissed though he was trying to keep his voice down he was getting increasingly frustrated at not only his bladders awful timing but his dad for prying.
“You don’t have a choice. It’s not a big deal everyone does it.” It was practically a right of passage. Tony definitely had the opposite of a normal childhood but even he’d had the experience of peeing in the woods. It would be better for Peter to get over his aversion now so he didn’t end up running into problems in a real survival situation; Tony was pretty sure this wasn’t the kind of training that Steve had in mind for that weekend but hey, if that’s what Peter needed to learn to help make things more comfortable for himself in the future so be it. The last thing the boy needed when he was on the run was a bladder infection, especially with his busted kidney. “You gotta learn to go outside at some point, so just go.”

“I can’t.” Peter hissed and crossed his legs. Whereas before stopping and made it easier to hold on, now that he was stationary for longer than fifteen seconds it was getting to be too much; he needed to move. It was taking a lot of willpower not to stomp his feet or walk in a circle because he knew if he did that Tony would push him into the woods before he could protest anymore.

“Kid, I don’t want you getting another bladder infection- will you just go?” Tony growled, starting to lose his patience.

“Not yet.” Peter squeaked and quickly walked away to catch up with the rest of the group before his dad could question him anymore.

Tony sighed but continued walking, hoping the kid would go when he was ready and that he wouldn’t have to trek all the way back to the cabin with the boy in wet pants. As much as he wanted to avoid that Peter had to learn to speak up for himself some time or another. And he did have to get used to going outside without waiting until his bladder was hurting.

Another ten minutes went by and Peter was getting to the point where he is bladder was hurting and he was ready to duck off behind a tree but Steve was in the middle of explaining- something. Something about the uses for tree sap or whatever- Peter could barely hear him over the sound of his screaming bladder but he didn’t want to be rude and interrupt him. He suddenly felt like a kindergartener waiting for their teacher to stop talking before he could ask for a potty break and that internal comparison alone was enough to make him want to crawl into a hole and die.

“Peter are you alright?” Bruce was the one to ask, catching on to Peters odd movements and flushed face.

“Uh huh, f-fine.” Peter stammered out.

“Is Clint’s bag getting to be too much?”
“I can take it now I’m fine kid really-“ Clint reached out to take the backpack off of him but Peter shook his head.

“No no, it’s fine really. I’m okay it’s just- just warm that’s all.” Peter swallowed nervously and prayed that Bruce wouldn’t force him to drink more water. One more drop and he was sure to burst.

But luckily for him Iron-Dad to the rescue again and this time Peter wasn’t going to deny the out.

“Hey Pete, come look at this.” Tony called and Peter practically came running over to where the man was to feign interest in whatever fake thing he was meant to be looking at.

“Go. I’ll cover.” Tony muttered out of the side of his mouth and Peter didn’t wait to be told twice. He sprinted through the gap in the trees and disappeared, making the other adults look quizzically at the man for an explanation. Tony simply shrugged. “He saw a deer.”

Clint clicked his tongue. “Huh. That’s weird. Don’t see any tracks about, do you Steve?”

“No I don’t.” Steve said ‘sarcastically’ (you’d really think he’d be better at sarcasm considering the company he keeps), but they were both smirking. Tony simply rolled his eyes and waited for the kid to reappear.

It took Peter a minute longer than it probably would have because he had to fight with the bags on his back but once they were out of the way he managed to relieve himself without major incident. He came back feeling an odd sense of pride for having managed to make it out of that situation without completely disgracing himself, though he had Tony to thank for that too, he was proud of his bladder for actually relaxing instead of freezing up on him like he had expected.

“Thanks.” Peter whispered to Tony as he reappeared onto the path and rejoined the group and his dad just winked at him.

“Get any pictures?” Clint smirked and Peter looked at him with a horrified expression.

“E-excuse me?”
“Of the deer.” Clint clarified, trying his best not to laugh when he realised what the boy must’ve thought when he said that.

“Oh- oh! Right, yeah- uh no I didn’t.” Peter stammered as he caught on to the lie his dad must have told in his absence just a little too late.

“Come on kids, we’re almost there.” Steve chuckled as he moved the conversation along in hopes of sparing the teen from some teasing.

“What do you mean ‘there’?” Tony asked suspiciously after a moment of considering Steve’s phrasing. “I thought we were just hiking?”

“Well, yeah, we are but I just figured that, you know, we’d stop somewhere eventually..” Steve trailed off with that same guilty look on his face that he’d had earlier when Clint mentioned his back hurting.

Tony immediately realised what the man had done. “Oh. Oh no. Steve you-“

“I wasn’t gonna make you! Or Peter I just figured-“

“What? That we’d walk back on our own after you set up camp- you planned this the whole time, didn't you?! I knew it!”

“What’s happening?” Peter asked confusedly. He wasn’t sure if his brain was melting in the sun and he was being slow on the uptake or if he had genuinely missed something.

“Camp counsellor Steve here has tricked us, Peter, that’s what.” Tony said angrily and the rest of the group started to back away slowly to try and avoid being caught up in the ensuing altercation. “Hold it right there, did you guys know he was planning to extend this to an overnight trip too?”

“...yeah.” Bruce said after a moment but Nat gave him a dirty look.
“Way to drop us all in it Bruce, we could’ve gotten off easy.” She hissed.

“Guys seriously? Steve you said no camping.” Tony sighed.

“I know! And I meant it! I just- I just figured since everything was going well that maybe you wouldn’t mind camping out just for one night-”

“If you’re only just figuring that now then why do we all have sleeping bags?” Christ he hadn’t even clocked the sleeping bags earlier, he should have known. It was obvious that Steve had planned the whole thing deliberately so why wouldn’t he just come out and say it? Tony may have been more inclined to listen to his side then. Probably not but still.

But no. Mr. Goody Two Shoes just couldn’t admit that he had lied to trick Tony into agreeing to camp out. “...just in case?”

“Right. We’re going back, come on Peter.” Tony said shortly and promptly began to turn around, spinning Peter with him. The teen was still a little confused as to what exactly had just transpired (okay maybe he was a little overcooked in the sun, he’d definitely allow himself the luxury of rehydrating himself when he was in closer proximity to a toilet).

“No Tony please, come on.” Steve practically begged.

“Yeah T, don’t be a spoilsport the kid was having fun.” Clint chimed in.

If only they realised it wasn’t Tony who didn’t want to sleep outside (which he didn’t) he was more concerned about Peter. He knew Steve had been worried about that in the beginning too but the blond must have assumed Peter would be fine so long as he was comfortable out in the forest during the day. Tony knew this not to be the case, it’s not like Peter was scared of the woods itself and he’d gotten over his fear after a single afternoon and now he wasn’t scared anymore- Christ, it was obvious why he didn’t want to spend the night out there. His concerns were nothing to do with the kid being a little prissy when it came to getting dirty, they were entirely to do with his sleeping habits.

“That’s right, haven’t you Pete?” Steve went along with Clint’s train of thought and spoke to Peter directly.
“Yeah.” Peter nodded. He wasn’t lying, it had been fun for the most part. Other than accidentally drinking dirt and having to pee outside (oh my god come to think of it that water may not have been just water if there had been other things peeing in the woods-blergh!) he had enjoyed himself. The animals and the photo opportunities alone had been enough to keep him happy and entertained all afternoon.

“So what do you think about spending the night out here?”

“I don’t know..” As much as the idea of actually camping sounded fun on one hand how would he avoid the whole bedwetting issue now? If he had an accident everyone would find out, there would be no way for him to hide it.

“Come on kiddo it’ll be a good chance for us to show you how to make a fire.” From the way Steve said it Peter got the feeling that this had really been his plan all along. To get him comfortable and trick him into spending the night in the woods after all. And while he wasn’t a fan of the way the man had gone about it the prospect of being allowed to play with fire really sparked the pyromaniac in him and he suddenly wished more than ever Thor had decided to stick around.

“Steve don’t pressure him-“ Tony was more mad that he was springing it on the kid last minute, especially in front of everyone where he’d feel obligated to say yes. If Steve had suggested it before they got there, even just that morning Peter would have had the time to think on it. It’s one thing signing up for a day out in the wilderness but a night too? After you’d been pulled into thinking you’d be sleeping in a cabin for the whole weekend? That wasn’t fair on Steve’s part, not at all. And while Tony understood why he had gone about things the way he had, Peter needed time to emotionally prepare for things and if Steve had just given him the chance from the beginning to do so- Ugh, Tony was so mad. It was the principle of the thing really not so much the camping itself it was the deceit and he didn’t like the feeling of being conned into doing something.

“I’m not, I’m not! Not at all, it’s totally up to you, sport. You and your dad can head back to the cabin if you want and we’ll meet up with you guys in the morning.” Steve said quickly, not wanting to pressure the kid at all.

Peter thought about it for a moment, feeling uncomfortable with the decision being left down to him. Whilst he was more than worried about his little nighttime problem rearing its head, he didn’t really want to miss out on anything. He’d never been camping before, bar that time May had let him and Ned sleep in a tent on the balcony but that hardly counted, especially given the fact that they’d given up after two hours and gone back in. Besides, it seemed like an experience that every other S.H.I.E.L.D agent had and if it was a mandatory part of his training that he should have done already...
“Can we stay a little longer then see how I feel?” He looked up at his dad to see if that option was okay.

“Of course, Pete.” Tony said gently. That seemed like a fair compromise even if he was still miffed at Steve. “Just make your decision before it gets dark because I don’t want to walk back and become bear food-“

“Dad !”

“Tony !”

“Right, right, sorry!”

So they hiked for a while longer, a couple hours or so and eventually they came to a large flat area that was clear of trees. It was almost too perfect for them to just stumble upon but Tony wasn’t convinced that any of this trip had been down to pure luck or coincidence. Tony wouldn’t have put it past Steve to have planned out everything about this trip to the last minute detail and for once he resented him for it.

Still, he’d agreed to it now so he contributed in putting up the tents. Well, his and Peter’s tent, but the boy helped him and they had theirs up in less than five minutes (seriously Tony should have noticed earlier, he knew that green roll Peter had strapped to his back looked familiar- curse you Steve).

“Come on Steveo, what’s taking you so long?” Tony chuckled as he watched the soldier fighting with the lining of his own tent. He looked like a camouflaged ghost as he struggled to get out from the inside of it- why had he gotten inside it in the first place?

“Yeah, even the two city boys got set up quicker than you.” Bruce laughed, especially when Tony ran over to Peter and covered his mouth just before he started singing again.

“No fair, they have two engineers!” Steve huffed as he tried to mash two pieces of the metal framework that clearly didn’t align together. It was rather entertaining to all of them to watch the man who had appointed himself the leader of their nature excursion struggle with putting up a simple tent. Oh how the mighty have fallen.
“What’s wrong scout master Steve? Can’t pitch a tent?” Clint mocked from inside the cover of his own tent that he’d had set up ten minutes earlier.

“It’s not his fault. Bucky usually does that for him.” Nat said and Tony couldn’t hold himself back from laughing. Like, he physically couldn’t stop. He actually had to walk away and pretend to take a call because he was almost in tears when he saw Steve’s face that had turned redder than the stripes on his uniform.

Like Tony had to the day before when Clint picked on him, Steve had to keep his mouth shut unless he wanted to draw attention to the comment. And he really didn’t want Peter realising what Nat meant, not only because it hinted to his private life it was also majorly in appropriate for a boy of his age to be hearing. Thankfully the joke went right over teen’s head; Peter just figured there was another incident where Steve was struggling to put up a tent before and Bucky had to help him out. Oh the innocence of youth.

“Want some help?” After he recovered from his laughing fit, Tony offered his help since the man was still struggling after half an hour.

“No I do not.” Steve said snappily.

“You should’ve brought your pop up tent-“ Nat smirked from inside the comfortable shade hat was her own pop up tent.

“That’s cheating.” Steve huffed as he sat down on the ground and pouted when a slight breeze knocked down what little progress he’d made. He hated these modern tents, there was nothing wrong with the ones he had when he was younger. Sure their standard army issue tents weren’t exactly waterproof or insulated, but goddamn it they didn’t need instructions just to know where the opening was meant to go. He was still convinced he had pieces missing and in the end he just gave up and sat staring angrily at the semi assembled structure, that looked like a gust of wind would turn it into a kite.

“Well let's just hope for your sake it doesn’t rain, Steveo.” Tony chuckled (though later that night when Steve wasn’t looking he did sneak over to fix it for him- not because he was being a good friend or anything, just because seeing things half finished bugged the crap of him- yeah that was it).

Whilst Steve was having his own crisis Clint was busy mocking the modern amenities Bruce had the forethought to bring with him. “Really Bruce? An air mattress? Hardly what you’d use in an emergency survival situation.”
“I have a bad back, if I don’t get enough support there will be an emergency situation. You’re just mad because you’re less prepared than we are.” Bruce shrugged.

“No I just didn’t think we were going ‘glamping’ otherwise I would’ve brought my orthopedic pillow and a mini fridge- ow!” A sudden rouge bottle cap hit Clint just below his eye.

“Oops. Sorry.” Nat said sarcastically as she took a swig of beer.

“That better not be-“ The sound of a beer being cracked open got Steve’s attention and he whipped around to chastise her.

“It’s non-alcoholic, jeez how dumb do you think I am?” She scoffed. She wasn’t the one who had brought whiskey with her, but she didn’t see Steve yelling at Clint and Bruce (or Thor for that matter but he had the mind to take off before Steve found out they’d been drinking).

“Pretty dumb if your choice of beverage is alcohol free beer, why would you want to drink it if it doesn’t get you drunk? Beer tastes like shit that’s kind of the point.” Clint shook his head.

“Spoken like a true little bitch. You can enjoy your fruity cocktails all you want, hun, no ones stopping you.” She shrugged between another sip.

Clint put his hands on his hips. “I’m comfortable enough in my masculinity to enjoy a ‘girly’ drink-“

“You have to be, to be able to order a ‘sex on the beach’ without laughing.”

Hearing talk of cocktails Tony’s ears perked up. “Oo that sounds good-“

“No it doesn’t.” Clint, Nat and Bruce said all at once.

“Enough talk about alcohol.” Bruce said finally.
While everyone waited for Steve to stop sulking, they entertained themselves for a while. Bruce contented himself with reading a book whilst the other three adults started playing cards, but Peter was bored. Despite having walked twenty miles that day he was still bursting with energy and he didn’t want to spend his freedom sitting stationary; if he wanted to sit down in one spot he could’ve done that back home at the tower, he wanted to go explore. “Hey dad? Can I go for a walk?”

“We’ve just been for a walk.” Tony said flatly. “Christ you really are a puppy.”

“Well a run then?” That’s when Peter got the bright idea that he had yet to use any of his Spidey-powers that day even though it was the perfect opportunity for him to spread his wings a little. “Or tree climbing!”

Tony’s eyes flickered up then to give the boy a dry look. To think he’d been worried about taking the boy away from his modern comforts and now he wanted to play in trees. “Really?”

Peter just gave Tony a sheepish smile and the man sighed. “I don’t want you running around on your own-“

“I’ll go with him.” Clint shrugged and stood up. “Gotta keep my back moving anyhow.”

Tony thought for a moment before he nodded. “Fine, but if he hurts himself you’re dealing with the blood.”

“Deal.” Clint shrugged again. The pros of babysitting a kid that can heal quicker than Pietro could run. “Come on kid, let’s go work some of that energy off.”

“Bring some firewood back with you!” Steve called, still sitting straight legged on the ground and staring at his failed attempt at shelter.

“I don’t understand how he can’t figure out how to put that thing together..” Peter shook his head as he and Clint headed back into the trees.

“Yeah well he can’t be good at everything.” Clint chuckled. After they walked back into the trees Clint raised his hands like he was presenting something. “Alright kid, go ahead, I’ll meet you between those two oaks over there, go ahead and do your thing.”
Peter wasted no time climbing the nearest tree and making his way up to the very top until he could see over the tree line. Wow, the view was pretty amazing from up there, he could see for miles; in every direction he looked he could see nothing but trees spanning the horizon and he spent a while just perching there and taking pictures, before jumping to the next tree to get some from a different angle. He suddenly wished that MJ had been with him, she was the photographer after all and she would have loved the opportunity to photograph such a landscape. He wasn’t sure he would have been able to get the girl that far up a tree, though not without her finding out he’s well, you know- part spider now.

He kind of lost himself up there for a while, just enjoying the view, so much so that he made a hammock using his natural webbing (which he was rather proud of, he was really getting the hang of controlling them now, other than when he sneezed or got startled of course). It was so comfortable up there he forgot that he was meant to be being accompanied by a certain adult. That was until said adult appeared in the tree top next to him.

“Oh good, I thought you got stuck-“ Clint said calmly but Peter jumped so bad that he almost flipped himself out of the web he’d made.

“Jesus! How-how did you get up here?!”


“Well- why?!” That was when Peter looked down and realised how high up he was. For someone with a bad back the archer must’ve still been incredibly agile to make it up that far- especially without Peter noticing. Yeah he’d been distracted but still. It kind of worried the kid, his spidey-senses should’ve kicked in way before the man was right there. Then again, his sixth sense wasn’t an exact science so maybe it could tell that Clint wasn’t a threat? Or that he was a familiar presence? Still- it would have been nice to have some warning.

“Because I’ve been calling your name for five minutes and I didn’t want your dad thinking I lost you.” Clint laughed. “Now are you coming or what?”

“Where?''

“To the next checkpoint. You wanted to run around remember? Let’s see who can get to that tree first.” Clint asked slyly as he suddenly let go of the branch he was on and dropped out of Peter’s view. The teen let out a shrill screech and looked down but he couldn’t see the man anywhere.
Then he heard the man’s voice from behind him again. “What are you screaming for?”

“What the- how the- how did you do that?!?”

“Wouldn’t you like to know.” Clint winked.

They hung out there for a long time, Peter meeting Clint at various points until eventually, at some point, it degenerated into a game of hide and seek and Clint was *good* at it. Even with his heightened senses Peter could never find him until he popped out from behind him to gloat and he would always find Peter in under a minute no matter how high up in the trees he climbed. It was getting to the point where the teenager was beginning to wonder if Hawkeye wasn’t just a normal guy who became an amazing archer, after all..there was no way he could have been that fast *no way* and Peter had seen the man on the treadmill. Clint had been kidding about teleporting..right?

The sky was just starting to darken slightly and Peter had been searching the forest floor for Clint for over five minutes. Just as he was starting to get worried that the game had ended and Clint had either gotten into trouble or just left him Steve yelled into the woods for them to come back for dinner but the archer didn’t respond. Peter slid down the bark of the tree he was in, scanning around him as he went. “Clint?”

Still nothing. He hadn’t strayed too far away from camp had he? Surely not if he could still hear Steve. Then again, super hearing…no he was good, he could see the fire (that he’d evidently been to busy playing childish games to see being erected), and the distinct lack of Clint’s shadow around it. He could make out everyone else, but no archer. ”Clint?!”

“Come on kid didn’t you hear dinners ready?” Came the man’s voice from *right behind him.* Luckily the man stood far enough away, out of Peter’s arm length because he startled the kid so much he swung for him- whilst screaming of course.

“Ah, you bitch!” Peter jumped as he punched the air between them which sent Clint into hysterics. Once Peter recovered from the initial shock he started complaining in a whiny voice. “Cliiiiiint - that’s not funny!”

“Peter are you-“ Tony came running towards them only to see that nothing was actually happening. His face went from worried to pissed real quick. “Oh for fuck sake- Clint. I told you to watch him not scare the shit out of him.”
“You didn’t specify that I couldn’t do that.”

Surprisingly Tony’s expression returned to a neutral one. “Fair point. Hurry up foods getting cold.”

“Hey! I didn’t consent to being spooked!” Peter said staring at his father with a look of betrayal.

“If you did then the element of surprise would be lost and then the spooking would be ruined.” Tony shrugged and Clint chuckled evilly as they walked the rest of the way back to camp.

Chapter End Notes

I sincerely hope everyone reading this has seen the clip where Tom Holland gets jumpscared as he comes through a doorway and screams 'ah you bitch' because that's what I was referring too in this chapter XD
See? Camping IS Fun!

Chapter Summary

The other half of the long chapter :p

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They ate in relative peace for once (probably thanks to Thor’s absence in all honesty), around the campfire. Despite the heat during the day now that the sun had begun to set there was a distinct chill in the air and it wasn’t an uncomfortable one, not after a day of blaring heat. It was comfortable for a long time, though once the breeze picked up Peter was forced to go and put on a jacket (another one he’d accumulated, this time it was Steve’s- it wasn’t his fault his larger counterparts jumpers were always more cozy than his own).

Bruce was in the middle of telling a story about how one time he had to run naked through an entire rural village in Guam after he Hulked out, because Clint had ‘misplaced him’ (“Forgotten you mean.” “I didn’t forget you it was before you let Tony put a tracker on-” “Then why instead of looking for me did you go back to the hotel?!”) when Peter got that feeling again. That feeling that he’d consumed too much water and that water now wanted release. Once again he decided to hold it until it got too bad to ignore in hopes of bettering his chances of actually being able to relieve himself, but it wasn’t long before Tony caught him squirming again.

Tony leaned in and whispered to him. “Go on.”

“Where?” Peter asked with an uncomfortable look on his face.

“Where you’ve been going all day.” Tony chuckled, hadn’t they been over this? What was different about peeing in the woods now? He knew it wasn’t a nice experience for the kid but needs must. He would’ve thought he’d be used to it by then after a day of doing it.

“But there’s nowhere private around here..” Peter mumbled as he peered around the grove. He wasn’t exactly wrong, they were in a fairly open plane, hence why they’d picked that spot to set up camp. If he wanted full tree cover he’d have to walk a ways away into the woods.

Tony shrugged at first. “Just go behind Clint’s tent.”
“Dad.” Peter whined sadly. Okay Tony, not the time to joke around you should’ve learned than by now, not when Peter has to go. Or when he’d skipped his nap for that matter.

It was obvious the boy was asking for permission to find a spot he deemed secluded enough to work as an impromptu bathroom, but Tony was hesitant. Though he wasn’t scared of bears getting his son, Peter could get himself into all kinds of trouble when he was unsupervised (not that he particularly wanted to supervise him but come on, they were in the middle of damn nowhere), not to mention what could possibly be lurking in the dark. Even though he was sure that they were safe- hell you can’t get safer than being around a group of superheroes, and they’d thoroughly scanned the area- but still. Call it overprotective but Tony didn’t like the idea of Peter disappearing out of his sight even for a moment.

“Two minutes. You don’t go more than twenty steps past the tree line, understood?” Tony said seriously and Peter nodded and ran off before he could change his mind.

Peter stayed within Tony’s parameters- at least he tried to. He didn’t want to stray any further than Tony had said, both because he didn’t want to disobey his father and the light from the fire only reached so far. Even though it wasn’t too dark yet when he was out in the open, this side of the tree line was considerably more shadow ridden and Peter didn’t want to be caught in total darkness with his pants down- literally. But if he still had light around him that meant there was the chance someone could see him well, going and that thought alone was enough to make his bladder lock up. He had to find the perfect spot..

By the time he did find that perfect place (it was like finding the holy grail, Peter could swear he heard angels singing when he spotted that bush) he was way over the two minute mark. Just as he’d finally started to go he heard footsteps coming towards him.

“Kid-“ It was Clint, why the hell did it have to be Clint? Couldn’t Tony have gotten off of his own ass to come check or just shouted? He had super hearing you know!

“Don’t come over here!” Peter screamed, his voice higher than usual. Fortunately upon hearing Peter’s voice the man’s footsteps retreating, quick enough for Peter’s bladder not to start freezing up on him.

“Oh so you’re not dead- he’s not dead!” Clint yelled back to the group, laughing his ass off. “Do you need some toilet paper kid? You’ve been gone a while, did you catch a parasite after all-“
“OH MY GOD SHUT UP!” Peter screeched and he could hear Clint howling with laughter, along with the rest of their group off in the distance. So much for privacy.

“All of you shut up.” Peter grumbled when he trudged back to the fireside and slammed himself down so hard on the log he was sharing with Tony he heard the wood crack. Despite his angry words everyone was still failing to stifle their snickers which only made his face flame more red and his mood sour even more. “I hate all of you, I’m going back to my hammock-”

“No no Peter we’re not- we’re not laughing at you buddy-“ Steve stammered out between splutters.

“You are too!”

“No we’re not it’s just- well I didn’t know you could scream that high.” Steve squeaked out before the whole group dissolved into roaring laughter again and Peter stood up and stomped back over to his fortress of solitude.

“Right! That’s it! If you need me I’ll be in a hammock thirty feet up in a tree.” He called back, simply flipping them all the bird when they tried to call him back.

They left him alone for a while, Peter enjoyed stargazing until Bruce managed to coax him down with the promise of s’mores. That and the fact that his phone battery was low and it was starting to get pretty dark and cold up there in the treetops. Thankfully everyone had decided to cease their teasing for the night and Peter was able to enjoy the rest of his evening in peace listening to the stories the adults were passing around.

They somehow got onto the topic about their families and though a touchy subject for a majority of the group there was a lack of tension in the atmosphere. Even Tony was being pretty open sharing a story about one of the only memories he had with his paternal grandfather, who died when before Tony even reached adolescence; where the older Stark had tried to take a very young Tony on a fishing trip but the toddler decided he’d rather tinker with the small boats engine and they ended up trapped in the middle of a lake before the local water rescue team got to them. “I just remember telling him to piss off when he suggested we swim to shore.”

“Goodness, you mean to say you’ve always had such a potty mouth?” Steve chuckled.

“Oh yeah, he threatened to tan my hide for that one but I didn’t care I was not about to get my hair wet.” Tony shrugged, looking proud of his younger self. “Hey that’s a thought kid, we gotta teach
you to swim at some point.”

Tony barged Peter with his shoulder and the teen blushed slightly. He’d intended to keep that shortcoming of his private until he could rectify it.

“You can’t swim?” Bruce asked incredulously and Peter shook his head. “Like at all?”

“No I never got around to it.” Peter shrugged. In truth he remembered May taking him to lessons once when he was around eight but some older kids had held his head underwater until his lips went blue to he never went back. And he never told his aunt why he refused to take baths anymore after that point. “I grew up in New York and it’s not like we ever went on vacation, there was never a need to.”

“Yeah we’re gonna need to fix that.” Steve said worriedly. “It’s a basic requirement to be an agent.”

“I’ll get on it as soon as we get home.” Peter said quickly, hoping to drop the conversation but Nat adorned one of her signature twisted smiles.

“Why wait? There’s a lake just there yonder.”

“Hell no.” Peter shook his head adamantly.

“Hey now.” Steve warned.

“Sorry- I mean heck no. I’ll stick to clean water. I’m already Iron deficient I don’t need to get attacked by leeches too thank you very much.” Peter said with a shiver at the mere thought of the critters.

“Christ kid is there anything you’re not afraid of?” Nat chuckled. She hadn’t meant it meanly but even so the words stung Peter a bit. He thought he was doing better combatting his anxious nature but apparently not.

“I’m not scared of everything.”
“No just bears, parasites, ghosts- and that’s just today. Now the water?”

“Those are all very valid things to be afraid of. And I’m not scared of the water itself- though who could blame me after what Steve made me drink- I’m just not a fan of being submerged in it. The sound hurts my ears.” Peter said defensively and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Oh he’s such a sensitive lad.” Nat said lightly and reached over to ruffle Peter’s hair as she stood and went to retrieve another drink from the cooler. Peter vaguely heard her asking if anyone else wanted something but for some reason his ears went funny. He started to feel weird, kind of tingly all over and everything felt fuzzy around the edges; That and everything sounded like it was..underwater..

Without realising it, just the thought of being thrown forcefully into a lake set of a chain reaction in his brain and kick started a memory he didn’t even know was still bothering him.

Out of seemingly nowhere he was transported back to that fight with the Vulture. The one that led to him falling hundreds of feet through the air with nothing to stop him; no buildings to anchor himself on to, no amount of webs would do him any good. He couldn’t catch himself, he couldn’t stop himself from hurtling towards the water. Even in those few seconds as he fell he knew that falling from that height would be equivalent to hitting cement. He was helpless. And alone. No backup of any kind. No Mr. Stark. The man didn’t even care about him any more, if he ever had in the first place. Why did he ever think that he’d be able to do this by himself? He was so useless, no wonder Tony had gotten rid of him. He was just a stupid kid.

But instead of hitting the water and being met by that harsh, icy bath of a thousand needles slicing into his skin he was warm again. And he wasn’t alone anymore because he felt a hand on his shoulder and he could hear people talking. Slowly one by one his senses came back, starting with his hearing and he heard Clint talking. He couldn’t make out exactly what he was saying but it was comforting nonetheless. Eventually his vision returned, albeit blurry at first, but he followed the hand on his shoulder all the way up the the person it belonged to. He looked up and after he blinked one more time he was back around the campfire again and not suspended in midair and Mr Stark- Dad. Dad was there. Phew, thank god that was over.

“You back with us?” Tony said gently once Peter showed some acknowledgement in his eyes instead of that vacant stare he had a moment before.

“Uh, yeah. Yeah sorry, I uh, what were we talking about?” Peter stammered, feeling embarrassment wash over him. He wasn’t exactly sure why, it wasn’t like he had intended to have a flashback- hell he didn’t even know the lake incident was triggering enough to give him a
flashback. That had never happened before. Sure, he had nightmares about it every now and then but he figured that was just his subconscious trying to tell him he had to pee in his sleep or trying to remind him how much it sucked to try and take on the world on your own- but he’d never had a flashback of it before. Huh. Weird. And kinda scary.

Tony didn’t move his hand from his shoulder, he kept it there, his thumb moving back and forth kind of Peter him comfortingly. “Clint was talking about the first time he got to get up close and personal with Hulk.”

Peter chuckled and continued to listen to the story Clint was telling, though he did move a little closer to Tony in the process, allowing his dad to give him a casual looking, but deeply consoling half hug. He hated the hollow feeling in his chest after a flashback like that, and this time it was coupled with feeling stupid and confused; not only due to the randomness of the memory that decided to plague him but the emotions he felt during said memory as well. He hadn’t really thought about it but that had been one of his lowest points as he literally fell from grace. He’d never felt so hopeless and alone in his short life up until that point; when he was feeling like Tony had abandoned him, that May was going to die and the rug was about to be pulled out from under him at any moment. The vivid emotions he felt at the time were lingering even though he’d snapped back to his current reality. The emotional echoes were always the worst part. That and catching his breath back that always seemed to run away from him.

“How long was I gone for?” Peter whispered to Tony whilst the others were distracted.

“A while, but it’s okay.” Tony said quietly as he brushed Peter’s hair away from his face. Peter looked at him, and Tony knew what he was silently asking from his eye movements alone. “No one else noticed, you’re good.”

That was a lie but the boy didn’t need to know that. He didn’t want Peter feeling embarrassed when it was obvious the boy was shaken enough.

“I’m sorry.” Peter whispered.

“Hey, no sorrys. You have nothing to be sorry for, you didn’t do anything wrong bubby, nothing at all.” Tony shushed him and brought him in for a tighter hug. “Do you wanna talk about it?”

Peter shrugged, which in teenager language meant no or at least not now so Tony dropped it. He decided he’d ask the teen once they were in private but for now he’d settle on helping the boy warm up from his dissociative state.
Luckily that didn’t take long. Peter helped himself by shoving chocolate in his mouth (muttering something about that being Lupin’s remedy after dealing with dementors and Tony had no idea what the kid was talking about). Not half an hour later the boy was back to joining in with the storytelling and jokes and at one point was even comfortable enough excusing himself for a bathroom break without making something up or just slipping away silently. When the teen was off relieving himself Nat used the opportunity to ask what was going on with Thor. They’d all avoided mentioning it as not to worry Peter but they were all silently wondering what exactly was occurring.

“I thought he said he’d come back tonight?”

“He said he might. I sent him our coordinates just in case.” Tony said flippantly.

“He didn’t say what he was doing?” Steve asked, unable to keep the worry out of his voice.

“No but he’s at home so he’s fine. Maybe he just didn’t want to spend the night out here.” Tony said, a little snarkily towards the blond himself; just so Steve knew that he hadn’t forgiven him for tricking him yet.

“I doubt Thor would have a problem with camping.” Clint said frowning slightly.

“Oh not you too Barton- guys he’s a grown ass man. I know he acts like a teenager but he’s literally hundreds of years older than us-“

“Not mentally.” Steve said and he wasn’t saying that in a derogatory manner, he was being genuine and the rest of the group nodded.

“Well I for one trust him and I know he’s at home safe.”

“It’s not a trust thing T it’s just..well you know he’s been a little..off lately.” Nat said, for once trying to censor herself.

“I know, hence why I’m not badgering him about whatever’s going on. Maybe this is just Thor’s way of saying he needs a little time to himself- when have you known the guy to ever come out and
say that?” Everyone else shrugged or shook their heads. “Exactly. He’s always so happy go lucky maybe he doesn’t know how to say when he needs some space. He sounded better on the phone earlier too, a lot calmer, so everybody try and relax alright? Ain’t that what this weekend is supposed to be about anyway?”

“What’s this weekend about?” Peter asked as he came bounding back over and threw himself cross legged on the ground.

“Relaxing apparently. But I don’t know how you can do that with that giant spider on your back—“ Nat said casually.

“WHAT?!” Peter leapt up again, ripped his (Steve’s) jacket off and threw it on the ground quicker than Bruce could say-

“Pete! Pete she was just kidding!”

“Really, you fell for that one?” Clint laughed into his drink, nearly sending it flying everywhere.

“Screw you Nat! That’s not funny!” Peter panted though he continued to run his hands up and down his arms with the newfound sensation of bugs crawling all over him. “Don’t you think I’ve had enough experiences with spiders?”

“You shouldn’t be afraid of your own kind, I was just trying to help you accept yourself.” Nat smirked.

“Why’s it always me you’ve gotta pick on huh? Why can’t you trick someone else for once?” Peter huffed but there was no real bite to it as he sat back down closer to the fire. He might as well give Steve his item of clothing back because there was no way Peter was wearing that thing again, real spider or a fake one.

“Because it’s so easy and no one else reacts to me anymore. Except your dad.”

“Please.” Tony rolled his eyes. “You haven’t gotten me in ages.”
“Oh? So you don’t want me to tell everyone about what happened after we went out on Steve’s birthday?”

Tony’s eyes went a little wider but he tried to keep his expression neutral. “Don’t-“

But she continued with a fake look of confusion on her face. “In the car when you swore you didn’t-“

“I said don’t Nat, I mean it.” Tony growled through gritted teeth and suddenly everyone was really interested in Nat’s story telling. He didn’t mind her telling the embarrassing moment to his adult peers but it really wasn’t a conversation that should be had in front of the youngest amongst them. “It’s getting late.”

Steve nodded his head in agreement as he looked Peter up and down. “Yeah it’s already-“

“Ten forty five?” Peter questioned, looking up at the sky trying to use the mood the same way he had used the sun before.

Steve beamed at him proudly. “Good job Peter! So you know that means it’s already past your bedtime right?”

“Aw come on- it’s the weekend!” Peter said. He wasn’t ready to go to sleep yet; A, because he was enjoying the campfire atmosphere, it was oddly calming and everyone was getting along for once (and he was interested in what dirt Nat had on his dad), B, he had still had adrenaline coursing through him after his fake run in with a spider and C, he still had his nighttime worries to think about. He’d drank a lot of soda over the course of the evening and he wasn’t even going to try to sleep before he was see it had all worked its way out of his system.

“Okay, well just a little longer.” Steve conceded once he shared a look with Tony that confirmed he was allowed to give an extension.

Half an hour later and Peter could barely keep his eyes open anymore. Curse his internal clock, it was too used to his usual routine; his body was practically screaming at him ‘What are you doing boy?! We’re supposed to be in bed right now!’ He couldn’t deny that he was exhausted after such a long day but he couldn’t sleep yet, not if he wanted to make it through the night dry which would be a miracle in itself anyway. He’d already tempted fate by drinking after dinner and he’d been lucky enough not to wet the bed the night before, why did he think he’d be lucky enough for that to
happen again? Maybe if he went to sleep now he’d be able to wake up before the others and dispose of the evidence before anyone else saw.

“Come on, P you can’t use me as a leaning post all night.” Tony chuckled as he tried to juggling the limp teenager into a standing position after he’d fallen asleep sitting upright against him. “Go get ready for bed.”

“M’kay.” Peter muttered without a fuss this time. As much as he wanted to force himself into staying awake all night he couldn’t physically do it any more, not with the warm fire lulling him to sleep along with the comforting sound of quiet conversation and Tony’s arc reactor whirring. It wasn’t fair that was like a recipe to cause sleepiness, how was he meant to stay awake with all that going on?

As he stood up and started towards the tent to change clothes, he found himself waking up a little bit. Moving around helped a lot and so did the harshness of the blue bulb in the lantern he was using to guide his way; the contrast between that and the warm light of the fire was stark enough to make his eyes sting, which certainly helped sharpen his senses. The cool summer air was helpful too, shocking his body to stay awake just that little bit longer. By the time he visited his designated pee spot, said goodnight to everybody and got himself changed, Peter was awake enough to feel confident in staying up for at least another hour, which should give his bladder enough time to fill itself again so he could empty it right before he went to sleep. Though he felt it was futile to try and prevent an accident he could at least try and reduce the damage of said accident.

Not long after he retired to his tent he was surprised to see that Tony came to join him.

“You okay?” Peter asked, somewhat perplexed as to why his dad was coming to bed so early.

“Yeah, just tired. What about you bubs, are you alright?” Tony asked as he laid down on his side of the tent.

Peter wasn’t even surprised to see that his dad neglected to change out of his regular clothes. He doubted Tony was any more comfortable than he was with their unusual sleeping environment. He nodded in answer to the man’s question and continued playing on his phone like he had been doing in order to keep himself awake.

“You wanna talk about what happened earlier?” Tony asked softly. It took Peter a moment to realise what the man was referring to, which Tony must have took as Peter being uncomfortable. “We don’t have to if you don’t want to, Petey.”
“No, it’s fine, it’s just..I’ve never had that one before and it kinda..kinda freaked me out a bit.” He went on to explain the contents of his flashback and how he had felt during it (though he skipped the parts about feeling like Tony had abandoned him, he knew the man felt guilty enough about all that). “It’s just, I’m worried that I’m gonna start getting more. More things that I didn’t think bothered me so much.”

“Well you’ve been working on the MV stuff with your councillor right?” Tony asked and Peter nodded. “So while you’re coming to terms with that part, your brain is trying to get you to deal with some other stuff you may have repressed or forgotten about while you’re at it. It makes sense for things not to bother you until you’re ready to deal with them. You’re stronger now so maybe this is your brain’s way of telling you that you’re ready to deal with some of the more deep rooted complex stuff.”

“Great.” Peter grumbled. “So my life is gonna be playing a game of catch and mouse- every time I get rid of one suitcase of crap I have to dig through another one?”

“I wouldn’t have put it quite like that and that’s the pessimistic side of you looking at it.” Tony said gently. “Think of it as a good thing, look how quickly you came round today. A couple months ago as you would have been a zombie for hours.”

“Yeah I guess..” Peter sighed, though he did find some solace in Tony’s words. His dads calm rational way of thinking always worked to calm him down and he couldn’t fault him for his logic. Even if the way he had explained it wasn’t technically how it worked it was nice to hear it put in a way that didn’t make Peter feel like he was going crazy. “I’m just scared about..some stuff coming back..”

“Like what?”

“The..the MV stuff..not with you I mean..the first time..” Peter said almost inaudibly.

“You still only getting flashes?” Tony asked in a neutral tone of voice as though they were having a completely innocuous conversation, but Peter didn’t fail to notice the soothing circles the man was now rubbing onto his back.

“Uh huh. And they’re bad enough.” Peter swallowed thickly, remembering the taste of metal in his mouth and the smell of burning. He shook his head quickly, not wanting to send himself into another flashback so soon.
Tony didn’t press him for any more conversation for a while after that; he just continued rubbing Peter’s back until the boy was ready for him to stop. “If the memories start coming back, we’ll deal with them together.”

Peter nodded, believing his dad whole heartedly. The contrast between the cold loneliness he felt in his flashback and the warm comfort that he was feeling in Tony’s presence now was night and day and Peter couldn’t be more grateful. That’s why he was now extra determined to stay awake for as long as he could, so he could thank his dad by not producing a puddle in their tent while he slept.

The atmosphere was calm within the confines of their tent (a little too calm for Peter’s intended plan but he was doing his best to counteract that). Both men started to wind down, each scrolling through their respective phones and listening to the distant conversation happening over by the campfire. Peter enjoyed watching as the shadows from their housemates danced across the ceiling of their tent, like some kind of weird Avengers themed puppet show. It was more entertaining when Tony joined in watching and started commentating what the figures were saying using terrible impressions of each figure. But it was Tony’s impression of Steve that got Peter the worst.

“Yes well that might be so but I know everything because I’m Captain America, America’s sweetheart and two time winner of America’s little miss fourth of July competition.” Tony rambled in his best (worst) Steve impression that he and Peter had perfects over the years and the kid was in fits of giggles. Tony could swear he was addicted to that laugh. “And did I mention I love America?”

After getting the boy smiling again after a difficult conversation Tony felt it was the appropriate time to encourage the boy to go to sleep- after the kid went to the bathroom two more times first of course. He figured Peter was worried about the possibility of having an accident but Tony was more than prepared for that eventually. As soon as Steve had sprung his surprise camp out on them he came up with a plan on what to do should such an issue occur. Still, he could tell Peter was nervous just from the way he kept moving around- not in a ‘I need to pee’ or an ‘I’m bored’ way but in an ‘I’m anxious’ way. Tony couldn’t explain exactly how he could differentiate between the three because they all certainly looked the same on the surface, he just could. Maybe it was a dad thing.

“Pete, if you won’t want to sleep out here we can always go back to the cabin.”

“But I thought you said I had to choose before it got dark?”

“I did but I don’t want you being uncomfortable. I don’t mind heading back with you if you want.”
“No I’m.” Peter took a deep breath. “I’m fine. Really. I just can’t relax. Can I take one of those melatonin thingies again?” Peter asked hopefully. He wasn’t sure how a medication that was designed to send you to sleep actually prevented him peeing the bed but maybe it was some kind of magic cure.

“Uhh, no I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Tony was quickly, not wanting Peter to go sleepwalking into the woods in the middle of the night, that would be a disaster and he knew his heart couldn’t take it.

“Why not?”

“Because you don’t want to get too dependent on them. Trust me I know from experience.” He said smoothly without skipping a beat. Nice save Tony.

So Peter sighed and turned over after asking for his dad to help zip him into his sleeping bag; it was one of those cocoon type ones with a hood that made it difficult to zip from the inside. He guessed he’d just have to give to the exhaustion and hope for the best- which in his case would mean a mess that would stay on his side of the tent instead of creeping into Tony’s, that was all he could hope for at this point. Usually he would’ve used his phone to keep himself up but he didn’t want the light bothering his dad and he wanted to save his battery; that and his hands were now practically trapped inside the sleeping bag.

“Goodnight bubs, you wake me up if you need me yeah? Even if you just want me up to go outside with you.” Tony said gently as he turned over to settle done for sleep himself.

“Okay..” Peter said uneasily. He really didn’t like the thought of having to wake his dad up for anything- let alone the idea that Tony thought he would need to. Still he appreciated the offer even if it did insinuate that he was a big blubbery baby that couldn’t handle one night in the woods. “Goodnight dad.”

Once he gave in to just how tired he was he actually found it was pretty easy to relax. Now that he’d made peace with the fact that he was more than likely to wet himself and that it was more of a matter of when than if, he found that it wasn’t difficult to start drifting off. The sound of the leaves rustling in the wind outside along with the now quiet conversation from what sounded to just be Steve and Clint now, left him feeling rather calm and it didn’t take long until he was fully asleep.

What Peter didn’t realise was that Tony stayed up a little while after him, watching him sleep. The
man wanted to make sure he’d catch any signs that Peter was wiggling so he could wake him up to pee and avoid the boy having an accident if he could. He stayed up for quite awhile before he succumbed to sleep himself though he kept one metaphorical eye open. And it was a good thing he did.

Peter woke up at around two in the morning, though he didn’t know what the time was; all he knew was it was late, if the complete darkness and lack of noise outside was any indication. It was pitch black inside the tent so he didn’t have the luxury of checking his watch and he wasn’t too fussed about how early it was anyway. Well, he was, being slightly grumpy to be woken up out of such a peaceful sleep but his bladder was more than happy for Peter to be up and at ‘em. Not two seconds after he woke up Peter was forced to slip a hand between his legs as a desperate need to pee surged through him.

‘Well it beats wetting the bed at least’, he thought as he noted that his crotch felt completely dry. He sat up to peek out of the tent window. It was dark outside, obviously- but it was dark. Peter couldn’t make out what was two inches in front of him, let alone the smouldering embers from the campfire which had long since burned out.

Now, Peter wasn’t inherently afraid of the dark, not really, though he did tend to leave on at least one light in his room when he slept but this- this was a new kind of fear that he hadn’t felt in a long time. When peering out of the mesh window he didn’t know if there was something out there looking right back at him..the sudden scare of a bird chirping didn’t do much to help the boy’s bladder and he almost let out an audible yelp.

He considered waking Tony up, but only for a second. He wasn’t a little kid, he didn’t need someone to go potty with him. Although Tony had said he didn’t mind before he went to sleep..and he did make a point of telling Peter to stay close whenever he dipped into the woods before- no, no he couldn’t wake him up. That was far too babyish and what if he got mad? Tony wasn’t the best when he was abruptly awoken and Peter didn’t want to do it over something as trivial as him needing to pee.

But he didn’t just need to pee he was dying; and he supposed that waking him up to go with him was better than waking up to a puddle seeping into his sleeping bag. Oh man, he didn’t know what to do- well he did but he didn’t want to and he just had to go so bad- he didn’t have time to overthink about it. So, for once, he didn’t.

He tried to wiggle and arm out of his sleeping bag to shake the man’s shoulder but he couldn’t, the neck hole was too small. Maybe he needed Tony awake after all for more reasons than one. “Dad..dad.”

Luckily Tony wasn’t sleeping too deeply and immediately stirred. “Hm? What?”
Peter waited for Tony to wake up fully and turn over. He sat up stretching when he realised Peter was sitting upright too. “What is it, what’s the matter?”

“I gotta go pee.” Peter whispered out shyly. He tried to keep his squirming to a minimum but that was impossible when he felt like he was about to lose it any second. Why couldn’t his bladder wake him up before he was on the brink of losing it? He couldn’t really complain, at least it had the courtesy to wake him up this time- but still, come on now.

“You want me to come with you?” Tony asked as he rubbed his eyes tiredly. There was no judgement in his voice, just the remnants of sleep and Peter suddenly felt awful about waking him up in the first place. He immediately regretted it and loathed himself for making such a rash childish decision.

“I-I uh- no can you just uhm- pass the lamp over?” Peter stammered out. Coincidentally the lantern was on Tony’s side of the tent as the man had been up after Peter had already fallen asleep.

But Tony wasn’t stupid. Even when he was half asleep he knew Peter better than that. The kid wouldn’t have woken him up just to pass the light source over to him, not when he could’ve just as easily reached over his sleeping form to grab it himself. “Pete if you want me to come with you it’s fine, just say so.”

“Mm-nn-o its fine just- mm- lamp, please.” Peter said urgently, trying to backtrack. He didn’t have time to chat, at this rate he wasn’t even going to make it out of the tent before he burst.

‘Very convincing son.’ Tony rolled his eyes. “Peter.”

“I-okay yes I’m scared please come with me just- just hurry ‘cause I can’t hold it much longer!” Peter blurted out his admission with a whine as he crossed and uncrossed his legs within the confines of his sleeping bag. The desperate plea was enough to make Tony spring into action despite being awake for less than forty seconds.

“Well come on then.” Tony said quickly and got up as fast as he could. He’d already gotten out of the tent before he realised Peter wasn’t at his heels or scrabbling to get past him like he thought he could. He peered back inside the tent only to see Peter continuously squirming in his seat, just as he had been when he shook Tony awake. It was like he hadn’t even attempted to move. “Come on kid, for someone who ‘can’t hold it much longer’ you’re being incredibly still-“
“I can’t get the zip! It’s stuck!” Peter cried and continued wiggling around inside his sleeping bag like some kind of demented disco worm; had the situation not been so dire Tony would have laughed but of course he couldn’t without upsetting the boy more. He did crack a smile in the cover of the darkness though as he set the lantern on the floor to set about helping his son out of his polyester prison.

“Hold still- hold still! I can’t jimmy it with you moving like that-“

“ It’s coming out!”

“Just two seconds!” Tony barked, the stress of the sudden life or death situation getting to him. ‘For Christ’s sake how does this kid always get himself into these situations?’ The two way zipper had gotten caught, snagging a piece of the nylon, so much for it making it easier for Peter to get out of. It took only a few strategic tugs for Tony to get the fabric free but from the way Peter was squirming he worried it was gonna be too late. “There now lets-“

The second the zipper gave way Peter was up and out of the tent before Tony could finish his sentence. He’d already bolted away towards the trees only stopping once he realised how dark it was and remembered why he’d wanted Tony to come with him in the first place. He skidded to a holt, bouncing up and down and he’d given up trying to be surreptitious about holding himself; he couldn’t help it, if he let go now he’d surely wet his pants.

“Dad come on! Please!” He hissed, urging Tony to keep up with his light source.

“I’m coming, keep your hair on.” Tony chuckled, but he did hurry up, taking long strides to catch up with his son who was clearly seconds away from pissing himself despite the fact that he was already surrounded by trees.

“I’m more worried about keeping my pants dry.” Peter whined pitifully and continued walking deeper into the woods near the spot he’d gone before he went to bed. After going there a couple times it was now the only spot he designated ‘safe’ both in a practical sense and a bladder shy sense.

But it seemed too far away now, his abdomen was already shaking with the effort to keep its contents in and every step he took was forcing more pee out of him and into his underwear. This forced him to take tiny, baby steps attempting to keep his legs partially crossed, which was nearly impossible given the uneven surface he was walking on. Compared to how he’d initially sprinted
from the tent he was now moving at a snail's pace and there was no way he’d be able to make it to his designated peeing area without completely losing it.

“Pete, just pick a tree. The world is literally your bathroom out here just go.” Tony said, somewhat frustratedly. Even though he understood Peter’s aversion to peeing outside and the ritualistic way he’d been visiting the same spot all evening, he figured when the kid was less than a minute away from completely soaking himself he’d make an exception. When the teen stopped walking altogether Tony decided to suggest again that he just go to the nearest tree. “Peter you can worry about re-marking your territory later- go on, before you have an accident.”

‘Ugh that stupid phrase again- accident’, Peter thought bitterly, though this time it wasn’t completely unjustified, he knew he was acting like a little kid but he just- he just wasn’t sure he could make himself go unless he was in a private- Ohh god, okay, his bladder was making that decision for him and he felt something drop down his leg which he prayed was just sweat. Oh but he couldn’t move. One more step and he was sure to lose it.

Instead of answering Peter just let out another whine like a kicked puppy, which essentially gave Tony all the information he needed. From Peter’s lack of movement he figured either he couldn’t without peeing or he already was, so he took it upon himself to make the situation a little easier. “Okay, I’m setting the lantern down here and I’m gonna go on that tree over there, you do what you gotta do.”

Tony did as he said he would, walking just far away enough to where he could still see Peter in his periphery but the boy still had some semblance of privacy. He didn’t need to go particularly badly himself but once he’d assumed the position by the tree it was impossible not to want to answer nature’s call; so he did, but apparently Peter wasn’t happy about that.

“Couldn’t you have waited until I started first?! That’s not fair!” Apparently hearing Tony relieve himself had nearly sent Peter over the edge, though not a second later he heard the boy sigh in relief.

“If I had been listening to you pee you would’ve freaked out but it’s okay for you to listen to me?” Tony pointed out, chuckling as he stepped away from the tree and used the hand sanitiser he had the forethought to put in his pocket as they left the tent.

“I didn’t mean to- super hearing! And shut up! Don’t talk to me when I’m- ahh god that’s so much better~” Evidently Peter hadn’t made it to a tree at all, he gave up on that idea or more so his bladder gave up on him and it was between peeing on the forest floor or in his pants; he’d opted with the former.
“I don’t need a play by play commentary.” Tony snickered, knowing full well how embarrassed Peter would be later by his moaning. “Just hurry up, it’s cold.”

Tony kept his back turned as Peter finished up and damn the kid wasn’t kidding about needing to go. That was the first time Tony could remember Peter peeing for longer than him- wow parenthood really makes you notice some weird things. He shook the thought off when Peter appeared beside him, his face slightly tinged red even in the blue lantern light. Without making the kid have to ask Tony held out the hand sanitiser for the boy to use. “Better?”

“You have no idea.” Peter sighed breathlessly.

“I mean, I kind of do considering we only made it five steps into the woods before you-“

“Shut up.” Peter said snappily and hugged his arms to his chest. Tony took that as a sign to not tease him which Peter was thankful for since he was feeling decidedly exposed after that little misadventure.

“Come on, bubs. Let’s get you back in the tent before you become a spidicicle.” Tony said gently as he wrapped one arm around the boy’s shoulders and lead him back to the tent.

As soon as they laid back down Tony reached over to help the boy get situated again but he felt Peter grab his hand to stop him in the darkness.

“Can you..can you maybe not zip me up? Just in case..”

“Okay buddy. You warm enough?”

“Uh huh.” Peter sighed contently. Clearly the interruption of his sleep from his bladder wasn’t enough to wake him up fully as it had Tony. Despite all the commotion it caused he was already back to yawning dreamily, lucky kid. Though he supposed Peter was used to it. “M’sorry I woke you up though-“

“Uh uh, we talked about this. If you need to get up again don’t hesitate to ask. Just get some more sleep, bubs.”
“Nunight.” Peter mumbled, though Tony wasn’t fully convinced the boy wasn’t already asleep when he did. Well at least one of them would get some decent sleep, Tony was wide awake now. He swore this kid gave him more sleepless nights than a newborn.

Peter woke up again a few hours later, feeling more well rested than he had in a long time. Surprisingly enough he was actually super comfortable in his sleeping bag and it wasn’t nearly as bad as he thought it would be. He had the best night’s sleep he’d had in ages (in spite of the little hiccup in the night). Falling asleep to the sound of trees rustling in the wind had been so soothing and he woke up with an unbelievable sense of calm instead of with the usual startling urgency. He nuzzled deeper into his sleeping bag, feeling warmth wash over him and he sighed contently. Wait-warmth? Oh no, oh no oh no, he hadn’t, he- he hadn’t. He was dry! Even after only getting up once in the night he was dry! It was some kind of Christmas miracle!

In his excitement he almost woke Tony up to tell him without thinking, only stopping himself at the last second. After resigning himself the night before to the fact that he’d end up with a soaked sleeping bag he couldn’t have been happier to not have to deal with that. He couldn’t remember the last time he made it through the night dry after only getting up once, even before getting shot; even when his kidneys were intact Peter tended to get up at least twice if not more. He was pretty glad he only had to get up once though because he wouldn’t have wanted to put Tony through the whole process of getting out of the tent together more than that. He was immensely proud of himself, and his bladder, for not embarrassing him whilst in such close proximity to his dad.

That being said, he was made aware as soon as he sat up that he made it until the morning dry for a reason and his bladder was uncomfortably full. Not wanting to make a scene like last night Peter quickly managed to detangle himself from the insulated pouch, unzip the tent (all by himself, no less- another Christmas miracle!) and escape without disturbing his dad. His bladder also allowed him enough time to get to an appropriately covered area to do his business as opposed to forcing him to go before he even made it past the tree line, another small blessing.

Once he was finished taking care of his morning duties he trailed back to camp realising he was the first one awake. Despite being July the early morning air was still pretty chilly, probably due to the lack of cloud cover overnight and the shadows from the trees. So Peter figured it would be a good time to put some of his newly learned survival skills to the test. Even though he missed Steve’s demonstration the night before the man had already detailed to him what he needed to do. He gathered up some more kindling and dry tinder before setting about building the platform of sticks. Once he had the structure of his fire set up he reached for his multi tool to use the lighter on it but he changed his mind at the last minute; instead he wanted to try finding a piece of flint to light it the old fashioned way.

He also wanted to put his navigation skills to the test. If he’d counted his steps right the day before he was pretty close to a stream and streams meant flint. But he wasn’t sure if it was close enough for Tony’s alarm to not go off- he knew he had a tracker on him that would alert the team if he wandered too far...maybe he should just wake someone up to tell them where he was going. But if he did that he knew they would likely want to go with him and he didn’t want that, he wanted to go
by himself to see if he could do it without having to rely on his Spidey-powers. Sure they might just say they’d tag along and let him lead but he knew all of the adults would subtly try to correct him if he did anything wrong, especially Steve- he’d just take over like he usually did when Peter was struggling to do something instead of showing him. No, he wanted to do it by himself. He’d be back before anyone woke up and if he did get lost he had his powers to fall back on, so no biggie.

Then again, his instincts told him it was a bad idea to wander off without letting anyone know where he was going. So he left a note. That was enough to keep the sense of foreshadowing away. He stuck it in the fire he’d started to build with a note telling Clint not to start it and he set off. Even after only a day Peter had a majority of the forest pretty well scoped out in his mind and he had the added benefit of being able to scale trees if he ever found himself lost or turned around. All in all his mini expedition only took around half an hour and on his way back he got to watch the sunrise above the treetops, illuminated the forest floor in a warm yellow glow through the gaps in the leaves. Wow, Steve was right nature really was beautiful.

Peter was marvelling the landscape when he bore witness to a giant mass hurtling towards their campsite in the horizon. For a second he panicked but that was before he realised the mass was actually in the shape of a particular big blond man. So Steve had been right for force Clint into carrying his stuff after all. As soon Peter saw him he hightailed it back to their camp where he’d already landed and was being greeted* interrogated* harrassed by Steve, Clint and Nat.

“Hello youngling!” Thor called loudly, waving to Peter But Steve shushed him.

“Shh! Thor he’s still sleeping don’t you wake him up!”

“No I’m not.” Peter said as he came up behind him, making the soldier let out a less than manly yelp. And he’d laughed at Peter’s squeaky voice, at least he could blame it on puberty.

“What the- where have you been?” He hadn’t even realised the boy had left which frankly startled him more than Peter suddenly appearing at his side.

“He was getting rocks for his hoarding pile.” Clint called and that was when Peter noticed he had lit the fire.

“Hey! I said not to do that! That one was mine!” Peter cried making Clint chuckle at him.

“Well I’m sorry pipsqueak, people were hungry.”
“Hmph.” Peter huffed and stomped over to the other side of the camp and started erecting another fire pit whiskey muttering to himself. “Make my own damn fire then..be better than Clint’s stupid fire...fire stealing Prometheus bastard…”

“You can make the coffee then!” Clint called still laughing.

“Fine!”

“And wake your dad up before Thor eats everything- despite not having spent the night in the woods anyway.” Nat grumbled bitterly.

“I had matters to attend to.” Thor said shortly.

“So you said but you could’ve at least brought McDonald’s.”

“We have plenty of food until we get back Nat we don’t need that crap.” Steve sighed tiredly. In fact he looked pretty tired in general, maybe the nature lover hadn’t slept as well as one would think.

“Oo that’s a nickel in the swear jar professor patriot. You’re a little sourpuss today ain’t ya?” Clint chuckled as he stretched. “Damn Peter, that hammock you made did wonders for my back I’m gonna need you to make me one of those back home.”

“You slept up there?” Peter asked incredulously.

“Well you weren’t so I figured it was free game.” He shrugged. “Besides you have to remember to take that stuff down. What if some rando hunter saw it and thought there were giant spiders running around the forest.”

“Fair point.” Peter said. “And I probably shouldn’t leave piles of my DNA everywhere.”

“That too.”
“Speaking of DNA where’s Dr Jekyll?” Clint asked, aiming the question towards Nat.

“Still asleep.”

That was when Clint got an evil look on his face and for once he shared it with Thor. “You thinking what I’m thinking?”

The god nodded and Steve decided to intercept before they went through with whatever they were scheming. “What are you thinking?”

“I just wanna see if that air mattress of his will float.”

“Well of course it will it’s full of air and- oh no- no don’t you dare!” Steve quickly caught on to what they were implying and scrambled up from where he was sitting to stop them before they got to Bruce’s tent.

“Pete I think it’s time to go wake your dad up before they decide to try and mess with him while he’s asleep. Then we’ll all be in trouble.” Nat said looking extremely bored. It wasn’t like she wasn’t used to the other men’s foolish behaviour and she was just glad she didn’t have to play enforcer that particular morning. “I’ll watch your fire, nice work by the way. You’re becoming a regular little bear grylls.”

Back in the tent Tony was blissfully unaware of what was going on around him. Once he’d finally got back to sleep he graced with a distinct lack of nightmares for once. Instead he was having a rather pleasant dream; Peter was graduating from college and Tony was there with Pepper and..a little girl who his dream self recognised to be his daughter (apparently Peter begging for a little sibling had ingrained itself in his psyche). As nice as it was Tony was suddenly pulled out of his dream and vaguely aware of someone poking him in the face.


“Good god- WHAT?!”
“Good morning.” Peter said cheerfully.

Tony rolled over, pulling Peter’s discarded sleeping bag over his head in an attempt to hide or at least drown out the noise and sunlight. “Mm, yeah? What’s good about it?”

“Uhh, well we survived another night and we didn't encounter any bears.” Peter offered with a shrug.

“Some of us also didn’t get any sleep.” ‘And because someone was too scared to go pee by himself and then spent the rest of the night kicking me in his sleep.’ Tony added in his head. Since Peter left his sleeping bag unzipped that meant his legs were free to move around and Tony had been kicked more times than a soccer ball. Even if he had been able to fall asleep after Peter’s midnight potty break it was nearly impossible to stay that way when you had a teenager elbowing you in the back of the head and kicking you in the ass simultaneously. It would’ve been almost impressive if it hadn’t have been so god damn irritating.

“Come on Dad, we let you sleep in an extra hour and Thor is threatening to finish off the eggs.”

“Mmf.” He didn’t want food he wanted sleep. But Thor came back that was good to know, he needed to talk to him-

“Get up.” Peter pouted and threw himself on top of his dad, making the man groan from the added weight.

“No.”

“Yes.”

“Grrrruh.” Tony let out a strangled, guttural growl that succeeded in making the teen jump back slightly.

“What the hell was that?” Peter laughed.

“I thought if you thought I was a bear you might leave me alone.” Tony smirked but his expression
“You are a bear. A very grumpy bear- now get up!” Peter resumed his previous tactics and went back to laying all over him.

“Let me hibernate.” Tony grumbled and attempted to roll back over but that was difficult with one hundred and twenty pounds of bony teenager squashing him.

“It’s the middle of summer! Who will take care of your cub?” Peter cried dramatically

“Well it’s in my will that you go to Pepper but Steve gets joint custody of May isn’t-“

“Lalalala!” Peter cut the man off. He didn’t want a serious answer to that question he just wanted to get his dad moving. “Get uuuuuup-“

“Fine! Just get off me, kid, you’re crushing me!” Tiny sighed. Looks like he wasn’t going back to sleep so he rolled back over onto his back and threw Peter’s sleeping bag at him. “Christ what were you like on Christmas growing up?’

“Oh you just wait until this year now I’m comfortable around you guys.” Peter grinned. He had plans to show Tony just how bad he could be on Christmas morning the following year.

“Ugh. Make yourself useful and get me some-“ Peter had preempted just what the man would demand for as soon as he woke up and handed the man a flask full of coffee. Tony seemed both surprised and grateful, though still slightly miffed at being woken up so rudely apparently the bitter drink was a decent way of apology. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Chapter End Notes

Just so you guys get a little waning- ya boy is going back to school starting next week so updates may be a little sporadic during term time- but I promise I'm not abandoning this fic until I'm bled dry of ideas dammit! But yeah, I'll probably have to drop down to once a week again or something ;/
Chapter Summary

Lack of proofreading? Written at three am on day two of no sleep? Rushed ending and clunky dialogue? That's practically my trademark baby ;)

***Minor emetophobia warning in this one ma dudes***

Another name for this chapter could have been “Thor you fucking idiot” because he gets called that like four times 😂 - Sorry Thor

It took Tony a while but he did eventually manage to wake up fully and crawl his way out of the tent. His spine was not happy about sleeping on the ground nor being kicked by Peter all night but here he was, might as well try and deal with it. What he couldn’t deal with was the arguing that had already broken out among the group. ‘Come on guys, can’t I eat before I have to deal with your shit?’

“You don’t know everything about survival Steve!”

“I know more than you!”

“Oh yeah, Mr. ‘Back in my day’- things have changed grandpa-“

“The wilderness hasn’t! That’s the whole point!”

“The point is you’re being a cu-“

“Woah, woah, woah can we take it down a notch? Jesus kids it’s not even eight o’clock can’t a guy get a break around here. I just woke up and I gotta deal with your crap?” Tony yelled to break up the fight and surprisingly it worked. Both of them backed off in favour of returning to their own meals, though they were shooting looks of disdain across the campfire at each other every so often. “Thank you. Can’t you Boy Scouts and Nature Scouts learn to get along? Or are you both going for your ‘annoying little bitch’ badge?”

“Wow T, hurry up and drink that will ya? That was terrible. I know you can come up with better insults than that.” Nat snorted as she strolled past and manually moved the coffee cup Tony was
brandishing closer to his mouth.

“Don’t mind if I do.” Tony muttered as he gulped down the rest of the mug with a loud contented sigh once he’d finished. He was busy looking sadly at the now empty cup, ducking his head as he did so, and it was lucky he did. No sooner than he put his head down slightly a pine cone went flying past his head at a velocity that shouldn’t have been possible due to the aerodynamics (or lack thereof) of its shape. “What the hell?”

“Sorry dad!” Came a voice just a short distance into the woods. “We were aiming for Clint!”

Tony squinted slightly so he could make out his son, accompanied by Thor no less, past the tree and just what his son was standing next to. A catapult. Made from logs, rope, web and some large rocks. A fucking catapult. “Oh Jesus Christ- Peter it’s too early for this! Can’t you wait to be creative and resourceful and- wow that’s a really good design how did you- ahem- can’t you wait until after nine to start being a nut job? Or at least after I’ve had some time to wake up?”

“It’s dope right?! Thor helped- well his hammer did.” Peter shrugged, completely ignoring every part of that sentence that wasn’t to do with the big wooden monstrosity he’d made. Thor nodded proudly waving Mjolnir in the air as though it was some kind of new discovery. “It’s needs a little more oomph though, then we can start using rocks.”

“Did you eat yet?” Tony cut the boy off.

“Yes?” Peter called but he turned away as he did so and his reply was less than convincing.

“Then why did that sound like a question not an answer?”

Peter started to wander away at that point, feigning having seen something that had captured his interest. “Sorry I can’t hear you!”

“You’re so full of shit- get back here!” Tony tried his best to keep the laughter out of his voice but it was difficult.

“But I’m busyyyy!” Peter threw his head back and whined.
“You can finish taking that thing apart after breakfast, it will still be there.” Steve called, shaking his head.

“Take it apart?!”

“You can’t just leave a catapult in the middle of the forest.” Tony laughed at the boys incredulous expression. “What did you expect? We can’t take it home.”

“I could carry it! It’s not heavy- see?!” Peter proved his point by picking the entire thing up with one hand effortlessly. He soon dropped it however, abruptly? causing the ground to shake and the birds to fly out of the surrounding trees. Incidentally the pile of logs and rope shattered with the force anyway, now all they had to worry about was scattering the pieces so no one would get suspicious down the line. Peter only dropped it because he was flinching away to look at his hand. “Ow. Splinter.”

Tony groaned and ran his hand over his face. He was raising the world's smartest idiot. “Thor bring him back.”

Thor nodded and beamed down at Peter as he scooped him up and threw him over his shoulder before the kid had a chance to protest. “Come along little one.”

“Awww- you’re no fun anymore what happened to you?” Peter grumbled as he accepted his fate. “You left me with all the boring people- and Nat!”

“I’m sorry Spiderling, I came back as quickly as I could.” Thor said lightly but there was an odd edge to his voice that Peter had never heard before. He couldn’t see the man’s face either from the way he was carrying him.

“Why did you go home?” Peter asked, a little less angrily this time letting concern seep into his tone.

“I had some business to attend to.” Thor shrugged, inadvertently jostling Peter up and down on his large shoulders.

“Hey! Watch it!”
“Sorry.” Thor chuckled.

“You can put me down now.” Peter huffed and Thor obliged to his request. Once he was placed right side up on the ground he looked back up at his friend who he hadn’t noticed before, looked very out of sorts. He couldn’t put his finger on it; he looked tired but not from lack of sleep, just-drained. “Like, S.H.I.E.L.D stuff or..?”

“Personal matters. All is well now, though.” Thor smiled and Peter didn’t understand. Why didn’t he just lie to him? Everyone else did and it would have been a lot more convincing; though of course he appreciated that Thor didn’t, it still didn’t make sense to him. It would’ve been easy to make up a story about some mission or something, the fact that Thor was giving a super vague answer instead made him feel uneasy.

Peter didn’t have time to keep prying though because they’d already made it back to camp and Tony grabbed him the second he was within arms reach. His dad pulled his hand close to him and before Peter could say ‘what are you doing’ Tony spritzed it with strong smelling antiseptic. “Ow! That burns!”

“That’s the point.” Tony shrugged. He knew it didn’t hurt the boy that badly he had a far better pain tolerance than that, he was just being whiny because he was hungry. “Now sit and eat.”

Peter did as he was told but only because he realised he was actually starving as soon as he smelled food. “I’m not a dog.” Peter mumbled through a mouthful of toast.

“What was that?”

“I said m’not a dog.” Peter tried again but he was still chewing and Clint started snickering at him.

“What’s that boy? Timmy’s stuck down the well?!” Tony teased.

“Shut up!”

“Peter, language and don’t talk with your mouth full.” Steve snapped as he flicked the back of Tony’s head when he walked past him.
“Jeez, someone’s in a mood today. Wake up on the wrong side of the tent, Rogers?” Tony mumbled rubbing the back of his head. Steve just ignored him and set about dismantling everything.

That came as a bit of a surprise to everyone else. They assumed that Steve would be that last one who wanted to pack up camp and Tony had already geared himself up for an argument about staying an extra night but hey, they weren’t about to complain. It was just a little odd how much of a hurry Steve seemed to be in. Ultimately they shrugged it off, figuring the blond wanted to stick to whatever schedule he had in his head.

Steve was noticeably less chatty as they set off that morning. In fairness they all were, other than Peter, who was asking Thor questions at a million miles an hour. The god took it in his stride though, remaining calm and giving Peter the same answers repeatedly without losing his patience. The same couldn’t be said for the rest of them however.

“Kid will you give him a break? He doesn’t wanna tell us.” Nat rolled her eyes after Peter had asked for the fifth time in ten minutes why Thor had abandoned him. “Steve can’t you distract him with some fun nature facts or something? He’s doing my head in.”

Bruce elbowed her in his silent way of saying ‘be nice’ but they all turned to Steve for a response. “Steve?”

“Hm?” The blond hummed distractedly.

“What’s up with you? You’d usually be talking our ears off right now.” Clint said as he eyed the man up and down suspiciously. He looked a little paler than usual. “Are you alright..?”

“I’m fine, why wouldn’t I be?” Steve said tightly and cleared his throat. Clint’s prompting had apparently made him realise he’d neglected his duties as self appointed leader of the group and he started talking as he walked, like he had been the day before; it was obvious that he was considerably less enthusiastic though. Just as everyone began to give each other sideways glances, silently debating whether or not they should say something else Steve suddenly stopped walking altogether.

As he was ahead of them, with his back turned to the rest of the group, they couldn’t see the man’s eyes go wide or the way he suddenly clenched his jaw shut before he went running off of the path. “I’ll be right back.”
Everyone looked around at each other with equally confused faces, though Clint and Nat in particular shrugged after a moment, attributing Steve’s odd behaviour to simply needing to relieve himself. Though those with sharper hearing (i.e. Peter) within the group knew that wasn’t the case. He could hear Steve gagging and choking just a ways off the path.

“Uhh Dad?”

“Go on Pete, we’ll wait for you too.” Tony said automatically as he scrolled through his phone.

“No dad I don’t- I think Steve’s being sick.” Peter said concernedly and everyone looked over to him.

“Steve doesn’t get sick.” Clint said sounding almost amused.

Everyone nodded, even Bruce. But Peter wasn’t convinced, he could hear him for crying out loud. “That’s dumb of course he can get sick.”

“Well I mean, he can, but I’ve never known the man to get ill a day in his life. That’s one of the benefits from the serum.” Bruce shrugged. They all figured Peter was mishearing things but they quickly changed their tune when Steve stumbled back out of the bushes onto the path looking flushed with a tell tale wet stain on his shirt.

“See?” Peter said. “Steve are you okay?”

“Never better.” The man gulped a little too quickly and started walking before anyone else could say anything. “Sorry about that.”

“Did you just throw up?” Clint asked going after him, as did the rest of them, cutting him off as he continued to apologise profusely for the interruption.

“No.” Steve said too quickly again, seeming to be closing his mouth as fast as possible every time he spoke. “Of course I didn’t. I don’t get sick.”
“Then why won’t you look at me?”

“I said I’m fine Clint, will you back o-“ Steve was cut off by his stomach lurching again and this time he didn’t even get to make it off of the path before he started heaving.

Everyone was stunned for a second, having not believed Peter at all before and they stared off into the gap in the trees where Steve had taken off to. Bruce was the first one to snap out of his shock and went to go after him- doctors instincts and all that, but Tony put his hand on his chest to stop him. “Wait here, I’ll go.”

Tony knew that Steve wouldn’t appreciate anyone seeing him lose his breakfast, let alone his team mates but Tony was the closest one to him. Afterall they’d been through a lot together and..seen a lot of each other in some pretty compromising circumstances, so he figured if anyone had to bare witness Steve would prefer it to be him.

He wasn’t wrong. As soon as Steve heard footsteps approaching he started to call out frantically; “Don’t come over here- I’m fine-“

“Steve it’s just me- jeez kid, you alright?” Tony grimaced when he caught sight of the man hunched over double.

“Who’re you calling a kid?” Steve managed to let out a strangled laugh in between heaves.

“Force of habit.” Tony hummed quietly, though that wasn’t entirely true. Something about seeing big strong Steve in such a vulnerable position made him feel a sudden overwhelming possessiveness over him, more so than what he felt was typical for someone seeing their friend vomit. He wondered if this was how Peter had felt when he’d stumbled across him being sick; seeing someone you thought was invincible in such a state was pretty unnerving, especially considering how suddenly it had come on.

Tony had seen Steve hurt plenty of times but this was a new one for sure. The blond wasn’t helping matters by insisting he was okay. “I’m alright really T, I just, I just got a little overheated I guess-“

“I’ll say. You’re burning up, Superman.” Tony clicked his tongue as he pressed his hand on the man’s forehead. “You didn’t eat some bad berries or something did you?”
“No I did not.” Steve huffed. “I know what I’m doing out here I- mm-“

Steve was cut off once again by his stomach convulsing and Tony started to freak out a little bit. Steve was meant to have some kind of super immune system, he didn’t get bugs or viruses, so what on earth was happening? Tony subconsciously moved to rub the man’s back but Steve shrugged him off. “Take it easy.”

“Leave off Stark, I’m fine.” Steve grunted with a distinct bite in his voice that he didn’t usually use. He wasn’t used to feeling like this, not anymore and it was making him snappy. He regretted shrugging the man’s hand off and felt guilty for biting his head off. He knew Tony was only trying to help after all. “I’m just dehydrated.”

“You don’t say.” Tony rolled his eyes. Anyone would be dehydrated after that. Despite being frustrated with the man’s flippancy he was still majorly concerned, but he was trying his best not to let it show. Steve was obviously not going to take being fussied over so there was no point trying to. Besides he wasn’t Peter, he didn’t need consoling and if he did, he wasn’t about to admit it so Tony knew it was better to be as casual as possible. “Seriously, you didn’t drink any dirty water or anything?”

Steve just gave Tony another look of disdain at the insinuation that he’d made such a rookie error. “I’m just asking, don’t get defensive with me.” Tony frowned.

“I didn’t. I ate and drank exactly what you did, don’t know why I feel so crappy.”

“When did it start?”

“When did you become a doctor?” Steve glared back as he spat up again.

Tony was quickly losing his patience. “Oh I’m sorry, would you prefer I have Bruce come over here and watch you puke your guts up? ‘Cause that can be arranged-“

“I’m sorry, please don’t.” Steve begged. “You seeing is bad enough- I’m sorry.”

Despite his growing frustration Tony relented. “Man, someone gets a little tetchy when they don’t feel good huh?”
“Hmph.” Steve huffed. “I started feeling funny this morning but I shrugged it off. God- I can’t remember the last time I got sick.”

“Yeah well, you’re body’s changing all the time.” Tony supplied. He was referencing how he and Bruce had figured out Steve’s body chemistry was in constant fluctuation, adapting to new stimuli and environments was a part of the serums design hence why Steve was able to enter stasis instead of dying in the ice; but apparently Tony’s wording came across in the wrong way.

“Please don’t tell me you’re about to practise your puberty speech on me before you have to have it with Peter.” Steve giggled weakly.

“You think I’m having that talk with him? Oh hell no, I’m just gonna show him one of your PSA’s when the time comes.” Tony smirked. After a minute or so of Steve dry heaving and swishing his mouth out with water Tony took a step towards him again, looping an arm under his. “You got any more?”

“No I think I’m done.” Steve grimaced but allowed himself to be touched this time. “This is humiliating.”

“Oh lighten up Cap, so what you’re still human, we all knew that anyway.” Tony shifted his weight so that he was able to bear most of Steve’s belongings and started to help the man walk up the small hill back to the path. “We gotta get you back to the cabin.”

“No I’ll be okay-“

“Shut up, Steve.” Tony wasn’t about to let the man try and convince him to continue their hike. There was absolutely no way.

“But-“

“I mean it. Shut up. Hey Nat?” Tony called as he helped Steve shuffle back up to the path.

“Yeah? Oh Jesus Rogers, you look like shit.” Nat popped her head around a tree before skidding down the side of the ditch to meet them halfway, automatically moving to help Tony carry the rest
of Steve’s stuff.

“Exactly. You alright to help me get him back to the cabin?” Tony asked and she nodded straight away.

“Why don’t we all just go back?” She asked, looping her arm around the small of the blond’s back and he didn’t argue which shows how rough he must’ve felt if he was actually to the point of accepting help.

“Because Peter still needs to be able to read a map and all that shit.” As much as Tony didn’t want to leave his son he knew he was in safe hands and he figured Steve didn’t wouldn’t want an audience; he’d prefer the privacy of a free house whilst he recovered from whatever was ailing him and Tony couldn’t blame him.

As loving as their... eclectic little family was, they weren’t always the best medicine when one was ill. Sometimes a little solitude was needed, hence why Tony asked Nat to help him get Steve back in one piece, knowing she’d be the one to allow him the most privacy. “Besides, it won’t take long for you guys to get back. The route Steve marked is a lot shorter than it was on the way here because you bypass the mountain completely- see.”

Tony pointed out on the map to Clint once they rejoined the rest of the group. “Where is my son by the way? Did you lose him already?”

“He had to pee after all.” Clint shrugged and pointed a thumb over his shoulder as he looked over the map. Something about the route seemed off to him but he couldn’t put his finger on it.

“I could fly Steven back if that would be easier?” Thor offered but the suggestion alone made Steve pale again and go stumbling off back into the bushes; thankfully Nat let him go alone because Steve was pretty sure he’d die of shame if a lady saw him in such a state.

“Great idea Thor, just what the local wildlife needs a good shower of superhuman stomach acid. I’m sure that’s nutritious.” Tony rolled his eyes.

“Dad, please.” Peter squeaked, reappearing behind them, turning a little green around the gills himself at the gruesome imagery Tony just put into his head.
“Sorry, bubs.”

“What’s happening?” Peter asked, having missed the conversation.

“Me and Nat are gonna get Steve back to the cabin while you guys finish out the rest of the trail without us.” Tony explained.

“Maybe I should go back with you too.” Bruce shuffled uncomfortably, eyeing Steve when he came stumbling back out to meet them, looking even more disheveled.

“I’ve got him Bruce, he’s fine.” Tony shut that idea down quickly when Steve gave him a begging look. The less people around the better and Bruce, being the brilliant doctor he is, would spend the entire time hovering over him. “I can handle some puke and a temperature, I happen to own a pet Peter remember? And if I can’t or something happens, it’ll be easier to get medical attention back there then out here. Besides I need you to keep an eye on mini-me and stop Clint and Thor from murdering each other.”

“Fine.” Bruce sighed, though he did go over to Steve and Nat to give his medical advice before he allowed them to depart.

Tony continued addressing Clint, essentially appointing him to be the new guide since Steve was out of action. “Clint, if you’re not back by six I won’t hesitate to send out a whole fleet of suits to bring you back, capiche?”

“I’ll get Spider-Boy back in time for dinner.” Clint said seriously.

“Spider-Man!” Peter huffed and stomped his foot from behind them. Yes Peter, that really proved your point.

“And you kiddo.” Tony leaned in and whispered to him. “Don’t dehydrate yourself and don’t wait until the last minute, okay? No bladder infections.”

“Okay dad, jeez.” Peter said blushing bright red and avoiding eye contact.
“I mean it. You gonna be okay without me?” Tony asked tentatively. He already knew the answer but the overprotective side of him needed confirmation just so he didn’t spend the whole time worrying himself sick (well he’d do that anyway in all honesty, but at least it would be slightly alleviated). Peter nodded and Tony smiled at him. “Atta boy. Take this, you call if you need me to head back okay?”

Tony handed Peter a portable charger for his phone that was near death. “Hey, why didn’t you give this to me last night?”

“Because you would’ve stayed up all night playing on it. You think I don’t know you by now?” Tony smirked at the indignant look the boy gave him and ruffled his hair. He then went back over to Nat and Steve, giving the rest a small wave as they headed in another direction. “We’ll see you guys later, have fun kids. Six o’clock, on the dot or I’m coming to find you.”

It went well for the first hour, it really did. Clint was leading, Thor wasn’t driving him crazy, Bruce wasn’t complaining and Peter was content. Tony was right, the route that Steve had marked off for them was exceedingly straightforward. Their six o’clock curfew would get them plenty of time so they weren’t worried about facing the wrath of Iron Dad. At least not at first.

Clint was in the middle of showing Peter how to make cords out of bark fibres that could eventually be weaved into rope, when Thor piped up from the back of the group. “Clint?”

“What?”

“Does that boulder look familiar to you?”

Clint turned around to see Thor staring up at a rock just off in the distance and he shook his head at him, ultimately deciding to ignore the question. He didn’t even look over to where he was staring.

The comment got Bruce’s attention though he seemed to agree with him. “Oh yeah- Clint it’s that one you said looks like a woman with big-“

Peter looked up then waiting for Bruce to finish his description but the doctor took a hard left turn. “Uh, hands.”

That got Clint’s attention. “What? We went past that yesterday why would we-“
As he circled back to where the other two men were standing and they were right. Clint has pointed out that very same rock the day before due to its uh..well endowed shape. “What the hell? That shouldn’t be anywhere near here?”

“Oh god don’t tell me you’ve gotten us lost Barton.” Thor groaned and Clint looked highly offended.

“Of course I didn’t! It can’t be the same one.”

“Then how would I recognise it. I wasn’t even here yesterday-“

“I don’t know what your girlfriends look like-“

“We’ve been walking in circles!”

“No we haven’t!”

“What happened to marking trees as you went, Clint?” Bruce asked tiredly as the realisation started to sink in. He hadn’t noticed before but everything about the area they were standing seemed oddly familiar.

“So this is my fault?!“

“Yes! You have the map!” Thor bellowed.

“Well I didn’t see you jumping to help navigate!”

The tension was quickly rising and Peter was starting to get uncomfortable, besides that the yelling was starting to give him a headache. He backed away from the group a little and scoped out the area around him. Looking around he tried to backtrack the route they had taken the day before, in his head, mentally retracing their steps.
As he was thinking he got the bright idea to climb the nearest tree and try and spot either their campsite or another recognisable landmark - and luckily he did so right as Clint and Thor were about to start swinging at each other.

“If you two don’t stop I’m letting Hulk out and he’ll be more than happy to- oh my god where’s Peter?!” Bruce yelled over the top of them and they all began frantically looking around.

“Up here!” Peter called quickly. The last thing he wanted was them freaking out thinking he was missing. He lowered himself down on a web and dangled himself upside down next to Clint. “Can I see the map again for a second?”

Clint held it out for the boy to glance over and Peter nodded before flinging himself back up to the treetops. “You see anything kid?”

“Uhhh...Hey Clint what year was that map published?”

“2002. Why?” Clint called back suspiciously. Peter’s tone was making him nervous.

“Man it’s almost as old as I am- well you remember the signs on the road up here that said about the towns reforestation programme? Yeah I think it was successful because that trail is gone.”

“What do you mean gone?”

“As in, not there anymore? What else would I mean?” Peter shook his head at the stupid question as he glanced back over the landscape. The trail Steve had marked didn’t exist anymore, no wonder they’d been going in circles. “It’s completely grown over, there aren’t any buildings there anymore.”

There was nothing, not even a shack or a pile of bricks. Just trees for as far as Peter could see- which was pretty far considering his heightened sense of sight. In fact he couldn’t even see where they’d come from. The cabin should have been within the next few miles or so, there was no way it was anywhere near there. Peter couldn’t even see the road anymore.

“Great just fucking great- Steve was oh so prepared but he couldn’t even get a map from the last fucking decade?!” Clint yelled and Bruce snatched the map away from him just before he tore it up, but Clint snatched it back.
“Will you quit getting so mad? You’re gonna set Hulk off and as much as I like the big guy I’d really prefer if we kept Bruce around.” Peter huffed as he slid down the tree trunk.

“Thanks Peter.” Bruce said sarcastically.

“Lemme see that again.” Peter said and reached his hand out for the map expectantly.

“Why? It’s useless anyway.” Clint grunted, practically throwing the piece of paper in Peter’s direction.

Shaking his head Peter ascended the treetops again, but this time he jumped over a few so that he was close to the nearby river. As much as the rushing water beneath him was terrifying, he needed to see its curvature. A thousand trees could be planted around there but it wouldn’t affect the shape of the riverbed; if he could see how and where it bent he could use it in comparison to the map to work out where they were or at least the direction the were walking in (which he was seriously starting to doubt was the right one). That being said, the sound of gushing water alone was enough to fill Peter’s heart with dread and he suddenly felt sick every time he so much as gazed down; the feeling he had from the night before when he had that odd flashback went coursing through him and he wanted to give up on the idea altogether, jump down to the safety of dry ground and call his dad to come and get him.

But he didn’t. He wouldn’t. He stayed up there and pressed on, pushing the feeling down. That was the whole reason they were out there to begin with, because Peter was too reliant on technology and his dad. No one had said that, of course but he knew it was true, even if just the fact that Tony had been the one to give him all the tech he relied upon. He couldn’t call his dad the second things got tough and who knows, maybe this was all just a test. Not a preempted one of course, Peter wasn’t crazy enough to think that Steve had made himself sick or given them an outdated map on purpose but- well if it was a coincidence it was very well timed and Peter wanted to use the opportunity to prove himself.

Just as he was mapping it out and he thought he had found the right landmarks to go off of, Peter felt the hairs on the back of his neck start to tingle and a familiar sense of foreboding wash over him. He knew what it was instantly, but why? He looked around, he couldn’t see any immediate dangers, other than the fact he was above the water and that he was scared. Why were his Spidey-senses going off-

“Ah FUCK!” Clint suddenly screamed and it wasn’t an angry one. It was an obvious cry of pain if the sound of the man hissing and falling to the ground immediately after was any indication.
But Peter didn’t get the chance to figure out what had happened because as soon as he heard the man yell he lost his footing and slipped. That wouldn’t have been a big deal if he hadn’t already been leaning on the farthest branch out over the water. As soon as he started to fall through the air he knew it was too late to do anything about it. The distance between him and the water was too short for him to have the chance to anchor himself to anything, but that didn’t mean he didn’t try. He shot a web up towards the branch that had once been his standing post but the second he made contact it snapped and all he could do was watch. Watch as he fell through the sky and into the water. Again. It was happening again. And he was alone, falling into cold water with no one to catch him.

Accept he wasn’t alone this time, as much as it felt like it in those horrible milliseconds before his back broke the surface of the river with a loud splash. As soon as Peter hit the water he heard Bruce and Clint screaming their heads off.

“Oh my god- PETER!”

“THOR GRAB HIM!”

Thor was the closest to where Peter fell and Bruce was preoccupied tending to Clint, who had his foot stuck in a hole- hence why he had screamed in the first place. But the blond didn’t move immediately, not understanding their urgency. “What?”

The man hadn’t been there the night before when Tony revealed to everyone that the boy wouldn’t be able to fend for himself should he find himself in water. “HE CAN’T SWIM YOU FUCKING IDIOT!”

“*Oh.*” Thor said quietly and sprinted to the edge of the water. He stayed surprisingly calm despite the other two men yelling at him as he scanned the water's surface for where Peter had landed. He expected to see flailing limbs or at least ripples in the water but there was nothing; had it not been for the map and a broken branch floating on top of the water Thor would never have known where the boy fell from.

No sooner than he saw that though Thor used mjolnir to hover above the river, reached down and plucked the boy out. Peter was completely rigid when he was pulled out by the scruff of his T-shirt and for a scary second Thor thought he was unconscious; but when he brought the boy back over to dry land Peter immediately tore himself out of Thor’s grasp and collapsed onto the ground, crawling away from him and gasping for air. He’d been holding his breath until his feet hit the dirt.
The whole thing happened in under twenty seconds but it had been terrifying for everyone involved. The whole ordeal left the three man shaking with adrenaline and Peter—well...

“Peter are you okay?!” Bruce ran over just as Thor was picking him back up. Peter didn’t answer, he didn’t even look at them. He continued staring blankly ahead of himself, jaw clenched shut and breathing rapidly through his nose. The god whisked him over next to where Clint was now sitting propped up against a log as everyone tried to frantically talk to him at once.

“You’re alright, you’re alright son, I got you- Thor gimme your- Thanks.” Clint said quickly as he ran his hands up and down Peter’s arms. Even though it was the peak of summer the cold depths of the water was freezing and the shock to the boy’s system had left him cold and icy to the touch. Bruce and Clint worked together to wrap Thor’s jacket around the boy in an attempt to warm him up, dry him off and snap him out of the daze he was currently in at the same time. “There, it’s okay, well get you warmed up, you’re okay.”

“Not again. Not again.” Peter muttered under his breath repeatedly. He was in the exact state they had seen him in the night before when he’d had a flashback around the fire though this time they understood the trigger. Peter stared straight ahead of him, looking straight through Bruce even though he was face to face with him, like he didn’t even know they were there.

“Pete, look at me, you’re okay.” Bruce grabbed the boy’s face in his hands in an attempt to get him to look at him and actually see him but Peter just looked even more confused.

“W-where’s Mr. Stark?” Peters voice broke and he looked as though he was on the verge of tears. Ah. That. That wasn’t good.

“Oh dear.” Was all Thor could think to say as the three adults looked at each other.

“Pete your dad’s back at the cabin remember? With Steve?” Clint said gently after a moment of tense silence. “Remember?”

That seemed to snap Peter out of it. He looked around, to each of their faces before he shook his head violently, sending water flicking off of his hair over everyone like a wet dog shaking its coat. “Right, yeah. Yeah, sorry I just- hm I forgot for a sec. I don’t know..I don’t know why.”

Peter shook his head again and went to stand up, still apologising. “Sorry, I’m, I’m alright—I should
“Kid sit down, you’re okay.” Clint pulled Peter back by his hood (well, Thor’s hood) so he was sitting back down beside him. He wrapped his arms around the boy’s shoulders and pulled him in for a hug, which certainly took Peter off guard. “Just get your breath back.”

“I’m wet.” Peter stated somewhat flatly, as though that was supposed to make Clint change his mind about the hug and let go but he held him firm.

“Yes you are. But that’s okay, I ain’t worried.” Clint said quietly, if anything he held him tighter. Peter was shaking so Clint grabbed his hands and they were freezing. He pulled Thor’s sleeves down to cover them and starting rubbing them together manually in an attempt to warm the boy up. “Christ kid, you’re frozen, that’s one way to cool off huh? I know it’s hot but next time you wanna take a dip try dipping a toe in before you swan dive.”

“I’m sorry.” Peter said sadly as Bruce was checking him over, trying to make sure that Peter hadn’t hit his head or anything as he fell. He had a slight scrape on the side of his face, assuredly where he’d hit the bottom of the riverbed or a rock on his way down but it was already healing up.

“What are you sorry for?” Clint asked gently, still rubbing Peter’s hands together.

“Falling..”

“Yeah well, I did too, it’s alright it happens. You can’t have super spidey reflexes all the time huh?”

“The one time I needed to..” Peter muttered bitterly. He was Spider-Man. He wasn’t meant to fall, that was kind of his whole schtick.

“The branch snapped Peter it’s not your fault. I shouldn’t have let you up there in the first place.” Bruce said sadly but Peter shook his head.

“Not your fault.”
Everyone was silent for a while, all trying to get their breath back and calm down. Despite lasting less than a minute it was surprising how wrong things could go so quickly.

Once Bruce made sure Peter was alright physically he moved back over to Clint; he moved the man’s pant leg up to reveal a badly swollen ankle. It didn’t take long for Peter to put two and two together, based on the foot sized hole in the earth next to them. Clint must’ve stepped in it and gone over on his ankle when he tripped and it looked nasty.

But Clint seemed more worried about the boy he was holding than the state of his ankle. “You alright, kiddo?”

“Uh huh..m’sorry I freaked out.” Despite feeling a little better Peter’s voice betrayed him, wavering in a way that made him sound like he was going to burst into tears. He was determined that he wouldn’t, it was bad enough that he’d embarrassed himself with his terrible survival instincts he didn’t need to add crying onto the list of bullshit they had all been through that day.

“Shh, that’s okay. Don’t apologise, it’s not your fault. You’re alright now, I’ve got you.” Clint shushed him, naturally rocking the boy slightly as he did so. He was being so nice that it was almost enough to make Peter cry in and of itself. “It’s okay to get scared Pete I’d be scared too if that were me and I couldn’t swim.”

“Why can’t you swim?” Thor said abruptly, as tactile as ever.

“Because I can’t?” Peter sniffed, a little defensively.

“But why?”

“I never learned.”

“Your survival instincts should have kicked in at the very least. You weren’t even attempting to save yourself.” Thor wasn’t trying to be rude, it just came out that way and he was right. From his point of view Peter had shut down completely; even if he couldn’t swim his body should have fought or naturally made him move to at least try and swim, but the boy just froze and that concerned him greatly.

“Yeah well my brain was kinda going haywire.” Peter grumbled under his breath and stood up. He
was no longer dripping wet but his clothes were still soaked through and clinging to him. The cold water had become tepid which made it even more uncomfortable as it the fabric stick to his skin. He felt undeniably gross not just physically but mentally. Thor was right, there was no excuse. His brain was just as feeble and useless as his body had been in that situation and he felt utterly pathetic. So much do not needing help to survive in the wild, huh Parker?

“What do you mean?” Bruce asked, with the intent to find out if the boy meant he’d had another flashback or if something else had happened.

“I don’t have a good relationship with water..” Peter swallowed and walked away from the group slightly, feeling his shoes squish beneath him. Ew. There was nothing in the world that felt more disgusting than wet socks.

“Why what happened?” Thor asked directly even though Bruce and Clint were adamantly shaking their heads trying to warn him not to.

“I don’t wanna talk about it.” Peter snapped with finality, which managed to get through to the socially inept god that that was one topic of discussion that should probably be avoided for the foreseeable future. Peter shifted again, shaking his legs a little feeling water run down them. “God I feel gross.”

“Go stand over there young one.” Thor directed, pointing to a spot just to the side of where he was already standing.

Peter was slightly confused but didn’t question him, even as Thor summoned Mjolnir and began to spin it around like a baton; the hammer was soon moving too quickly to see anything but a silver blur and it was soon emitting a concentrated beam of air aiming directly at Peter, essentially blow drying him and his clothes. It was a good idea in theory, only Thor miscalculated the strength behind it a little and he ended up sending Peter hurtling ten feet backwards into the nearest tree; the boy smacked his head into the trunk with a ‘thunk’ loud enough to be heard over the gust of wind.

“Oh my god- Thor!” Bruce growled- growled as in, the veins in his neck began to tinge green and his voice became deeper and more guttural; all clear signs that Hulk was close to fronting. “You fucking idiot- “

Just a Bruce was about to lose it Peter jumped up. And he wasn’t crying or holding his head like they’d expected. He was giggling wildly. “That was fun! Do it again!”
Clint grabbed Bruce’s arm and pulled him back. “See? Take it easy B, the kids fine. And he’s right, we really could use you instead of the big guy right now.”

“You could use me more like, Clint this really doesn’t look so good.” Bruce said, switching back into doctor mode when he saw how the archers calf had started to darken a few shades, indicating the formation of new bruising.

“It’s alright. Doesn’t hurt so bad no-ow!”

“Stay still.” Bruce grumbled when Clint flinched away from him.

“I’m trying but that hurts.” Clint grunted and Peter started to get concerned. Clint didn’t exactly have a low tolerance to pain so for him to be complaining it must’ve been really bad. This is the guy who tried to continue running about town with a broken back and now he wouldn’t even let Bruce touch him.

“It’s not broken is it?” Peter asked worriedly. It really didn’t look good, he knew from his own first aid training that the mottled hue to the man’s skin wasn’t a good sign.

“I didn’t think so at first but now I’m not so sure.” Bruce sighed under his breath as he continued trying to turn Clints foot only for the man to hiss and pull away again.

“It’s not broken, alright? I know what a break feels like and this ain’t it.”

“Wow C, I didn’t know you had X-ray vision. That’s really impressive, why didn’t you let us know sooner? It could’ve come in real handy on multiple occasions-“

“Yeah alright, Bruce, I get it.” Clint barked, both because he was getting pissed off with Bruce’s attitude but he’d also attempted to move his foot again. “Just ‘cause Tony ain’t here doesn’t mean you have to ramp it up with the sarcasm to compensate.”

“Speaking of Tony, I’m calling him-“

“Oh no you ain’t!” Clint’s eyes went wide and he grabbed a hold on Bruce once again. “I mean it
Bruce, give me that!"

Clint snatched the phone from the doctors hand before he even finished getting it out of his pocket. "Hey!"

“No Stark. No Steve. This is survival.” Clint said determinedly as he struggled to get back into his feet, only for his ankle to turn over on itself and force him back down.

“Why do you have to make everything so dramatic?” Bruce sighed tiredly as he ran his hands through his hair. “This doesn’t have to be a survival situation you’re making it into one-“

“Because it could be. What if Tony wasn’t here?”

“But he is. He’s literally five miles away.” Bruce shook his head aghast at how facetious Clint was being.

“Exactly. I think we can push through for another five miles, don’t you kid?” Clint looked over towards Peter for back up knowing the youngest of the group was the most susceptible to placating to someone if it meant an issue would be resolved quicker- having been used to dealing with Tony and his mantrums.

But Peter bit his lip and looked unsure. They didn’t even know if it was five miles away and from what Peter had seen it could be a lot further than that. “I don’t know Clint, your ankle looks pretty beaten up..”

“Peter this is the part where you’re supposed to agree with me, you know, jeer me up a little. Come on I know Tony’s taught you this.” The archer hissed and gave the boy a pointed look.

“Right Uhh- well if Clint’s this optimistic even with.. that going on, maybe uh- maybe we could just push forward..?”

“Don’t I get a vote?” Thor chimed in from the background.

“No.” Bruce and Clint said simultaneously, making the god pout.
Bruce stared at Clint for a while, not breaking eye contact and Peter could practically hear the man thinking. He was seemingly weighing his options and deciding whether or not he thought Clint would budge. The man was notoriously stubborn, but even so Peter expecting Bruce to overrule him. But he didn’t.

“Fine. Peter climb up and scope the area but stay on *that side* - no more hovering over the river, find the straightest path and I don’t care if Thor has to tear trees down to do it, do not take us up any inclines. I don’t want Clint snapping his other ankle. Flat surfaces as much as possible.”

“Yes sir.” Peter nodded and did as he was told, quickly scaling the nearest tree that wasn’t near the water.

“Thor you stand beneath him, if he slips again you’re to catch him because I swear to god I’m not having Peter get hurt too. This is already a disaster enough as it is.” Bruce said in an authoritative tone that he usually only reserved for when he as giving serious medical advice (usually to Tony who was infamously for disregarding doctor’s orders).

“Look at you Brucey boy, playing big man, calling the shots for once. Now Nat will be sad she missed this.” Clint grinned as Bruce set about finding a few appropriate sized sticks to work as makeshift splints.

“Don’t call me that.” The doctor snapped.

Clint sousing drop it though. “Why you turning all pink there Banner?”

“I am not.”

“I do believe you are becoming a bit flushed my friend. Did Clint touch a nerve there, hmm?” Thor joined in on the teasing and the pair ramped it up a level. As soon as Bruce was within arm’s reach the began pinching at him like he was a child and they were the ‘look how big you’ve grown’ aunts at a family event.

“Aww is that what Nat calls you? Little Brucey-“
“Stop it. Stop it!” Bruce yelled, slapping their hands away which the other two found hilarious. Clint soon stopped laughing when Bruce pulled in his leg to align it though.

Peter came back down from the tree not a minute later, deliberately letting himself fall knowing Thor would catch him and he landed bridal style in the man’s arms with a thud. He pointed in a certain direction (north east to be exact- the polar opposite to where they thought they were meant to be going) as he hopped down. “Thata way.”

The adults he was with didn’t fail to notice how the boy’s voice was oddly distorted, like he had something in his mouth. Oh god.

“What are you eating?” Bruce asked suspiciously.

Peter gulped. “Nothing.”

“Peter please don’t tell me you just ate something you found in the branches because I have seen enough vomit today-“

“No, it’s just an apple, I had it in my pocket.” Peter said quickly and held up the partially eaten core as evidence. It still had the ‘pink lady’ sticker on it so Bruce was sure that he hadn’t just plucked it off a random tree.

“How- when?” Bruce asked confusedly. Peter just shrugged. “And why didn’t you just say that when I asked what it was?”

“...I don’t know..”

“You didn’t want to share did you?”

“I’m hungry! And it was my last one!” Peter said guardedly. It wasn’t like he wouldn’t usually share- he was a great sharer his kindergarten teacher said so- he was just so hungry . He should’ve eaten lunch an hour ago but Steve had left with the rest of their supplies and he’d polished off his jar of jelly earlier that morning. Besides, his snack break had been nice, it gave him an excuse to eat in peace away from the arguing for five minutes.
“How many did you have? You don’t even have pockets on that thing? And that’s Thor’s jacket—where were you hiding them?” All of Bruce’s questions were met with shrugs from the teenager and eventually he gave up, giving Peter a side smirk. “Alright, then. Keep your secrets.”

Bruce didn’t understand the reference he’d made or made the connection with the character that had said it; even when Peter, Clint and Thor started dissolving into hysterics.

“What? What?! Why are you laugh—what did I say now?!”

“Come on Frodo, patch me up already. We should get going before Papa Stark starts sending a crusade after little legs.” Clint chuckled, even as Bruce began strapping his leg.

“Peter could you give me a hand?” Bruce asked and Peter appeared at his side. “This bandage ain’t gonna hold, I need you to web it if you can.”

“Sure, I mean I can try..” Peter mumbled. He still wasn’t that well versed at producing webs on command especially when he was stressed. It took some focusing but Peter managed to produce enough silk to wrap around the man’s leg.


“Are you sure you’re okay to walk..?” Peter gnawed his lip nervously as he watched Clint stand up. He was bearing weight on his leg at least, but it didn’t look comfortable and he couldn’t take more than a single step without stopping.

“I’ll be fine so long as we don’t get lost anymore. I’m gonna rip Steve a new one when I see him.”

“I can see which way we gotta go now anyway, it’s all cool.” Peter said calmly. He was still a little shaken from the whole almost drowning thing—more than a little shaken actually, he still felt like he was on the verge of a panic attack but he desperately pushed that feeling down because he had a job to do. The fact that he was actually being of some use made him feel a lot more confident. He knew what he was doing for once and he was actually able to take the lead instead of following other people; and he was gonna do it without Tony’s help.

“Then lead the way youngling!” Thor beamed enthusiastically. “Clint I can carry you if you need.”
“No. No way am I playing Yoda, fuck that.” Clint spat bitterly as he stumbled again, causing Thor to have to catch him. “Peter find me a cane.”

The teen looked around for a second before walking over to a nearby tree and snapping a branch off of it.

“That’ll work too.” Clint shrugged and gratefully took his makeshift walking stick. “This splint ain’t half bad, you should patent this Bruce.”

“Hey! I helped!” Peter pouted.

“Co-patent it.”

They were moving at a considerably slower pace than they had been but at least they were going in the right direction. After another hour they were back where they’d started originally and Clint was already flagging behind. Every time they offered to help him he outright refused and even threatened to beat Thor with his stick if he asked again.

He didn’t argue when Bruce forced them all to take a break though and sat down on a tree stump while Peter went off the path to ‘look at deer’ again. “Will you please stop being stubborn and just let me call T?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Because.”

“You’re just trying to prove a point, we’re never gonna make it back before six now.” Bruce shook his head. He should never have agreed to try and finish the trail anyway.

Peter popped out from the bushes just as Bruce said that, and he glanced down out his watch. Shit
it was eleven minutes past six. “It’s gone past six, do you think dad was being serious when he said about- uh oh.”

“What’s wrong?”

But Peter didn’t answer. He couldn’t explain but his spidey-senses were tingling again, saying his dad was on his way already. And they weren’t wrong.

Not thirty seconds later Tony clad in his Iron-Man suit came soaring over the treetops and hovering just above them.

“What are you guys playing at? You were walking in circles for three hours and then you just stop?” The man yelled before he lifted up his face plate. He didn’t sound happy; though he had his signature smirk on his face when he turned to Clint. “Don’t tell me you got lost, Barton.”

“Blame Steve! He’s the one who gave us an outdated map!” Clint snapped and threw himself down onto a tree stump angrily.

“I thought you were some kind of wild man who didn’t need maps? You can’t even find your way in a forest.” Tony laughed as he landed.

“I could have but Bruce wouldn’t let me climb a tree to check out the landscape-“

“That’s why I left you Spidey surveillance services over here.” Tony ruffled the youngsters hair with his gloved hand which made Peter’s head wobble side to side dramatically. God he hated it when Tony did that and Tony knew it too, that’s why he did it all the more. “Peter why didn’t you answer your phone?”

“I broke it again...sorry dad.” Peter mumbled quietly, shuffling his feet. He really didn’t want to tell Tony what had happened because he knew he’d freak out at the others for letting him fall into the river; even though it wasn’t their fault Tony tended to overreact and would no doubt blame them.

“Yeah he wrecked it when he was up a tree.” Thor said quickly. It wasn’t a lie, that was how the phone ended up waterlogged. “It wasn’t his fault.”
“It’s okay, Spidey’s not in trouble.” Tony shrugged. It wasn’t a big deal, it's not like Peter didn’t break his phone on a regular basis, he just wished that someone had texted him to let him know what was going on. Instead he’d had to spend his afternoon watching them walk in circles for two hours before changing direction on his laptop, in between trying to deal with Steve who had become delirious and at one point belligerent; apparently, according to a feverish Steve, Nat was actually Peggy and Tony had to get some plums now - it was an emergency. It had been an interesting afternoon to say the least.

“Well Spidey is hungry.” Peter pouted.

“Nat ran out and got some supplies earlier.” Tony said as he stepped out of his suit, deciding to walk the rest of the way back with the group instead of flying back; his suit compressed itself into a backpack and Peter without being asked lifted it and swapped Tony for his own backpack. It was considerably heavier but not to the teen with super strength.

“Is Steve alright?” Peter asked once they had started walking again.

“Oh now you’re worried about Steve.” Tony chuckled.

“Hey I was always worried about him!”

“No you were more concerned with your stomach.” Tony laughed and poked Peter in the side.

“Well how’s Steve’s stomach? Has he stopped throwing up? Did he manage to keep water down? What about his temp- Is his fever down? ” Bruce asked rushedly. It was obvious he was bursting to ask about Steve’s condition but didn’t want to be the first one to ask; Peter had broken the ice for him and now it was fair game.

“Yes doc he’s fine. He’s sleeping it off.” Tony rolled his eyes. He was stretching the truth just a teensy bit but there was no use worrying Bruce when he was too far away to do anything yet. He could wait until they got back.

“You mean he gave up the opportunity to go grocery shopping? Jesus he really must be ill.” Clint commented. Peter noticed how the archer had dropped behind slightly, likely so Tony didn’t notice him limping.
Tony noticed something else though and he was giving Peter a sour look. “You smell. Why do you smell?”

“Hey! It’s hot and I’m a teenage boy don’t make me insecure!”

“You don’t smell like sweaty teenage boy that’s the problem-“ Tony sniffed him again and furrowed his brows, making Peter jump away from him.

“Hey! You make it sound like I don’t shower or something- will you stop!”

“You smell like pond water.” Tony said quizzically, before his face fell. Oh shit he was figuring it out, Peter had hoped to avoid that until they got back to the cabin at the very least. “And your hair looks like you slept with curlers in-“

Peter went wide eyed and quickly tried to explain before Tony started yelling. “It was an accident-“

“You went in the water?!” Tony bellowed, angrily enough to where even the adult men cowered slightly.

“I slipped when Clint twisted his ankle-“

“Twisted his-“ Tony shook his head looking angry and confused but he looked back at Clint, his eyes locking on to his leg and his expression changed again. Now he looked confused and concerned. “Barton, shit, are you okay?”

“I’m fine really-“ Clint held his hands up defensively.

“Bullshit you’re leg is fucking purple, what the hell happened to- why didn’t you guys call me?! What is wrong with you?!“ Tony barked making all of them hang their heads ashamedly, but none more than Bruce who looked the guiltiest.

“We thought-“
“Shut up Thor you fucking idiot- You’re all in so much trouble I can’t even- god fuck, I am not doing the paperwork on this!” Tony growled and held his hand out for Peter to return his suit to him. Bruce went to open his mouth and say something but Tony cut him off. “Save it. Just save it. I don’t want to hear your bullshit excuses- you were meant to be the responsible one Bruce. Thor fly Clint back, Peter you’re with me and Bruce-“

“Yeah yeah, I’ll stay put.”

“I mean you can if you want, I was gonna say you’re on your own.” Tony gave him a shit eating grin as he suited up and hoisted Peter onto his back. “Now you’ll have time to think about all the shitty decisions you made. Enjoy your hike.”

Tony then zoomed off before Bruce could have the chance to protest. It didn’t take three minutes to get back to the cabin but by the time they handed Peter was frozen from the chill of the wind and shaking. He dropped down off of Tony’s back as soon as he was close enough to the ground not to injure himself. On impulse, he wanted to run inside and haul himself up in his room, to avoid the undoubtedly uncomfortable conversation that Tony was about to have with him.

“Don’t even think about it, Parker.” Tony growled as he landed himself.

“Dad I’m sorry, we wanted to call but Clint said no and-“

“Are you okay?” Tony cut Peter off in the middle of his explanation by grabbing his face with both hands and giving him that worried-dad look.

Peter hadn’t prepared for that. He’d prepared himself to be yelled at and for Tony to be mad at him for not calling for help- but now he was thinking about it he wasn’t okay. He had been, right up until Tony asked him of course, but as soon as his dad went from angry to concerned Peter felt panic start bubbling up in his chest again. God he hates it when Tony caught him off guard like that. “Y-Yeah I’m fine I just..”

“Peter.” Tony said knowingly.

Peter’s chin wobbled despite himself. “..N-no.”

“I-I was up in the tree trying to map out the river and Clint screamed a-and I slipped and- I tried to catch myself but the branch snapped and I just fell. It was just like the flashback Dad and I couldn't breathe!” By the time he was finished explaining Peter had dissolved into tears and he was mad at himself for it; but he knew it was futile trying to hold it back. Tony had that effect on him, whether he liked it or not the man would get whatever was bothering him out of him eventually, so there was no point fighting it. And he was scared. As much as he’d known it was important to learn how to swim- he intended to- he just hadn’t realised he’d need to learn that quickly. And the fact that he’d just froze in the water instead of, like Thor had said, survival instincts kicking in was even scarier.

“How did you get out?” Tony asked as he rubbed Peter’s back, trying to get his breathing under control by breathing slowly himself in hopes that the boy would mirror his own breaths.

“Th-Thor grabbed me.” Peter sniffed and pulled away. He was starting to get mad at himself now, remembering how his mind and body had failed him. “I didn’t even try and swim dad, I c-couldn’t move.”

“We’re gonna get you started on swimming lessons as soon as we get home.”

“What’s the point?” Peter said bitterly as he wiped his eyes with the back of his hand.

“So this won’t happen again-“

“No but something else will. I can’t do anything right, I always need help. I’m never gonna be able to-“

“Stop. Stop.” Tony said quickly and grabbed Peter by his shoulders. “Go inside. Get a shower and something to eat, then go take a nap. You’ll feel a lot better.”

“I’m not a baby Tony! I don’t need a fucking nap!” Peter snapped and shrugged the man off of him intent on storming inside and...taking a fucking nap. “Quit smothering me! It’s your fault I’m so defenceless all the time- stop treating me like a little kid!”

“So we’re back to that now are we?” Tony simply rolled his eyes. He didn’t have the energy to go chasing after a cranky teenager and he knew Peter wanted some space. He sighed to himself and let Peter storm off.
Whilst Peter was throwing a minor tantrum outside, inside Thor was helping Clint into the living room, much to Steve and Nat’s surprised. Well, Steve seemed pretty confused in general; he was currently laying on the couch, grey skinned and sweaty with a wet washcloth on his forehead.

“What happened to you?” Steve croaked as Clint hobbled in with an arm thrown over Thor’s shoulder.

“What happened to me? Have you seen yourself? Christ Steve you look like death warmed u-uh-ah! Thor mind the counter you fucking idiot!” Clint bellowed when Thor accidentally caught his foot on the breakfast island that jutted out of the kitchen.

“Sorry!”

“Fuck me.” Clint hissed in pain and bent forward to grab his leg.

“No thank you, I’d rather not.”

“Shut up, Thor.” Steve and Clint at the same time- but hey, Nat laughed.

“Okay.” Thor shrugged, as he dropped Clint on the couch and went back out to grab Bruce. Tony had only been kidding when he said about leaving the doctor behind but apparently he had genuinely forgotten.

“Mm, ow ow ow.”

“Easy does it.” Nat said gently as she helped elevate Clint’s injured leg. “What the hell happened?”

Clint opened his mouth to answer but Peter burst in through the back door looking very upset and interrupted him.

“Hi sport.” Steve mumbled, somewhat dreamily. He was out of it.
“Hi Steve.” It was clear where the boy was headed but he skidded to a halt and looked at Steve with a look of horror on his face. “Oh my god, are you okay? You look-“

“Go pee first.” Steve chuckled.

“Oh yeah- *an actual toilet* praise Jesus!” Peter continued to his intended destination and slammed the door shut behind him so hard that everyone could hear the hinges crackle and threaten to snap under the strain; which was followed by a quiet. “Oh, I’m Sorry!”

“Did he just apologise to the door?” Clint asked with a small smirk on his face which made Steve laugh but he regretted it severely.

“God ow.” The blond covered his eyes and groaned.

“Your head?” Nat asked knowingly, moving over from her spot at Clint’s side to Steve’s.

“Pounding like nobody’s business.” Steve chuckled lightly but his voice was strained and it was obvious how uncomfortable he was. Nat set about taking the man’s temperature again even though she had only just done so. “Nat it’s not gonna change in three minutes-“

“104.” Nat cut him off, the numbers proving Steve’s point to be null and void. “It’s not going down Steve.”

“He’s still feverish?” Bruce called as he entered the room, having been retrieved by Thor after being abandoned in the middle of the woods.

“I feel a lot better-“ Steve started to say quickly attempting to sit up but Nat pushed him back down.

“104.” Nat and Clint said simultaneously and Bruce gave Steve a very grave look.

“You need to go home.”
“No! I don’t- I’m okay! I just over did it that’s all.”

“Yeah that makes sense, a super soldier overexerted himself by taking a leisurely stroll through the woods.” Clint rolled his eyes.

“Speaking of leisurely stroll what took you so long? Other than Clint breaking his ankle-“ Nat asked. Clearly Tony hadn’t told her that they were walking in circles for a while, probably to save them the embarrassment and teasing.

“It’s not broken!”

“Whatever you say Hopper-“

“ARE YOU WATCHING STRANGER THINGS WITHOUT ME?!” Peter bellowed from inside the shower.

“No!” They all yelled back.

“But seriously, what happened?” Nat asked again as Bruce and Thor braced themselves for what they thought would be another explosive argument.

But Clint just sighed. He didn’t have the heart to yell at Steve when he looked so pitiful. “I read the map wrong, that’s all. Then I tripped and hurt my leg and Peter fell into the water-“

“Into the water?!“ Nat and Steve said in tandem, both of them going wide eyed. Clint, Bruce and Thor all nodded.

Just as Peter exited the bathroom (smelling a lot less like river water and a lot more like bubblegum now) and quickly walked into the kitchen, grabbing a pack of oreos and retreating to his room. “Don’t wanna talk about it, don’t bother asking.”

Once he’d slammed the door behind him the others sat in silence for a while. Bruce set about properly examining Clint’s ankle and came to the conclusion that it wasn’t in fact broken (“Ha! Told you!”) but badly sprained with hairline fractures still being a possibility. The doctor urged
Clint to let them take him to a hospital but he brushed them off. “We’re going home tomorrow, I can tough it out till then.”

“Me too.” Steve croaked meagrely and everyone rolled their eyes at him.

“Nope. You’re going home Steveo.” Tony announced cheerfully as he came in through the back door. “Just got off the phone with Buck, he’s gonna come pick you up tonight.”

“What?! No! He can’t! You said we have to stay within this area because-“

“Because S.H.I.E.L.D have us tagged as being here, yes I know what I said. Who do you think I just spent fifteen minutes on the phone to? As soon as Bucky can he’s coming to get you and you’re going straight home, Dr. Cho is already on a flight over here.”

“We don’t need Cho, I’m a Doctor.” Bruce grumbled, sounding a little jealous.

“It’s nothing personal Bruce, I could only get the clearance to let Steve go home early okay? Trust me I tried to get this whole thing pulled when you guys let Peter almost drown.” Tony’s eyes turned steely and cold towards the latter part of that statement and the three main culprits hung their heads again. “We’ll go home tomorrow afternoon as scheduled but you three get to spend the time we have left, making a head start on the paperwork from the shit that you pulled today.”

Tony walked over to his bag and retrieved a whopping stack of papers that he dropped onto the coffee table with a loud thwack. “Have fun with that.”

As much as Tony would have loved to have spent the rest of the evening yelling at each one of his housemates for their individual stupidity, he had bigger things to worry about. That and he only had so much energy, he didn’t want to waste it, not when he was running off of two hours sleep and he knew Nat would take over the job of chastising the three idiots he’d entrusted his son with.

He had to make sure said son was okay after the sudden turn of events that had left their weekend away in shambles (just as Tony had predicted no less- but now wasn’t the time for ‘I told you so’s oh no, that would come later- most likely when Steve wasn’t on his deathbed). After he left the rest of the household to argue about their various medical problems, he headed to Peter's room and knocked on the door.
He waited. But he didn’t receive an answer. So he knocked again. Still nothing.

“Come on Underoos, I know you’re still awake.” Tony sighed and leaned against the door frame. “I’m not going away.”

The door slowly creeped open at that point, revealing the darkened room inside. Tony stepped in and switched the light on, expecting Peter to be behind the door or on the bed but he wasn’t. The door shut behind him abruptly and made him jump, and he jumped even more when he turned around as saw Peter up on the ceiling. “Fuck! Peter don’t do that we’ve talked about this! Bad heart!”

Despite being startled Tony calmed down once he saw Peter smirk a little. Even if it was at his expense he let him have that one.

“Sorry I didn’t mean to.” Peter giggled as he dropped down from the ceiling. “And I’m sorry about snapping earlier.”

“It’s okay bubs-“

“No it’s not. I was upset but I shouldn't have taken it out on you-“

Tony sat down on the boy’s bed and patted the spot beside him. “And now you’ve said sorry so all is forgiven. It’s been a real clusterfuck of a day kiddo I don’t blame you for snapping a little.”

Peter sighed and sat beside his dad, automatically cuddling next to him. “You do baby me though.”

“I know. But so what? It’s not hurting anybody and you have to do a lot of grown up things, you need a little babying to balance it out.”

“I don’t think that’s how it works.” Peter mumbled but he didn’t argue when Tony started messing with his hair.

“Yeah well who cares.” Tony yawned. He couldn’t be bothered to have a long existential debate about it, not today, they could save that for a time when they weren’t both so emotionally drained.
They sat in a comfortable silence for awhile, until Peter pulled away a little to look up at his father questioningly.

“Dad do you think I’m psychic?” He asked out of seemingly nowhere and Tony gave him a bewildered look, that prompted Peter to explain what had led him to ask it in the first place. “Well I had that flashback- that I’ve never ever had ever then I go and fall into a lake? Coincidence? I think not.”

“Peter I don’t think your Spidey-senses are so good that they can see into the future.” Tony smirked.

“But what if they are? How would we know? Maybe I could test it somehow.” Peter hummed, clearly in deep thought.

And Tony could see where those thoughts were headed; he didn’t like the idea of Peter putting himself in harm’s way to test to see just how reliable his sixth sense and he could see the wheels turning in Peter’s head. “I know how to test it.”

“How?”

“Did you see this coming?” Tony asked coolly. Just as Peter got that signature confused look on his face, Tony sprung his attack and pinned him to the bed with one hand, tickling his rib cage with the other.

Peter immediately started shrieking and trying to wiggle away but it was no use; his laughter had knocked all of the strength out of him and he was at Tony’s mercy. “AHH! DAD STHA-AH-AP! NAT- TH-OR! SOMEONE- AHH ANYONE FUU-HA HA- HULK!”

Not two seconds later Nat barged into the room with her hands on her hips. “What are you doing?!”

“Science.” Tony shrugged.
That night Peter went to bed pretty early, given that he was exhausted and once he was fed a proper meal (of junk food thanks to Nat being the one who went grocery shopping) he essentially passed out. Tony spent the rest of the evening, along with Nat and Steve when he had the energy to talk, berating the rest of their teammates for being absolute imbeciles and endangering themselves.

They all just took it, knowing Tony was right and feeling bad for having not been more mature in handling the situation; and Tony was right, the paperwork alone was punishment enough. They had to fill out a stack of injury reports, health and safety violations, other possible extraneous variables- “Jesus T, you have to do this for every mission?”

“And now you know why I don’t sleep.” Was all he said in reply as he poured himself another cup of coffee. Bruce didn’t even bother to comment on his caffeine consumption as he usually would, he didn’t want Tony to give him that angry stare again.

“You should try and get some sleep now though, I know you didn’t get much last night.” Nat said and Tony just shrugged.

“You say that like I’m not used to it.”

Steve giggled from where he was laying on the couch and everyone turned to him, expecting him to add to the conversation. But he didn’t. “Tony did you know that your dad almost gave you Steven as a middle name?”

Tony sighed and rolled his eyes. “Yes Steven, I did know that. You never fail to bring it up at parties.”
Despite being visibly annoyed Tony walked over and pushed Steve so he didn’t roll off the sofa as he was teetering precariously on the edge, and gently tucked his blanket around him a little tighter. “Yeah I ain’t sleeping with this big lump acting a fool. He’s away with the fairies.”

Tony wasn’t wrong, Steve had already attempted to run off into the woods three times because he was sure that he was on an actual mission; even using a couch cushion as an impromptu shield at one point. It had taken Nat, Tony and Thor to wrestle him back inside each time and each time Tony almost got knocked out when Steve threw him. Oh yeah, he had to remember to send an invoice to the owners for the hole in the wall, better write that down.

“I’ll watch him, T. I’ll stay up until Bucky gets here.” Nat offered.

“Are you sure you can handle him?” Tony said sounding pretty unsure but he was beyond exhausted; it wasn’t just the night before where he’d had little sleep, he couldn’t remember the last time he got more than four hours and it was beginning to show. It had probably been a week since he went to sleep at night and stayed that way until morning- even Tony Stark could only take so much.

“We’ll be fine, won’t we big guy?” Nat said, slapping Steve on the shoulder as he continued mumbling to himself.

“Sure Peggy, whatever colour you want just not the blue, it clashes with my eyes.” Steve muttered as his eyes fluttered closed, indicating that the fever was causing him to drift unconscious again.

“That’s good to know honey, I’ll go with the red instead.” Nat assured him with a smirk on her face.

“Hmm...okay but wake me up if he starts to get rowdy, alright?” Tony relented. He ended up checking on Peter once more before he went to bed himself (give him a break he’s still getting over this separation anxiety thing, okay?) and it was a good thing he did because Peter was sleeping face down on the floor after apparently rolling off of the bed too- What was with these superhumans rolling around the place? Just lay still dang nabbit!

“Oh for Christ’s sake- Petey what are you doing?” He whispered, not expecting an answer. He simply scooped the boy up the best he could considering it was like trying to pick up slime the way the kid was all limp, and poured him back into the bed. That woke him up though and Peter whined.
“Mmmm- I w’s comfy!”

“Yeah pal, you sure looked it.” Tony chuckled and went to pick up the discarded blanket on the floor to rebundle the kid, but he hesitated. “Hey, do you have to pee before you go back to sleep?”

Peter shook his head and tried to pull the blanket up around his ears but Tony stopped him. “Are you sure bubs? You didn’t go before you went to sleep.”

Peter grumbled, apparently getting frustrated by Tony continuing to interrupt his sleep. “Went a minute ago when you were calling Clint a fu-“

Tony quickly covered Peter’s mouth. “Okay, you don’t need to repeat that- shouldn’t have heard it. Alright well goodnight then.”

“Love you.” Peter mumbled as he cocooned himself in the blanket, leaving nothing but a foot and a tuft of hair sticking out.

“I love you too.” Tony chuckled as he shut the door behind him and quietly walked away to his own room.

“Did you remember to turn his baby monitor on, Stark?” Nat called from the living room with a smirk on her face.

“Yeah, yeah.” Tony sighed and waved a hand in her general direction. “I baby him too much, I know it.”

After Tony went to bed it didn’t take the others long to follow suit, mostly because Nat was a lot more lenient with enforcing the report writing punishment (not because she didn’t want them to pay for their ill actions but because she wasn’t in the mood to hear them bitching). It was gone three am when Bruce gave in and went to bed too- he was insistent on staying out there with Steve and helping take care of him, but Nat forced him to go to bed because he kept drooling on Tony’s precious progress reports when he nodded off.

So it was just Nat awake in the living room, unfortunately for a certain little spider; who an hour later came creeping out of his room only to be confronted by yet another awkward situation. He just couldn’t seem to catch a break.
He’d been woken up by a nightmare, and who could blame him? Of course he was going to have the drowning nightmare after what had transpired the day before. But the bad dream wasn’t the only issue. It was the problem it had caused, the problem he had been trying to avoid the whole weekend. He woke up soaked, and not just in sweat.

“Uh oh.” He muttered as he jumped up out of the now cold wet bed. “No, no, no, oh please no- why now? Just one more night- just one more night and I would’ve been home and- Ugh shit!”

‘No Peter, calm down it’s okay. Dad made sure Steve got a place with a washer remember? We can fix this.’ He tried to calm himself as he gathered up the sheets. He considered waking Tony up at first, to help him dispose of the evidence but he quickly decided against it. He’d disturbed the man’s sleep enough for one weekend he couldn’t do it again; besides he really didn’t want his dad to know. Tony was treating him as a baby enough as it was he didn’t want to go and prove his point by waking him up to deal with this mess. Anyway that wasn’t fair, not when he could deal with it by himself.

He said a silent thank you to whoever had the forethought to put a mattress protector on that bed and quickly snuck out of his room, trying to be as quiet as possible as he assumed everyone else would be asleep. He assumed wrong.

As soon as he stepped into the hallway he looked into the living room and immediately made eye contact with Nat. Ah fuck.

Nat seemed to have the same reaction. This was awkward. She didn’t know what to say- but she had to say something right? It was obvious what had happened from the balled up sheets alone, let alone the fact that Peter was still wearing wet pants. Shit. “Uhh, you okay?”

“Yes.” Peter said shortly. His brain was telling him to run, or to hide the bedding behind his back or to make up a lie- something, but he couldn’t. He just froze. ‘Be calm, be calm. Maybe she hasn’t noticed- oh shut up P, you idiot of course she noticed!’

Nat tried her best to be as casual as possible but internally she was cringing, desperately trying not to say the wrong thing and scare the boy off. “Do you need help with that?”

“N-n-no I’m-” ‘Dammit Peter don’t you dare start crying I swear to god!’ “I’ve got it.”
Now Peter managed to make his body spring into action, if only to avoid Nat seeing him burst into tears on top of everything else. He could only think to do one thing though, and that wasn’t to calmly walk down to the basement and set his things on to wash, or to go back into his room and change; he automatically went into hide mode and shut himself inside the bathroom, locking the door.

‘Shit, so much for not scaring him off.’ Nat thought. She sighed to herself. She wasn’t sure what to do now. She knew that Peter would likely just want to be left alone or for her to go away but she couldn’t leave him in the bathroom like that. Despite her lack of maternal instincts (or so she thought) she knew she had to do something. After briefly considering waking Tony up but scrapping that idea- he was exhausted after all- she tried to think of what he would do in this situation.

Tony would probably cuddle Peter and tell him it was alright but that...that didn’t seem appropriate for her to be doing. Not only was she not really the cuddling type it would probably just freak Peter out if she tried to do that. Then what would Steve do? Or Bruce? Hell- even Clint? Not Thor because he was an idiot- but one of the other actual grown ups?

She sat there racking her brain for a while trying to think about the best way to go about things whilst Peter was having a small melt down in the bathroom trying to figure out what to do himself. After a few minutes though Nat shook her head. It didn’t matter what anyone else would do- she wasn’t them. She’d deal with it in the Nat way; practical, no bullshit, Nat style. Peter might not take too kindly to it at first but hey, she had to show him that it wasn’t a big deal and the best way to do that in her eyes was to not make a big show of it. She quietly went into Peter’s room, replaced the sheets and grabbed him some clean clothes.

Then she braced herself for the awkwardness to come as she knocked on the bathroom door. It was gonna be uncomfortable but it had to be done, best to get it over with and she was pretty good at handling awkward stuff; the perks of having a cut and dry personality. “Kid?”

“Y-Yeah?” Peter sniffled form the other side of the door and Nat felt her heart break a little bit. This was why she had to handle it instead of someone else, she didn’t want Peter to sound so scared of her. Besides, if the Steve incident had taught her anything it was to deal with Peter straight away instead of letting things drag on.

“Open the door.”

“W-why?”
“Just do it.” She sighed when she heard a lack of movement from behind the door and decided to just pick the lock instead. “Fine, make yourself decent I’m coming in anyway.”

She gave him a ten second head start before she opened it and luckily for both of them that was more than enough time for him to appropriately cover himself in a towel. She held out his clothes to him. “Here. Beds taken care of, give me your wet stuff.”

But Peter shook his head going wide eyed. “No please don’t- I d-don’t want you to have to-“

“Peter it’s just piss. I’ve had to clean up Steve’s puke today, do you really think I care?” She rolled her eyes and kept her hand outstretched expectantly.

Peter eventually handed her the bundle of only to make the conversation end quicker- though she was grateful that he handed her a part of the fabric that wasn’t wet. “I’ll throw these in the wash. Get dressed then come and talk to me.”

“Do I have to?” Peter sniffed. “Can’t you just pretend I don’t exist or something?”

“Nope. I’ve gotta be a responsible adult and shit. Don’t worry I won’t make you talk about your feelings.” She smirked and shut the door, going to fulfil her end of the bargain.

Peter did as he was told but he hid out in the bathroom for as long as humanly possible. Why did his body have to embarrass him like this? Why did he let himself get too comfortable and fall asleep? He was so humiliated and felt so pathetic and now he was crying to top it all off. Stupid body, stupid camping, stupid lake. Fuck lakes. And Nat saw- Nat. Why did it have to be Nat?

She waited in the living room for Peter to reappear which he did, but he was avoiding eye contact and he sat as far away from her as possible. She didn’t expect any less. “You okay?”

“No.” Peter said honestly.

“You wanna talk about it?”

“No.” He sniffed and brought his feet up off the floor and tucked his knees to his chest, hugging
“Peter come on, it’s not a big deal we’ve been over this.” Nat said, softening her tone ever so slightly.

“Yes it is.”

“We’ve had this conversation before kid.”

“Yeah well.” Peter shrugged and continued to stare right ahead of him.

Nat sighed. She wanted to make him feel better somehow so she decided it would be a good time to give the boy candy, despite it being four in the morning. Tony might not approve of her methods but she wasn’t the best at comforting smalltalk and Peter wasn’t exactly being receptive to it either. The twizzlers got the boy to smile so she counted that as a win. “Here pipsqueak.”

“T-t-thanks.”

She ruffled his hair and sat back down. Thank god for the boy having a sweet tooth. “You should go back to sleep kid, it’s still early.”

“I..I can't..”

“You scared it’s gonna happen again?” She asked flatly and Peter nodded. “Fair enough- I mean I did just give you a shit ton of sugar so I doubt you’d sleep anyway. Did you have a nightmare or did it just happen?”

Peter shrugged at first but Nat raised her eyebrows to let him know that wasn’t a suitable answer. “A bit of both I guess..but mostly the nightmare..”

“Still don’t wanna talk about it?” Peter shook his head vigorously at that. “I figured as much.”

The pair fell silent again and Peter continued to state sadly at the floor looking like he wanted to
curl in a ball and cry and Nat couldn’t take it.

“Hey, look if we’re quiet enough about I’ll give you a game of Mario Kart if you’ll stop looking so sad.”

Instead of perking up Peter just looked more upset, like he thought Nat was finding him annoying just for being sad. “I’m sorry.”

“You shouldn’t be you didn’t do anything wrong so don’t start with the apologising. Come on.” She stood up and grabbed the remotes, passing Peter the pink one in an attempt to goad him into an argument of some kind. “Don’t think I’m gonna go easy on you though, punk.”

They played for a while, Peter losing every time- Nat wasn’t kidding when she said she wasn’t going easy on him (what? She was trying to make him feel better that doesn’t mean she had to let him win!). Eventually he began to warm up again and could actually maintain eye contact without cringing, which for Peter was a big deal. Nat was just happy that she wouldn’t have to go through days of the kid avoiding her because he was ashamed; frankly she was proud of him for reacting so well to her blunt way of dealing with things. And she was proud of herself for handling it without Tony’s input.

“Hey Nat..?” Peter looked up at the woman after losing for the fifth time in a row.

“Yeah?”

“Thanks..for not babying me I mean and being, you know, chill about it.”

“No problem. I know you don’t need that, you’ve got Tony for when you feel like being coddled. You don’t need that from me.”

“Yeah I weren’t in the mood for all that tonight.” Peter chuckled.

“Well that’s why we’re a good team, all of us are different you can come to us for things. If you want comfort you could go to your dad or Steve, if you want medical advice you’ve got Bruce-“
“If I needed help hiding a body I’d go to you.”

“Exactly.” Nat grinned and bumped her shoulder into his. “You wanna talk about that dream now?”

“Eh..it’s not that interesting a story. I don’t know how much Tony told you about the Vulture stuff.”

“Nothing at all. He literally told us nothing about you other than ‘oh by the way you know that Spider-Man dude? Well he’s fifteen, I’ve been his mentor for a year and he’s coming to live with us.’ I didn’t even know your name was Peter until like a month in.”

“What?” Peter laughed because he thought she was exaggerating.

“Seriously! You spent all your time hiding from me and Tony only ever called you kid. He did tell us before you moved in but no one ever said it again so I just forgot until one day Steve asked where Peter was and I was like ‘who the fuck is that?’”

“Wow Nat, way to make a kid feel special.” Peter rolled his eyes but he was still laughing at the idea of Nat not knowing his name for that long. To be fair she was right, he was petrified of her in particular for a long time. Longer than he cared to admit. It seemed silly in hindsight, knowing how they acted with one another but if he had told himself a year ago that they would banter, bicker and playfight more than Ned and his sisters he would’ve laughed.

“He kept you pretty secret. He just said you took out an illegal aliens arms dealer by yourself and I thought that was pretty cool so.” She commended him which made Peter sit up just a little bit taller and smile proudly. “The Vulture huh?”

“Yeah he had these big metal wings.”

“You don’t mean Sam do you? You seem to have an issue with people and bird related names.”

“Yeah Ned pointed that out too.” Peter went on to describe all of the events that took place, how he’d scoped out the weapons ring and how Tony wouldn’t listen to him; so he decided to do it by himself. “Then there was this time I was meant to be at this party and, well I got into this chase with him and a bunch of stuff happened and..well he ended up dropping me into a lake from super
high up and..yeah. Pretty scary. Tony had to save me.”

“I can imagine.” Nat said quietly. She felt awful for joking about throwing him in the water even though she hadn’t known about the incident when she said it; still she ought to have been more careful with her words, she should’ve known that by now especially with Peter. “So swimming lessons for you kiddo.”

“How fun.” Peter murmured sarcastically.

“It won’t be so bad. Tony will probably make you some little Spider-Man themed arm bands.”

“Ugh, don’t give him any ideas. Christ between him and Steve they’ll probably have me wearing a life vest before I’m even allowed in the shallow end.” The image of Peter being forced to wear pool floaties was enough to have them both cracking up, but they had to stifle their laughter when Steve started to stir. “You won’t..you won’t tell dad will you?”

“Tell him what?”

“About me wetting the- Oh.”

“There we go.” She rolled her eyes when he caught on to what she was getting at.

“Thanks Nat.”

“Don’t mention it Squirt.”

Not long after five o’clock Bucky arrived, so Peter and Nat were tasked with trying to get Steve up without disturbing everyone else- but the soldier refused to move. He didn’t just refuse to move, he refused to wake up; even when Nat stuck his finger in his nose and smacked him with a pillow (let it be known that Natalia Romanova should never become a medical professional). It was meant to be a quick pick up but Bucky ended up having to get out of the car to come and deal with him.

“P, help me get Steve’s stuff in the car, Buck can handle rousing him. He’s good at that.” Nat winked causing Bucky to roll his eyes.
The winter soldier went further into the living room and saw Steve sprawled on the couch looking terrible. He was used to seeing Steve ill, after all he’d been the one to nurse him every time his weak immune system failed him in their youth- but he hadn’t seen him this bad since before Steve was given the serum. Shaking the odd sense of nostalgia off he moved over and leaned on the arm of the couch, gently stroking Steve’s arm to try and wake him without startling him. “Hey, rise and shine princess your carriage awaits.”

“Mm..Santa?”

“Jeez, I know I’ve put on a few pounds and the greys are starting to show but damn, blondie.” Bucky grinned when Steve opened his eyes.

“Bucky?”

“The one and only.” The dark haired man looped an arm around Steve’s waist to help him sit up and he could feel him swaying side to side. Had it not been for his arm Steve would have surely toppled off of the couch. “How are you feeling?”

“I- urgh-“ Steve swallowed thickly but it was no use. Apparently his stomach didn’t take too kindly to being vertical and it was a good thing that Bucky had quick reflexes or Steve would have painted the couch a new colour.

“Wow, that good huh?” Bucky hummed as he rubbed Steve’s back. Unlike he had with Tony the day before Steve didn’t reject the comforting touch of anything he leaned into it. “Easy, easy I’ve got you. Man, Tony wasn’t kiddin’ when he said you were sick. You hurtin’ anywhere?”

“Just my head- mm-“ Steve was cut off by another gag but those three words were enough for him to come across unconvincingly.

“Stevie, you lyin’ to me? You’re not very good at that remember?”

“My ear.” Steve groaned after a moment.

“Your ear? You got an infection?” Bucky asked trying to clarify what the man meant. It didn’t
exactly come as a surprise, Steve had been pretty susceptible to those when he was a kid. It helped settle his nerves a little bit. It was still concerning that Steve was ill, considering that was meant to be a near impossibility, but it made sense that the man’s own body could still damage itself in such a way; it was a lot less scary than the other alternatives, such as some kind of supervirus or that Steve had another underlying serious medical issue- a lot less scary that was for sure.

“I think so- urk!- that’s what it feels like.”

Suddenly Tony’s voice joined in the conversation, from his spot in his bedroom doorway. He’d woke up the minute he heard Bucky pull into the driveway. “Why didn’t you say that yesterday?”

“‘Cause I didn’t think that was possible.” Steve snapped back bitterly. “I- I haven’t had one since-“

“Yeah well we didn’t think you threw up or got temperatures anymore but here we are.” Tony shook his head, moving forward to help Bucky get the man standing. Bucky supported most of Steve’s weight while Tony held the designated sick bucket. “Cho’s waiting for you guys at a hospital near by I’ve sent you the coordinates.”

“No- no hospitals! You said I was going ho-“

“If your temp had gone down and we could keep fluids in you, you could’ve gone home but I ain’t having you sit in a car for four hours Steve.” Tony said seriously; it was the first time that anyone had heard him use his dad voice to anyone but Peter and while Steve didn’t like it in the slightest, it certainly made him listen. “You couldn’t even remember my name yesterday. You were so out of it- frankly you’re scaring the shit out of me. You’re not meant to get sick, you’re meant to be the only one who doesn’t get sick- now look at you. You’re sweating buckets, you haven’t kept any food and barely any water down- with your metabolism that’s fucking dangerous. I’m not having it. I’m not having you die on me just because you wanna be all polite and not ‘make a fuss’. Stop being such an old man. You’re gonna go to the hospital, they’re gonna fix you up and if you try and put up I fight I’ll have Peter put you in a choke hold until you pass out- then you can spend the little drive unconscious, understood?”

“You’re not nice.” Steve sniffed once Tony was finished with this little rant.

“Yeah? And you’re annoying. Extra annoying when you’re sick apparently.” Tony growled and after he had a brief staring contest with Steve he turned his attention back to Bucky. “You alright to drive him still?”
“Sure thing, I can handle him for forty minutes.”

“I can always send reinforcements.” Tony gestured to Peter who waved shyly. “He’s getting very good at knocking people out without causing visible bruising.”

“Dad I’m not hitting Steve.” Peter said seriously, as though Tony wasn’t joking.

“Aw come on please? Just once- it’ll be my christmas present!”

“I think we’ll be okay, you’re not gonna give me any trouble are you Stevie?” Bucky laughed and pinched Steve’s cheek. Even in his weakened state the blond frowned and slapped his hand away.

“Don’t call me that.”

Bucky just chuckled and started walking Steve out to the car. “Not in front of the guys huh? Sorry love. Come on, let’s get you in the truck. I’ll keep you updated, T. And don’t worry, if i do hafta smack him I’ll send you a video.”

Tony nodded and after watching them leave safely, staying outside until they’d left the driveway and drove far enough into the night where he couldn’t see them anymore. Once he went back inside sat down on the couch beside Peter, before he realised how early it was. “And what are you doing up, kid? You’re supposed to be in bed.”

“Couldn’t sleep.” Peter shrugged and looked away.

Tony was instantly suspicious. For someone who couldn’t sleep Peter had seemed to be perfectly fine snoozing on the carpet not a few hours before. “Everything okay?”

“Yes.” Peter said with finality giving Tony a pointed look that told him not to start with the babying. Tony surprisingly actually backed off; mostly because he was distracted by an alert popping up on his phone.

“Damn. I forgot to organise a spot car- Nat could you-“
“Where are the keys?” She sighed and held her hand out expectantly. Tony just nodded a thank you to her and she took off in one of their cars to escort Bucky and Steve to the hospital.

The rest of the early hours of the morning were spent by Tony and Peter clearing things away and getting ready for their departure whilst they waited for the rest of the household to wake up. Eventually they were just waiting on Clint and they heard the telltale sign that he was awake at around seven thirty.

“Ow- Shit biscuits!” They heard him cry out accompanied by a loud crash.

“Forget about your ankle?” Thor smirked when Clint appeared in the doorway of his room.

“Forget bout your ankle? Fuck you.” Clint mocked as he hobbled into the bathroom. He came out a few minutes later, his limping having improved, but slightly. “Where’s Nat?”

“I’m not sure, she should have been back already.” Tony hummed. He pulled out his phone to check her location and frowned. “She’s stopped over on the interstate.”

Tony tried to call her but she sent him straight to voicemail and sent him a text saying she’d be back soon, she just got held up. Though it struck him as odd Tony shrugged it off and informed the rest of the group that he’d pulled some strings, allowing them to leave earlier than originally planned. It had taken their higher ups some convincing since they weren’t cleared to change location until after midday but after all the fuckery that had occurred over the last twenty four hours Tony had managed to convince them that an early start home would probably be a good idea.

So the plan was as soon as Nat got back they’d pile the remaining stuff into the other car and set off home. Only as soon as she got back she came through the back door and immediately started addressing Tony directly, in an unnervingly calm voice.

“What the fuck took you so long? I’ve been calling you- I thought we’d lost another team member.” He said somewhat jokingly but that soon changed when he saw the frantic look Nat had in her eyes.

“Okay. Tony. I need you to stay calm alright?” She had her hands up in a truce position and everything about what she had said and the way she was acting immediately set Tony on edge.
“What happened?” He growled and stood up, walking over to the door that she was currently blocking.

“That’s not staying calm.” She smiled a nervous grin and side stepped to stop Tony walking around her.

“Natasha-“

“Don’t full name me, ew god, okay- I got into a bit of an accident.”

“Are you okay?” The men in the room all said in tandem, looking the woman up and down.

“I’m fine, I hit a deer-“

“Is the deer okay?!” Peter cried before he could stop himself and everyone took a second to shoot him a dry look before looking back to Nat.

“The deer was fine, P, he ran off but..the car isn’t.”

“Oh for fuck- what did you do?! ” Tony had quickly stopped being concerned and was back to being mad. He pushed past Nat and went outside and all the rest of them heard was him yell; “Oh Jesus fucking Christ!”

Everyone else soon filed out there only to see the absolute wreck of a vehicle. The front bumper was gone completely, and the fender to the right side was caved in. As well as the headlights being smashed, the hood was slightly popped open because of the crushed exterior, and plumes of smoke were emanating from underneath it. Oh, and the windshield was smashed. Yeah that.

“Nat how did you even drive this thing back?! ” Clint asked in disbelief, quickly limping over to where Tony was standing just staring at the totalled 2016 Jeep Compass like it was a friends open casket.
“With great difficulty.” She shrugged.

“Well you’re an idiot! That was so dangerous you could’ve been hurt and- my car!” Tony’s emotions were bouncing all over the place but it ended with him screaming and pointing at the dead vehicle. It was very dramatic, even by Tony standards.

Peter didn’t know much about cars, but he didn’t need to, to know that the truck was a bust. From the smell of the smoke alone he could tell that the thing was a lost cause. Tony popped the hood anyway while everyone else just kind of stood around and awkwardly watched as he lost his shit.

Clint was the only one brave enough to actually approach him while he muttered angrily to himself. “Well can you fix it?”

“No Clint I can’t.” Tony barked. “Even if I could the fucking windshield is smashed! In layman’s terms it’s fucked.”

But Clint wasn't phased by Tony yelling at him, it was pretty much a daily occurrence so he’d become accustomed to it pretty early on. “Let me take a look-“

“I’m a fucking world class engineer- I’ve made shit you couldn’t even fathom- I discovered a new fucking element! Do you really think if it could be fixed that you’d have a better chance of fixing it than me?!”

“Well it wouldn’t hurt to have a second opinion.” The archer shrugged remaining completely calm.

“No but it will hurt when I stick what’s left of the bumper up your- you know what? Fine. Go right ahead.” With that Tony stormed off muttering to himself about having to call Nick again.

After an hour or so, Tony having made several phone calls and the rest of the adults having to stop Peter from scavenging for parts from the (possibly explosive) wrecked car, they came to the conclusion that they’d have to find another means of transportation. Tony’s car was only a five seater, and with six of them left as well as six peoples worth of camping and survival gear there was no way they’d be able to drive four hours home.

“Can’t S.H.I.E.L.D send someone with another car?”
“No because no one is meant to know where we are dipshit, it was hard enough to get them to authorise Bucky picking Steve up- they only gave in because I said they’d be liable for any more damage he caused.” Tony shook his head. “I just wasted my breath asking for permission to leave early because looks like we’re fucking stuck.”

“Look, find a rental place, two of us will leave pick up another car then come back for the rest.” Bruce suggested.

“Nice plan Bruce but we’ve all gotta he out of here by eleven. That’s when the lenders are getting back.”

“Seriously?”

“Well it’s not my fault Nat crashed the fucking car!”

“It’s not her fault either!”

“I didn’t say it was!”

“Well it sounded like it!”

“Oh piss off playing the protective boyfriend she doesn’t need you standing up for her.” Tony rolled his eyes and Nat just shrugged. It wasn’t exactly an untrue statement. “We don’t have a choice. Just..just try and get most of the shit in the car then we’ll figure out the rest okay?”

“Tony we’re not all gonna fit in there..”

“I know. But we don’t have another option.”

Thor raised his hand as though he was asking for permission to speak. “I can fly back?”
“No you can’t you have a warrant out if you’re caught flying over state lines without a permit again.” Nat informed him. “We got the call when you guys were off fucking around in the woods.”

“Well that’s bullshit!”

“You shouldn’t have abused your flying privileges just because you wanted to go home—“

“I didn’t want to I had to!”

While Nat and Thor started bickering, Tony attempted to figure out another plan with Nick on the phone and that was going just as well.

“Yes I know Nick- well can’t you just- they’re pensioners! Just tell them to come back later!- Fine- Fine Okay- I said FINE!” Tony screamed down the phone and promptly hung up, shoving his phone back in his pocket. “Ugh! First they get on my ass about us leaving early now they’re mad because we’re leaving late?! Fucking- argh- god damn pencil pushing sons of-“

“Will you stop cursing.” Bruce sighed.

“Oh don’t turn into Steve-“

“I’m not it’s just everyone’s yelling and I can’t think with all this-“

“Peter stop touching the car!” Clint yelled as he saw Peter start to creep towards it again, thinking he was shielded by all the commotion going on.

“I wasn’t!”

“Liar! I saw you, you little gremlin!”

“Well I’m sorry Natasha but I had more important things to do than camping-“
“Oh yeah like what?! What’s so important that you couldn’t-”

“Bruce try and touch my leg one more time I swear to fucking god see what happens-“

All the screaming combined with the stress of the situation- anyone would have thought Bruce would have been the one to snap, maybe even grant them a visit from his big green other personality, but it was Tony who lost it.

“Guys.”

Tony tried to talk. He tried to get them to listen to him. Three times. He was polite at first but no one, not even Peter, took any notice of him. After he’d spent the last day and a half taking care of everyone and trying to figure things out after the complete *clusterfuck* of a weekend- Tony felt he’d earned a little more respect than he was currently being given.

“Guys if you don’t shut up I’m-“

“Well you are ginger!”

“I’m not fucking ginger you big bearded blond fuck I’m *aurburn!*”

“FINGERS ON LIPS!” Everyone quietened down but Peter and Thor took Tony literally and actually held a finger over their mouths like a couple of kindergarteners.

“Right! Thank you! Now there’s not enough room for everyone. We’ve established that but we need to leave in the next hour unless we want to give two old people a heart attack when they realised they rented out their cabin to the Avengers-“

“Hey if they had heart attacks we could take their car-“ Nat started.

“*I said fingers on lips .” Tony hissed, giving one of his scary faces- one of his *really* scary faces; Peter decided to hide behind Thor when he made it. “The next person to speak is walking home, I swear to fucking god.”
Peter popped his head out from behind Thor and he’d barely drawn a breath before Tony snapped on him.

“Peter that goes for you too!” The teenager pouted because he wasn’t used to Tony yelling at him as of late but Iron Dad was not in the mood. “There isn’t enough room for everyone so one of you are gonna have to sit in the back with the bags and someone else will have to sit on someone’s lap.”

Of course, logically so, everyone turned to Peter. He didn’t realise at first but the second he made the connection between their looks and Tony’s suggestion he shook his head and laughed. “No way.”

“It’s just until we can get to a better dealership-“

“No! I’ll go in the back with the bags I’m the smallest it makes sense-“

“No you won’t it’s not safe.”

“I can web myself a seat belt!”

“If we get pulled over by the cops and there’s you in the trunk we’ll get charged with endangering a minor. Oh and even better they’ll find out that minor has freaky super powers! And he’s travelling with the fucking Avengers so bye bye to your secret identity and that’ll be great publicity for us wont it?” Tony’s voice was just dripping with sarcasm and had Peter not been so scared of his dad when he was in that kind of a mood he would have flipped him off. “Huh? Oh you don’t have anything to say now?”

“Don’t get nasty with me!” Peter pouted and folded his arms over his chest. He knew the situation was stressful but he hated when Tony goaded him like that. It was way too Flash-like.

“Then answer me. Do you want to fill out the paperwork on that?”

“No.”
“Do you want the cops to take you away?”

“No.”

“The shut up and pick someone.”

“What?! Can’t you come sit back here-“

“No because I’m driving and that’s awkward. I ain’t doing that.” Tony shrugged. “Pick someone else.”

“So you’ll share food with me but you won’t-“

“Stop talking because I am this close to flying myself home.”

“Why don’t you?” Clint rolled his eyes. Tony wasn’t the one on a flight ban and it would certainly leave more space in the car.

“Because I have the keys Barton.” That made sense, it’s not like he could give them to any of the other adults who have licenses. Well he could but they all knew he wouldn’t. Not only because Tony was very precious when it came to his car and had a very short list of who he would let drive him places; Nat had already crashed one vehicle, Clint had a bad ankle, Thor was- well Thor and Bruce had a tendency to be susceptible to road rage. And Peter couldn’t drive. So it looked like they were stuck with a very angry Tony driving, which made it very awkward when it came to placing Peter.

“Can’t Nat sit on Bruce’s lap?”

“Now that’s inappropriate.” Bruce chuckled.

“Why? You share a bed.” Peter said innocently.

“Exactly. And besides, Bruce is going in the trunk.” Tony smirked slightly from his spot in the
The smile dropped from Bruce’s face real quick. “I didn’t sign up for that.”

“You’re the second smallest.” Nat smirked instead of jumping to her boyfriend’s defence.

“Nat please? Just you do it- I don’t wanna.” Peter whined.

“Nope for once I’m gonna side with Tony- I ain’t moving.”

“Fine. Thor then.” Peter huffed.

“You can’t Thor is in the front.” Tony said automatically and they were not about to have the legroom argument again because Tony would fly home and abandon them all there. He was this close to doing it.

“So?!”

“Did you not hear my speech about no one seeing you? Clint or Nat they’re your options.”

“M’not doing it.” Peter said adamantly, stomping one foot and crossing his arms back over his chest to signify his refusal to move. Tony took a deep breath before he spoke again because he really didn’t want to yell again, for the sake of his own head and he didn’t want to lose his shit at Peter directly.

“I’m not starting this car until everyone is buckled in.” He said somewhat calmly, before he caught Bruce’s eye in the rear view mirror. “Besides you Bruce.”

“Ugh, just come here.” Clint pulled Peter in to his lap and buckled them in. Despite the bags crammed part way into the middle seat Clint managed to squeeze himself into the space, so Peter was only half sitting on his lap and had most of the seat to himself.

“...Is this the part where I tell you what I want for Christmas?”
“I swear to god kid I am going to strangle you-“

“I’m going to strangle everyone in this fucking car if I don’t get some quiet.” Tony barked and slammed his fist onto the dashboard with such force everyone braced themselves for the airbag to go off. Fortunately it didn’t.

“...Don’t make him turn this car around.” Nat muttered out of the side of her mouth and everyone started giggling.

“Right! That’s it. Fuck all of y’all. I’m done. I’m fucking done. You guys can get yourselves home.” Tony got out of the car and slammed the door shut and the second it was closed everyone dissolved into giggles.

He only came back after ten minutes of Bruce convincing him (and the fact that the couple they were renting off of was going to be there any minute and they had to leave) but only on the condition that no one was allowed to talk.

“One hour. It’ll take one hour to get to the rendezvous point where we can split off into two, separate, more spacious cars, where everyone can have their own seat. One. Hour. I don’t want to hear a word.”

“Dad…”

Tony let out a muffled scream before he looked back at Peter and used his best polite business voice accompanied by a sickly sweet smile. “Peter I’m going to send you to live with the Leeds if this isn’t really, really important. Do you understand?”

“It..it is kind of important..”

“What is it?” Tony asked more seriously but he didn’t need a verbal answer; as soon as he turned and clocked eyes on his son, Peter’s expression and shifty eye movements were enough for him to figure out what was so important. He chuckled him the keys and sighed. “Go on. But be quick.”

Peter did as he was told hopping out of the car (literally when he got his foot caught on the seat
belt and had to barrel roll) and ran back into the cabin.

“Does anyone else need to pee?” Tony sighed and looked around the car. Everyone shook their heads. “Are we sure?”

Bruce and Clint looked at each other to see whether the other was brave enough to admit it or not; after a second they both nodded at each other for support before nodding to Tony.

“Oh my god- we’ll go on then! Jesus Christ. I’m. Becoming. A fucking. Soccer mom.” Tony muttered under his breath as he repeatedly smacked his head on the steering wheel. “And I’m going. To kill. My kids.”

“Oh Tony not again- Stop!” Nat grumbled and yanked Tony back upright before he gave himself a concussion.

Once everyone was back in their seats- and their coworkers lap in Peter’s case, god he was never going to live this down- Tony started up the engine. “Right! Now that everyone has emptied their bladders there’s no need to talk for the next hour. Let’s go.”

Peter tried to adhere to that rule. He really, really did but half an hour in, they drove past something that caught his eye. A whole field of somethings. As much as he tried to hold it back he couldn’t- he had to say it or he was going to explode. The car was so deathly silent and the atmosphere was so heavily tense but he couldn’t bite his tongue. He couldn’t hold it in anymore.

“Cows!”

“What?” Bruce jumped when the boy screamed and ended up smacking his head on the roof. Nat immediately started laughing at him whilst rubbing the now sore spot on his head. Now that’s a loving girlfriend.

“Are you trying to make me crash this car? Because quite honestly it’s tempting!” Tony yelled back.

“Sorry!” Peter covered his mouth with his hands. Not only had he not meant to say it but he also didn’t mean for it to come out quite as loud as it did.
“What’re you screaming for?!”

“I- I saw cows..” Peter said quietly. He would’ve thought that was obvious.

“And you felt the need to announce that why exactly?”

Surprisingly Clint was the one who came to Peters defence on that one. “Well duh, kids can’t drive past cows without screaming about it. Don’t you know anything about children?”

“It’s kind of a rule- Hey it’s not because I’m a kid- and I’m not a kid!” Peter cried indignantly.

“You’re right, I’m sorry Peter, you’re a young man I ought to have learned that by now.” Clint said seriously, taking Peter completely off guard.

“Oh. Well thank you. I appreciate that.”

“Especially after this weekend you’ve really shown how mature you really- look more cows!”

“Where?!” The teen eagerly looked out of the window before he realised that he’d been tricked. “Oh you asshole-“

“Lets another game instead of spot the cows. I call it ‘shut the fuck up before daddy crashes the car into a ditch and takes us all out with him’.” Tony said in a very cold, calculated voice that sent a shiver down Peter’s spine because he wasn’t so sure he was kidding anymore.

“...Please don’t call yourself daddy.” Nat said quietly after a moment of silence.

“Yeah like, ever.” Peter nodded his head in agreement.

“Oh look a ditch-“ Tony mumbled before swerving the car to the side and back suddenly, making the whole thing shudder and jolt, sending its passengers (bar Nat who remained completely still
somehow- pretty sure that defies physics but whatever-) bouncing side to side along with it. The road was empty and he was in complete control the entire time, so there was no real danger but it was enough to make the other males in the car scream- none louder than Peter.

“Tony!”

“Odin’s beard!”

“Jesus Christ!”

“DAD!” Peter squealed. “Don’t fucking do that!”

Tony was too busy laughing at the priceless look on all the men’s faces to tell Peter off for swearing. Well at least he’d cheered himself up.

“I’m serious! You almost made me pee my pants!” Peter said more angrily.

The car went silent for a second. “Please don’t tell me you have to pee.”

He didn’t mean to say that, it just slipped out of his mouth- he would never admit in front of a whole car full of people that he had to use the bathroom. “No I was just saying- I mean, well, kinda now you mention it-“

“Tony stop this fucking car right now!” Clint started yelling and attempting to hold Peter away from his lap which only succeeded in garrotting them both with the seatbelt. “Peter if you pee on me I swear to god-“

“I’m not going to!” Peter cried indignantly and elbowed Clint in the ribs to stop him from tugging at the seatbelt.

“You just said you’re about to pee your pants!”

“Only because Tony made me think we were gonna crash! I’m not now!”
That seemed to calm Clint down some as he stopped thrashing around, but he was pulling as far away from Peter as possible. “You better not I’m serious because I won’t hesitate to throw you out of the window.”

“Chill out Clint it’s not like you haven’t been peed on before.” Nat chuckled, having been dying with laughter during the whole exchange.

“What me and Laura get up to in our spare time is none of your concern-“

Now it was Peter’s turn to try and get away. “EW! Dad stop the car- I don’t want to touch him!”

Clint rolled his eyes at Peter’s overreaction, as though he himself hadn’t been doing the exact same thing thirty seconds earlier. “Oh it was a joke -“

“You are a joke.” Peter grimaced at him looking absolutely disgusted.

“Your mom’s a joke.” Clint said automatically before realising what slipped out of his mouth.

“My moms dead.” Peter deadpanned.

“I didn’t say it was a funny joke.”

“Clint!” Everyone in the car yelled with varying tones of dismay and anger. Nat even lent over and punched him way harder than what was necessary.

But Peter didn’t look particularly phased. In fact he had a small smirk on his face that slowly grew wider. “…okay that was kind of funny.”

“See? I wouldn’t have said it if he’d get upset I’m not a monster! Jesus, guys ever heard of dark humour? Shit Nat that really hurt!”
“Good you fucking asshole, I hope it leaves a mark that you have to explain to Laura.” She hissed.

“That was a good one. I’m stealing that.” Peter grinned. Oh how he enjoyed making people uncomfortable after ‘your mama’ jokes- especially at school. That was one of the only things that even Flash dared not joke about. He liked the fact that he had someone to share his morbid sense of humour.

“If I ever hear that come out of your mouth Peter Benjamin you’ll be grounded for a month.” Tony said very seriously. Peter couldn’t see but he was gripping the steering wheel even tighter than he had been when he was screaming at them all to be quiet.

“Why? Who cares? I don’t even remember my parents I was, like, two and I’m pretty sure they don’t care because, you know they’re dead.”

“I care. Because they gave me you. You might not remember them but I sure as hell don’t want to hear anything like that, understood? It’s disrespectful and it’s not funny.”

Peter, once again couldn’t bite his tongue despite the seriousness of the conversation. “...aww! ‘They gave me you’- that was the sweetest warning ever!”

Tony rolled his eyes but he did admittedly feel slightly uncomfortable by his outburst. He hadn’t meant to come across so emotional he just hated when Peter made light of being orphaned- and he needed coffee okay? It had been a long day at it wasn’t even 12:30. “Shut up.”

“That was pretty cute.” Bruce smirked.

Tony gritted his teeth. “I said shut up.”

“Uber cute.” Nat chimed in.

“Cute indeed.” Thor chuckled.

Tony scowled and looked as though he was really going to drive the car off the road any second. “That’s it. I’m not stopping the car, Peter can pee his pants. I’m driving straight home, I don’t care
and the rest of you can clean the seats. Have fun with that Clint.”

“What?!” Clint yelled. “I didn’t even say it was cute, why are you punishing me?!”

“Because you used ‘your mom’ as a comeback and that’s the lamest shit I’ve ever heard.” Tony said dryly.

“It was a set up!”

“Dad I gotta go.” Peter bit his lip looking nervous. He’d never thought his dad would have actually used not stopping for him to use the bathroom as a punishment before and he prayed that he was joking. Then again they had pushed him a lot that morning...maybe he’d finally lost it.

Tony saw the anxiety on Peter’s face and immediately felt a stab of guilt. He shouldn’t have said that- shit. “I was only kidding Pete, just hold on.”

“Please hold on.” Clint begged.

“I’m not going to piss myself! I’m not five!” Peter snapped but he felt everyone’s eyes on him what he had just said. “Shut up!”

“No one said anything-“

“I said shut up!”

“We’re almost to the rental place anyway, can you wait?” Tony asked seriously, ignoring the previous tension in the car.

“Yes!”

But Clint wasn’t fully convinced. He could feel the kid shifting around periodically and it was definitely getting progressively more desperate. He dropped his tone back down to a more gentle one, knowing the boy had gotten his back up over the comments they’d been making. “Okay kid,
all jokes aside you don’t have to say that so we won’t tease you—

“Then maybe you shoulda thought about that before you teased me.” Peter mumbled, trying to seem stoic and unbothered but internally he was cringing and trying not to cry. Not only had he embarrassed himself by admitting he had to go Tony picked now of all times to be a dick about it. He understood that the man was upset but that’s the one thing—*the one thing* Tony knew he got super upset over. After everything that’s happened he says that. Peter didn’t care if it was only a joke, it hurt.

“Can you actually wait or are you trying to prove a point?”

“You only care because I’m sitting on you.” Peter sniffed and looked out of the window, refusing to make eye contact with anyone. He just wanted to be at home and he wished that Steve had been with them. He would’ve kept everyone calm and he would’ve yelled at Tony for saying what he did.

“Mostly yeah, but I also don’t wanna see any tears this weekend.”

“We’ve seen every other bodily fluid why not tick that off the list, get the full set.” Nat smirked and Clint shot her a glare.

That was when Thor popped up. “You cried when you hurt your ankle, though?”

“Piss off Thor no I did not.”

“You did a little.”

“No I fucking didn’t!”

“Oo getting defensive are we? Were they itty bitty baby tears for the little man—”

“Guys .” Tony growled, the level of anger he’d been displaying earlier starting to creep into his voice again and everyone promptly shut their mouths. “Peter answer the question.”
But Peter didn’t answer. He didn’t even glance in Tony’s direction. “Don’t ignore me.”

“Why not? You told me to pee my pants so don’t act like you care now.” Peter spat with such ferocity that everyone flinched.

“I didn’t mean it.” Tony sighed knowing the boy was getting irritable because he had to go which was a sure sign it was getting bad and he didn’t want to add to it by getting angry to match. “If you need me to stop sooner I can-“

“I already said no, quit asking me.” Peter snapped.

So Tony did. In fact everyone stopped asking. Or talking at all.

“Welp. There’s that silence you ordered Tony.” Nat said after a few minutes.

Everyone, bar Peter responded; “Shut up, Nat.”

Not twenty minutes later they made it to the dealership in one piece, by some miracle. Peter immediately ran out and no one bothered to ask after him to see where he was going as that would only slow the boy down, it was a close enough call as it was. Thor just followed him across the street to the small gas station so that he wasn’t left unsupervised while everyone else set about renting and switching cars.

Tony almost expected something else to go wrong, for the dealership to be closed or for them to get ambushed (be that by enemies or paparazzi- after all it’s not every day that the avengers turn up stuffed into one truck and all climb out like some kind of clown car) but he was pleasantly surprised. He managed to get a rental car for the others and get their things situated between the two vehicles in the time it took for Peter to use the gas station bathroom and Thor to eat four slices questionable looking 7-11 pizza. So no time at all.

Tony waited for Peter in his car while Nat, Bruce and Clint waited in the other for Thor to join them. However, when the pair were walking back Tony didn’t fail to notice how Peter hesitated before approaching his car. It looked as though Thor had to convince him as the god nudged him in the right direction before getting into his own designated vehicle.
For a second it looked like Peter was going to get in the back of the car, which concerned Tony even more. But it turned out he was just putting his bag back there. Still, Peter lingered for a moment longer than necessary before sighing and getting into the passenger seat.

He buckled himself in wordlessly and immediately positioned himself so he was looking out of the window. Ah shit.

Tony took a deep breath to prepare himself for the attitude he was about to receive- well deserved attitude but attitude nonetheless. “You alright?”

“Don’t talk to me.”

“Peter-“

“Don’t.”

“I didn’t mean it.”

“Then you shouldn’t have said it.” Peter snapped, raising his voice.

“I’m sorry, P.”

“Good.”

Man, if even a rare Tony Stark apology didn’t work Peter must’ve been pissed. “Wanna put some music on?”

“No.” Peter said shortly and for the first time he twisted in his seat to give Tony a glare. “You caused this awkward silence you deal with it.”

“Peter come on.” Tony sighed but yet again he was met with zero response even when he put a hand on the boys leg. “Pete. Petey, I’m sorry. I mean it. You’re right I shouldn’t have taken it out on you because I was mad. And I should never, ever have made light of you saying you needed to
go to the bathroom. I know how uncomfortable you were with everyone knowing and I shouldn’t. I just shouldn’t have said it. I’m so sorry bubs, I promise it won’t happen again.”

As much as Peter wanted to keep sulking, he could hear the remorse in Tony’s voice. He had known the whole time that he didn’t mean it when he said he wasn’t going to stop, and it had been a more than stressful weekend. Maybe Peter would let Tony have this one, just this once.

“Fine. You’re forgiven.” Peter sighed and adjusted his posture to where he was sitting facing forward. “But I want McDonald’s.”

“Okay I’ll get you food.” Tony chuckled. ‘If all it takes is food to placate him he’s really gonna get along with Pepper even better than I thought.’

After a while Peter stopped being cranky and started chattering with Tony like he usually would. Though about half way into their journey Tony did notice the boy quiet down again, but this time he was seemingly more distracted by his phone. At least he was back to his usual self.

“P stop looking at your phone. I know you’re a teenager and you’re probably having withdrawals after a whole weekend without it but I don’t want you to get sick.”

Peter heard him, but didn’t respond immediately. Instead, he kept his eyes glued to the screen with his brows furrowed. “Hey dad?”

“What?”

“You know how you do super invasive background checks on everyone I’m in contact with?”

“Yup, what about ‘em?” Tony asked simply. It wasn’t an unfair summary and he wasn’t about to deny it.

“Have you looked into MJ’s dad?”

That question caught Tony a little off guard. “Of course, but why are you asking me?”
“Well, it’s just she never really talks about him and he’s away a lot - she hates being home by herself and, I don’t know I guess I was just wondering.” Peter trailed off and began gnawing at his thumbnail, a nervous habit Tony had noticed very early on in their relationship. He started to feel a little uneasy himself at Peter’s sudden shift in demeanour.

“Then why don’t you ask her? A little hypocritical asking me when you hound me about being a stalker don’t you think?”

“I don’t know.” The teen mumbled quietly.

“He’s a police officer. A detective from what I could gather.” Tony said after a moment.

“From what you could gather?” Peter asked confusedly. “But you can find out anything?”

“He’s pretty high up in the police force there’s not much on him. A clean record- probably so they can keep him and his family safe and use him for bigger things. Takes a lot to get that high up in New York, but I could find more if I needed to. You worried about something?”

“No.” Peter shook his head. “No. I just don’t like the thought of her being alone all the time, you know? Not when it scares her.”

“She can always come stay with us if she’s frightened.”

“Seriously?” Peter was shocked that the man would even suggest such a thing, considering he was the same man who hadn’t let Ned set foot in the lobby until he got black out drunk. Ned for goodness sakes. He was the least threatening human in the world.

“Well it’s not like I’d have you two sleeping in the same room. Sex segregation only.”

“Ew, that wouldn’t be an issue anyway.” Peter grimaced, though his face started turning pink. “I’ve told you I have no interest in that stuff.”
Peter was of course referring to the many conversations they’d had regarding the subject. Tony never had the official ‘talk’ with Peter of course, but they subject had come up a few times and Peter had confided that he had never needed to test Tony’s adult restrictions on adult sites; the parental locks had remained completely untouched other than that one time Peter was looking up high grade explosive. “I know kid, I’m just saying it would be more appropriate that way. And god knows Steve would impplode if he found out a girl had been anywhere near your bedroom.”

“Ew- she’s not allowed in my room anyway, she might touch my things.” Peter pouted slightly.

“That’s the point of the separate sleeping situation.”

“Dad-“

“I was just kidding! But you know Steve can be a little old fashioned in his thinking sometimes. I’m not worried about that but he’s still convinced that teenage girls and boys can’t have platonic friendships. I don’t think he’d get it if you said that you didn’t care about sex.”

“You’ll find the right girl or guy and that’ll fix it.’ Yeah, I know the speech.” Peter grumbled. Ever since he’d toyed with the idea of possibly labelling himself asexual that was always the first reaction he was met with- even from May. Tony had been the only one not to scoff at him when he used the term.

“Hey you never know, you’re still young you might-“

“Ugh! After everything we’ve talked about?!” Peter yelled with a look of betrayal crossing his face.

“Peter I’m just saying . I’m not trying to undermine anything or patronise you I just don’t want you to get stuck thinking one way because you think you have to. Nothing is set in stone yet and you know what? Labels don’t mean a thing anyway. You do what you’re comfortable with when you’re comfortable with it. It doesn’t matter either way okay? You know that.” Tony said quickly before Peter got the wrong end of the stick.

“Right..” Peter mumbled feeling uncomfortable. He really didn’t want to have this conversation- especially when they were just talking about the possibility of MJ staying over. Having his female best friend associated with the conversation was making it even more uncomfortable. Yeah time for this conversation to end. “And Steve’s getting on board with a lot of stuff.”
“He is, he’s doing good but he’s still struggling to accept himself so adding another thing to understand might be a little much for him.” Tony shrugged before quickly continuing when he realised that Peter wasn’t aware of the whole Bucky thing yet- oops, moving on. “But like you said, it won’t be an issue anyway because MJ isn’t allowed in your room in case she touches your dolls-“

“Action figures. Collectable action figures!”

“Right, right, collectable. God you nearly snapped my neck when I picked up the limited edition iron man figurine-“

“Limited edition! Do you know how many of those were even made?!” He couldn’t believe a man of such education had such little respect for the rare items in his mini Avengers museum.

“You have the real Iron Man! As your freaking dad no less! Do you know how many of me were made?!“

“Sometimes I think one too many- you don’t have a twin do you? Please don’t tell me you have a brother- or a sister dear god!”

“That’s it, you’re definitely not getting a little sibling now.”

Peter’s eyes lit up. “You mean it was on the table before?!“

“No! It wasn’t I’m just saying it- ah fuck.”

Peter then ranted on about baby names for the next half hour and Tony was seriously considering ejecting the boy forcefully from the car; who would have expected a teenage boy to have such baby fever. Not long later though Peter began to fall asleep and Tony had never been more grateful for the boys routine having to include naps.

He didn’t even bother to wake Peter up when they got home, he just carried the boy upstairs. God he’d never been so happy to be home (okay maybe that was a slight exaggeration but still) and he’d be even happier once Steve had recovered from his confirmed to be ear infection (thanks to Cho he
was already feeling a lot better), so he could rub the failure of a weekend in his face. Oh the words ‘I told you so’ would never taste so sweet.
“Are you sure you’re gonna be okay?”

“Dad for the millionth time- yes . I’m fine, now get going you big dork-“

“You said you’d be fine last time and then-“ Tony was about to reference the compound incident but Peter cut him off.

“Uh uh, don’t go there. Excuses, excuses. Thor’s here and I’m gonna spend the weekends with Ned, I’m gonna be fine. To be honest I can’t wait for you to get out of my face for five minutes.” Peter huffed a laugh through his nose but Tony pouted slightly.

“Wow. Ouch.”

“Shut up, you know what I mean. Once we get this over with your separation anxiety won’t be so bad and we’ll both be able to chill- now go.” They both knew the first overnight or otherwise extended trip apart was going to be difficult. Even with Peter back out patrolling Tony had still refused to leave the boy alone for a single night, something he’d always been strongly against anyway. He’d never liked leaving him for long periods of time but this would be their first mission without him since the shooting and the man was understandably worse than usual. They were scheduled to be away for two weeks. Two whole weeks and Tony was seriously struggling to say goodbye.

Of course Peter was secretly just as upset as he was, but he knew he couldn’t let that on to his dad. It wasn’t fair, there was nothing he could do to avoid the trip so he’d just make Tony feel worse unnecessarily. It wasn’t like Peter crying and bitching would help in anyway; it would only give Tony another reason to worry about him and god knows if he did any more of that he’d make himself sick. Whatever the mission was (he wasn’t allowed to know) it was apparently really important, so he knew that Tony couldn’t miss it no matter how much either of them wanted him to stay.

So Peter put on a brave smile and hugged his dad tight one last time, being sure to not make it too long. If he hugged him for too long he knew his dad would suss out just how upset he really was.
Two weeks was a long time after all..but he’d be fine. Like he said Thor had offered to stay behind to be with him so that would be fun. He knew the god would basically let him do what he wanted but he wouldn’t be alone at night so that was good.

But Thor had been acting a little...strange lately. Stranger than usual and that was saying something. There had been a couple more instances where they were in the middle of something as a group and Thor suddenly took off (usually at the most inopportune times) without explanation. He also tended to spend the majority of his time hauled up in his room and whilst that in itself wasn’t odd, (he did have the mindset of a teenager most of the time after all) anytime Peter went to his room to fetch him Thor would be sitting in total silence.

There was never any TV or music blaring or anything, nothing like the usual sounds that would often eminante from his room- especially at ungodly hours of the night; Peter couldn’t count the amount of times their other housemates had to bash on his door or the walls to tell him to shut the hell up. But in recent weeks, nothing. No noise day or night and whilst everyone else seemed to be happy about that it concerned Peter greatly. Even more so when he opened Thor’s bedroom door and he would just be sitting or standing, looking as though he’d been doing so in complete silence and often staring at the floor or a far wall. Like some kind of statue. As soon as he saw Peter he’d always smile brightly and greet him, but it was like someone pressing an on button and Peter could just..sense something was off about him. He wasn’t as lively as usual and frankly Peter was more than worried.

Still the god had seemed more than excited when Tony had asked if someone would stay behind with Peter and he’d jumped on the chance; he claimed that he was just excited to spend some quality time with the boy after Tony had spent a majority of the beginning of the summer stealing his playmate and keeping him hauled up working in the lab- but even that struck Peter as odd. Thor usually would never opt out of missions he enjoyed the chaos (however controlled it may be) and carnage that came along with fights- he often said it was one of the only times he truly felt free. But he’d just given up the opportunity to spend two weeks doing one of his favourite things to babysit Peter instead?

The teen had voiced his concerns, repeatedly but they fell on mostly deaf ears other than Nat, surprisingly. She had seemed to cotton on to the fact that Thor had been acting extra weird for some time but she had come to the conclusion that it was due to the upcoming anniversary of his mother’s death.

“He got in a similar way then.” She said, somewhat sadly. “It wasn’t so bad last year but the year before that he wouldn’t come out of his room. Bruce had been the only one he would talk to and even then it was only a couple of words. He didn’t eat, sleep, shower, anything. Typical depression symptoms.”

“What happened? You know, like to make him feel better.”
“Nothing in particular. Just a little time and understanding.” Nat sighed looking sad for a moment. She quickly regained her composure however and bumped shoulders with the boy sat beside her. “I’m sure a fortnight with his best friend will help him feel a little better though don’t you?”

“I hope so..”

So now there they were, standing outside of the compound upstate, on the runway by the quinjet, waiting for Tony to finish giving Thor an earful so the rest of the team could leave. “No soda, that’s my rule- no caffeine at all. You can give him all the sugar you want, I don’t give a shit, you’re the one who has to deal with his hyperness- that’s Steve’s rule not mine- but if I come back and his kidneys are even more damaged I’ll have your head. And none of those stories from that old book, that monster one. He didn’t sleep for a week after you read him that story about the green goblin-“

“Daaaad!”

“Hush Peter- and his meds. Don’t let him forget to take them, alright? You know how he forgets and good god do not let him patrol on his own. And you make sure either you or Hap pick him up and drop him off anywhere. Okay?”

“Understood Anthony. I agree to your terms as I already have..several times..” Thor nodded his head, trying to keep his tone as light and friendly as he reassured Tony that he’d take care of their youngest. He’d already done so at least eighty times but he couldn’t blame Tony for being overprotective. As annoying as it was.

“Yeah well I’m tryna make sure it sticks in that thick skull of yours this time.” Tony grumbled and looked back at his son, this time looking slightly frantic. “I can find a way to stay back Pete, I can fake another heart attack, it’s real easy look-“

“Dad , no. Come on we’ve talked about this.” Peter laughed and pushed the man slightly to encourage him to start walking towards the jet. The others had already finished loading their stuff and only Clint was waiting at the stairs for him now. “I love you, and I’ll FaceTime you everyday so you know I’m not dead and visa versa. Now go , ‘cause you’re just making it worse.”

“Okay okay, god.” Tony took a mere two steps away before he turned back and wrapped Peter in another hug, this time around his neck and Peter was forced up onto his tippy toes due to the height difference. “I love you.”
“Is that why you’re crushing me?” Peter croaked out in a strangled voice.

“Yes.” Tony muttered only squeezing the boy tighter to prove his point.

“Well okay then so long as we’re clear.” Peter chuckled. Being that up close and personal he could hear Tony’s heart beating a mile a minute and his arc whirring to compensate, as well as his breathing becoming short, shallow and shaky. It was obvious the man was working his way into a panic and Peter knew he had to break off the hug before Tony fully convinced himself that he couldn’t leave. That and he was slowly starting to feel the early signs of oxygen deprivation thanks to the chokehold of a hug that he was currently in. “Dad..Dad I’m starting to see stars.”

“Sorry.” Tony quickly let go but he kept his hands on Peter’s shoulders for just a second longer before he clapped them down twice and let go. If Peter didn’t know better he would’ve thought Tony was a little misty eyed. “Okay. Well. Bye then.”

“Buhbye.”

“See you in two weeks.” Tony said, sounding a little more like his usual self as he managed to force himself to turn around and walk away.

“Uh huh. I’ll be right here.” Peter called cheerily, making sure to sound as confident as possible.

For a step it looked like Tony was actually going to walk away but he came to a halt just a few feet away from the stairs to the jet. “Maybe I can just-“

“Right that’s it- come on for Christ sakes man-“ Clint snapped, having lost his patience and descended the stairs to retrieve his friend; which he did by grabbing Tony by his wrist and dragging him the rest of the way.

“I was just gonna day I-“

“Can it, we’re gonna be late. See ya later kiddo.” Clint called back, altering his angry tone as he said goodbye to Peter.
“Bye Clint.” Peter grinned as he watched Tony wrestling the archer for a moment to get him off of him.

“Bye!” Tony yelled back.

“Bye! I love you!”

“I love you more!”

“Why’s it always gotta be a competition?!”

“Because! I like quantitative data!”

“You’re putting a number on it?!”

“Yep! Six hundred percent!” Tony was halfway up the stairs now and he wasn’t making it any easier for Clint to drag him because he refused to pick his feet up.

“Well, I love you three thousand!” Peter grinned at the small smile Tony graced him with as he was pushed past the entryway to the jet and the sliding doors shut behind him. At least he’d got his dad to smile, hopefully he could keep that picture in his head for the next fortnight.

“Farewell all!” Thor called. The remaining two Avengers waved as the jet took off and eventually faded into the distance. They waited a while, just looking at the patch of sky they’d disappeared into and Thor wrapped an arm around his younger charge. “You alright little one?”

“Uh huh.” Peter sighed, trying his best to put on a brave face but Thor saw right through it.

“You don’t have to lie to me. Your father is gone so you don’t have to spare him anymore.” The blond gave him a knowing look as he started to lead him back towards the building, and to the car where Happy was waiting to drive them home.
“I’m okay I just...gonna be a long two weeks.” Peter relented and let his face fall.

“And that’s why it’s my job to fill it with shenanigans, Hm?” Thor jostled him slightly, trying to get the boy enthused at their prospects for the weeks ahead. “Why don’t we kick it off by playing all of those Zelda games you’ve been telling me so much about and getting pizza?”

“Really?” Peter asked hopefully. The goody two shoes side of him was like ‘oh my god it’ll be almost bedtime by the time we get home’ but he couldn’t help smiling at the idea.

“Why of course, first night with your father away it’s the perfect opportunity to break some of his golden rules don’t you think?”

Last time he broke his dad’s rules he ended up peeing himself in front of Steve but hey, Steve wasn’t there right now and neither was Tony and a gaming binge with junk food sounded just like what Peter needed to get over his dad not being there to say goodnight. Besides- it was summer vacation and he’d just been signed off of lab duty for two weeks. Other than patrol he had no other work commitments- so why not?

So that’s just what the pair did.

Peter still ended up falling asleep fairly early all things considered. Even after three hours on the N64 an exorbitant amount of pizza he was still in bed before eleven o’clock. The teen passed out on the couch but like the responsible childminder he was, Thor put him into his own bed, made sure his bathroom light was on and the door was open so he wouldn’t get scared in the night. The god also left his own bedroom door open (something he hadn’t done in months) so he could keep an ear out and asked JARVIS to wake him should the boy need anything. All in all he was being a very responsible big brother.

Tony called to say goodnight not long after the teen went to bed; he had figured Peter would stay up late with the god anyway so he was surprised when Thor answered the phone instead to tell him that, no in fact he was already asleep. Tony commended him on actually being responsible though he was a little saddened by it at the same time.

“You sure he’s actually asleep? He usually can’t fall asleep without saying goodnight.” Tony asked, knowing full well he sounded like he was talking to a babysitter about a five year old not his fifteen year old, but he didn’t care. He felt a little guilty for it, but he couldn’t help but feel sad that Peter hadn’t waited up for him. It was gone twelve by that point and he knew how much of a lightweight his son was, he hadn’t really expected him to- or really wanted him to, just a little part of him did. Tony was just...he just wanted to hear his voice. God it hadn’t even been ten hours, how
was he going to do this?

“I should hope so since he allowed me to carry him to his room.” Thor chuckled. “Though I know children have a tendency to pretend sometimes, the boy was rather tired it’s been an emotionally taxing day.”

“Yeah..Thor remember you can’t tell him why we’re out here. Not a word.” Tony said gravely. It was important that they kept that particular mission a secret, especially from Peter considering the whole point of it was to keep him safe. As soon as Tony had gotten the call from Fury detailing exactly who they were dealing with he’d sworn the rest of the team to keep it dead quiet.

“I won’t my friend. I don’t wish to scare the boy anymore than he has been.”

“I appreciate it.” Tony sighed. “Can you make sure he calls me as soon as he wakes up? We’ll be at the stakeout point by then.”

“Will do. Take care Anthony.”

“You too.”

Thor kept his word and had Peter call his dad as soon as he woke up, which was beneficial for both of them; not only were they happy to see each other but it also helped to reinforce that a night apart wasn’t going to kill anyone. Just thirteen more sleeps and it would be over with and at that point it seemed like a piece of cake. Peter hadn’t found himself nearly as anxious as he thought he would be (though the same couldn’t be said for his dad who hadn’t slept a wink) and he attributed that to keeping himself busy the night before. So long as he wasn’t left alone with his own thoughts for too long, the next two weeks would go by quicker than he originally thought.

So after a very questionable breakfast and a quick gym session running off said breakfast, Peter informed Thor that he’d be heading down to the lab to work on some stuff. He already had plans for something that he knew Tony wouldn’t let him do, so he figured now would be the best time to do it. In fact, now that that he wasn’t obligated to spend time in there all day every day, Peter was even more drawn to the lab and in a sudden stroke of inspiration had a hundred ideas running through his head all at once and he needed to get them out.

Meanwhile Tony was bored. He’d been sitting in an empty room for hours now and boredom led to
him thinking and thinking led to overthinking- overthinking about someone in particular. He had known that it was going to be hard leaving Peter overnight, it always had been but now it was just felt impossible. He hadn’t slept at all because he was tossing and turning and worrying. He was pretty sure he’d never worried so much in his entire life, not over something so minor; he’d left Peter in one of the safest places in the world- their home. With a god for crying out loud. Yes Thor could be a little immature at times but Tony knew that he would die before he saw anything happen to Peter. He didn’t have any reason to worry, the only real threat to his son were the people they were currently going after. Peter was at home, the best place for him, safe and content, so why couldn’t he just fucking relax?

Then again to a young boy with an IQ on par with a NASA astrophysicist, who had access to an even higher level of equipment, who was unsupervised could certainly cause a lot of problems. But fortunately Tony thought of this.

It had only been a matter of hours since they had factimed but Tony knew his son, he could’ve gotten into all manner of trouble in that short amount of time and he had to check in on him. He was stuck sitting in a hotel room with nothing better to do; he’d already spent the night drawing out plans for projects to try and keep his mind busy, and that hadn’t worked. So now he had had free time- something he always detested- which meant his anxiety was at an all time high. It had been a few hours, a few hours was long enough to want to check in right? He wasn’t a crazy person- he just to see that Peter was okay- and that he hadn’t broken anything. Or himself.

So he pulled out his tablet and opened up his surveillance system Tony knew exactly where the boy would be too, where he always went the second his dad’s back was turned. And he was right, the feed JARVIS relayed was of his lab confirming his suspicions.

Tony watched as Peter was swanned around the lab floor; the 3-D printer was going, as well as several other machines that he was working all at once with ease- some of which Tony hadn’t even shown the kid how to use, so he was both slightly concerned and impressed that he’d figured them out on his own. The boy had music blaring that he was scream singing along with (Queen’s ‘I Want To Break Free’ when Tony first tuned in) and messing around on a wheeled chair, scooting around between all the different things he had going on in the lab. Oh, and he was wearing nothing but a T-Shirt, underwear and a singular sock.

Tony watched in amusement, making sure that JARVIS recorded Peter’s one man concert and sent it straight to his phone to be archived for future blackmailing purposes. The music then changed to some mumble rap song that Tony didn’t recognise as the teen fired a web up towards the high ceiling and suspended himself upside down in one of his signature poses, so he could solder some kind of circuit to...well whatever the hell the little genius was building. Probably something overly complicated to perform an asinine task, like the rocket launcher Peter had made to put his socks on for him (though he had claimed it was to help Aunt May on her days she found it difficult to do herself, Tony had seen the boy use it on himself for shits and giggles), or something equally ridiculous; at least that’s what he hoped it was, the monstrosity was twice the size of Peter and took up the entirety of his work station. For once Tony thought he’d let the boy have his fun, so
long as he wasn’t doing anything too dangerous. DUM-E and JARVIS were there to stop him from doing any real damage to himself and he’d engaged babysitting protocol with both AI’s so he felt secure than Peter was safe in that regard.

It was fun to watch for a while. Tony found himself engrossed in what Peter was doing. Even though he had no clue what on earth he was making it was still fun to try and follow along with the kids thought processes; if anything it made it even more interesting to watch, as he tried to figure out what the final product was supposed to be. It was so entertaining Tony grabbed a box of cereal to snack on whilst he settled in to watch the Peter Power Hour. It was way better than the cable that everyone else was occupying themselves with in the other room.

Usually when he was in the lab he was too focused on his own work to really appreciate Peter’s style when it came to creating things. It was obvious the kid was just kind of winging it; Tony could see remnants of a basic preliminary sketch that Peter had barley developed (concept art really) but decided to just dive in anyway. It was fun and in a weird way it took him back to his youth where he could just build what he wanted when he wanted- however he wanted, without worrying or caring about protocol or time restraints or any of that boring stuff. He made a mental note that every once in a while, maybe once a month or something, he was gonna set aside some time for him and Peter to just be creative. The lab needed a little more fun in it nowadays.

Maybe not dance around in your underwear levels of fun, but some fun nonetheless.

When Peter was in the middle of belting his heart out to some Katy Perry song when the boy suddenly stopped in the middle of his dance routine. His expression changed too and for a second Tony’s heart began to race, thinking something was wrong; but that was when Peter suddenly adorned a devilish grin and looked side to side suspiciously.

‘Oh god, what is he scheming?’ Tony thought, half concerned and half amused as he wondered how the scene was going to play out. He watched as Peter crept towards Tony’s work area, which up until that point looked relatively untouched bar from a few open draws as the teen had dug through to find specific parts for his project. The teen looked like Jim Carey’s portrayal of the Grinch as he tiptoed dramatically over to his intended target, laughing maniacally to himself. This kid was such a goofball.

A goofball that was going to be in serious trouble if he touched that suit.

It was a new one, a work in progress that Tony intended to showcase at his next expo but it was nowhere near ready for human testing yet and Peter knew that. So why was the kid still mere inches away from touching the button that opened the suit up for someone to hop inside?
As much as Tony wanted to see what the little goblin thought he was up to, he wasn’t about to risk him getting hurt should he accidentally trigger one of the sensitive mechanisms. He had JARVIS chime in using an autonomous feed of Tony’s voice through the speakers overhead. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

The teen jumped back three feet in the air, landing on top of one of the tables and sticking himself to the adjacent wall- all while pulling his T-shirt down to try and cover the fact that he’d neglected to get fully dressed. It’s no use kid, he’s already seen your Hulk print underwear.

“AHH! Mr. Stark that is so not funny- oh my god were you- how long have you been watching me?!” Peter screamed, his shock scaring him into his old term of address. Tony didn’t justify his question with an answer, deciding ambiguity would be a suitable punishment for the boys ignorance for even thinking about touching his suit. Well really, what a stupid thing to do.

He liked the idea of the kid being a little paranoid from then on too; obviously Tony couldn’t spend the entire trip checking up on Peter but at least this way the teen would never know if the man was or not, so he was more likely to keep himself in check. Parenting smarter not harder.

“No touchy the shiny new things. You’ve got your own toys, play with those.”

The teenager unstuck himself from the wall and shook his fist indignantly at the sky. “Come back here and fight me, old man!”

“And put some pants on.” Tony added, it taking everything it had in him to keep his voice serious and avoid busting out laughing.

“Why??” Peter screamed. He was alone, why should he wear pants if they were an unnecessary social construct?! The pair had had the debate more than a couple times, most notably that time Peter got caught short and had to run into his room when people got home early and he’d left the stove on in the process- seriously what was it with this kid and fire?

Tony shut off the intercom and laughed to himself. After he looked up from the tablet he noticed Steve’s shadow looming over him. He was standing behind Tony’s chair but the man could just feel his eyes boring into him disapprovingly. “Got something to say Spangles?”

“That’s not right Tony, you shouldn’t invade the boys privacy like that.” Steve was shaking his
head with his arms crossed, looking the picture of disappointment.

“Calm down, I was just checking in on him.”

“Couldn’t you have just called him?”

“I could have, but you know he’s a sneaky wee bugger.” Tony shrugged and attempted to scoot his chair away but Steve spun him back around. “It’s a good thing I checked when I did he was seconds away from getting his ass beat by one of my suits-”

“Why would you leave them out then, knowing Peter would be enticed to touch them and knowing they’re dangerous!?”

“Spider bait.” Tony shrugged, throwing a handful of dry cereal into his mouth before Steve snatched the box away. “Hey!”

“I’m serious Tony! It’s not funny! You’re deliberately tempting him and he could hurt himself! What if you hadn’t been watching and he did that when-”

“That’s why I have the baby monitor numb nuts, it’s a social experiment. For a snowman you’re not very chill.” Tony grumbled and flicked the screen on his tablet so he could zoom in and see what Peter was working on- was that a fucking lazer? Tony was pulled from his thoughts by Steve smacking him around the side of the head. “Ow! Okay, okay mom jeez. I’ll put my toys away. For someone who preaches about resolving issues with words you’re getting awful handsy lately.”

“Well you don’t listen to words! No more of that I’m serious. If I catch you pulling that again I’ll-”

“What? Put me in time out? Ground me? Spank me?” Tony waggled his eyebrows suggestively with that last one, in a way he knew would make Steve highly uncomfortable. And it worked the blond immediately went bright red and he looked even more pissed off. ‘Hehehe.’

“Call Pepper.” Steve smirked. “And May.”

That got Tony’s attention. “You monster.”
“Try me.” Steve grinned. “Cut the spying all together while you’re at it.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s wrong.”

“Wanna know what’s wrong? What I caught him doing this morning.”

Steve’s eyes went wide and he quickly moved to exit the room. “Oh god, I don’t wanna know what he was-“

“It’s nothing like that, Christ, calm down Captain Wholesome.” Tony rolled his eyes. “Remember the oh-so-nutritious meals you lovingly prepared for them both before you left?”

“Yes he said they ate-“

“Exactly. That’s what he said but this is the concoction they came up with this morning.” Tony hummed as he pulled up the footage from the kitchen that morning.

“What- what is that?” Steve frowned, leaning in closer to try and make out what Thor and Peter were eating.

“Pizza and Nachos- I think they threw some spaghettios in there too.” Tony smirked at the horrified expression on Steve’s face and that wasn’t even the best part. “Oh and M&M cereal.”

“M&M don’t make a cereal?”

“No they don’t. They just put half a pound of M&M’s in a bowl with milk.”

A couple more buttons and Tony was playing the audio that accompanied Thor’s idea of babysitting. “This way we can tell Steve we had cereal for breakfast like a couple of good boys.”
Steve was positively furious if his bright red face was anything to go by. “That little- what are they doing now?!”

“Oh so now you’re on board with spying? A little hypocritical there Ste-“

“Shut up and show me!”

Tony made a little ‘oo’ noise that he liked to make whenever Steve was being a diva- but the smirk soon dropped from his face when he swiped his screen back to current time. “Huh. That’s weird.”

“What?”

“Peter’s still being, well Peter.” The pair watched as the boy rearranged the furniture in the lab to where there were two huge tables and he was piling a bunk of jambled junk he’d created on to one of them. And he was holding a blow torch- okay he quickly skipped the feed along so Steve wouldn’t have a heart attack. “Weird little creature- but Thor. Thor hasn’t moved in almost an hour. That can’t be right..”

Tony checked by scrubbing through the feed and it was right, Thor hadn’t moved. He was standing in the centre of his bedroom, looking at the wall furthest from the door. It wasn’t as though the camera had frozen because were still moving around him; there was movement in the trees and the angle of the sunlight from the window behind changed as time went on, but the man remained frozen. Like a statue, it was unnatural. He didn’t even blink or move an inch- like in that shaky, jittery way one would have expected a sped up video of someone attempting standing still to move, he remained entirely frozen like the feed had glitched- but only on him nothing else.

“Maybe the feed is just slow?” Steve suggested, not seeming nearly as perplexed as Tony.

But Tony immediately dismissed that idea. “No I was just talking back and forth with Peter.”

“Maybe JARVIS prioritized kiddos feed or something, or there’s a lag.”

“Hmm..” Tony tapped a few buttons to check Steve’s shallow theories. “No. Everythings fine with the system-”
“Tony glitches happen it's probably nothing-”

“But it might be something and I’m sorry, when did you become tech savvy? You couldn’t figure out how to use the fucking toaster this morning.”

“Hey, it’s new.” Steve said sadly and Tony felt bad for snapping on him, especially when he’d been so proud when he finally did figure it out (even though he set the fire alarm off but hey credit where credit is due).

“Sorry, I didn’t- you did good Steve, the toast was great. Just- just hold on.” Tony had a distinct feeling of dread in his gut, one that he couldn’t ignore. He had to figure out just what the fuck was going on because something wasn’t right and it was making him feel sick. ‘I’m overreacting, I know I’m overreacting- oh but I don’t give a fuck.’

After two rings Thor picked up which corresponded with what Tony could see on screen. “Hello there Anthony!”

“Hey big guy, are you alright?”

“Never better! Are you alright my friend?” Thor asked sounding as concerned as Tony felt after hearing how frantic the brunette was. “You sound worried is everything-“

But Tony cut him off. “What- what’re you doing?”

“I was just preparing to go on an outing with the youngling. Apparently it’s blaspheme that I have yet to dine at Baskin-Robbins.” As Thor spoke he moved around his room, changing into his ‘disguise’ (that consisted of normal people clothes, a beanie and sunglasses).

“Oh yeah he’s obsessed with that place..what you, uh, what you been up to today?” Tony pressed on.

“Catching up with paperwork and other such things in hopes that Steve will stop relentlessly harassing me.”
But Thor’s casual tone wasn’t sitting right with Tony, not after what he’d just witnessed. It didn’t make any sense and if something didn’t make sense then something was wrong. Very wrong, and Tony couldn’t afford for something to go wrong, not when Peter was involved. Not when he was four thousand miles away. “So you didn’t just sit still for an hour?”

“Tony my friend, when have you known me to sit still for more than two minutes?” Thor chuckled.

“Fair point. In that case can you do me a favour? Get Peter to send me some diagnostics for Jar from the computer in my office. He knows the codes.” Tony sighed, feeling himself relax somewhat. He ran a hand through his hair, feeling stupid for having gotten so worked up in the first place (which wasn’t helped by Steve watching him from the corner of the room the entire time). Thor sounded fine, everything else seemed fine, maybe JARVIS was having some technical difficulties. Even if everything looked fine on his end something must be going on. Of all times for the computer to malfunction, why did it have to be now? When Tony had left Peter at home- he was supposed to be safe there- he couldn’t have their main source of defensive security go on the frizz now.

“Will do. Is there anything else?”

“No that’s it.”

“Well in that case I must go, my friend, I have to ensure that Peter actually has clothes on for our outing.”

“Right yeah. Okay I’ll talk to you later.”

“Goodbye!” Thor hung up cheerily and Tony watched as he did just as he said he would do; he met a now pants-wearing Peter and the pair headed out to meet Happy. No more glitches, no other abnormalities, nothing to be concerned about (other than the fact that the sweatshirt Peter was wearing was not appropriate for the weather outside- but that was just the dad brain talking).

“See? I told you it was nothing.” Steve shrugged but Tony looked entirely unconvinced. If anything he looked more perplexed than he had before.

“Hmm.”
Peter was none the wiser to the strange visual anomaly Tony and Steve had witnessed, or that the diagnostic tests that Tony asked him to run on JARVIS was anything other than routine. The computer came back looking completely fine on all accounts so he sent off the data to his dad and set about force feeding Thor thirty one different flavours of ice cream.

Not that Thor complained any. They only ended up leaving because the man had devoured half of the stores stock and people were starting to stare, wondering how a normal man could consume so much.

Peter was feeling decidedly more confident about the blond’s mental state now too. Maybe Nat was right, maybe a break and some bro time was just what he needed. As soon as they left the tower it was like the odd, heavy veil Thor had over him was lifted and he was back to his usual bubbly, loud self. The bounce in his step was back too and Peter just hoped that it would stay that way.

His hopes were short lived however. As soon as they started heading home Thor quietened down considerably. At first Peter thought it was just due to Happy’s presence as the agent had a tendency to be a little..short tempered with Thor’s loudness. But even once they were out of the car and walking into the building Thor had still become more subdued, more reserved.

Peter decided it would be best to broach the subject while Thor was still somewhat lucid. “Hey, are you okay?”

“I’m fine Spiderling, just a little tired is all.” Thor smiled as they entered the elevator to get out of the underground parking garage.

“You’ve..you’ve been tired a lot lately, huh?” Peter said as delicately as he could. He didn’t want to come across as patronising or overbearing, he knew all too well how that felt; when you’re already feeling low having people talk down to you or act like they understand what’s going on, it’s the complete opposite of helpful (exhibit A Tony, exhibit B Steve, ect.)

“Yes I’m sorry. I know I’ve been rather distant as of late.”

“That’s okay man, everyone needs some space sometimes.” Peter shrugged nonchalantly. He was trying to emulate how Nat had dealt with his little- uh- mishap back at the cabin, as he felt that would be the best approach. Thor certainly seemed to appreciate it because this was the most he
had opened up about his recent shift in behaviour. Every other time anyone had even attempted to mention it he’d instantly get defensive or deflective, and try to divert the conversation. “You don’t have to, you know, pretend to be okay either. If you’re having a rough time and you don’t wanna hang out with me, you can say so. I don’t want you to feel obligated to.”

“I don’t feel obligated at all. I thoroughly enjoy spending time with you. I’m sorry if my actions have said otherwise.” Thor frowned slightly and Peter kicked himself mentally, wishing he had worded that a little better.

But he persevered. “I’m not gonna give you the whole ‘if you wanna talk I’m here’ speech, ‘cause you already know that. But even if you don’t wanna talk and you just want something to take your mind off of- whatever, or even if you do want me to go away- just say so.”

Even though he stumbled over his words a little, Thor smiled brightly and put an arm around Peter’s shoulders in a half hug, just before the elevator opened on their floor. “Thank you little one. I truly appreciate it. You really are wise beyond your years, you know that?”

“Eh well, I’ve been there dude. You wanna have some alone time for a bit?”

Thor’s face twitched slightly, and Peter couldn’t quite read his expression before it changed again. “I..I think that would be best. Just for a few hours I think, I think I may lie down for a while.”

“Yeah man, it’s cool. I’m gonna go back down to the lab for a couple hours anyway, I’ll catch up with you dinner yeah?” Peter suggested and Thor nodded. “Cool. Oh and Doctor Who is on tonight remember.”

“I wouldn’t miss it.”

The two of them parted ways, Peter heading back down towards the lab and Thor to his own quarters. At first Peter was fine, as inspiration took him again and he was able to continue working on his project for a few hours without too many thoughts seeping into his brain; but it was once he’d figured out a particularly tricky mechanism and he turned to call Tony over to have a look at it, and he realised that Tony wasn’t there he became distracted. It suddenly felt incredibly lonely down there in that big room. Whereas before the prospect of having complete free reign had been exciting, being able to do whatever he wanted without Tony breathing down his neck- he very quickly realised that he missed it. He missed Tony breathing down his neck.
He liked having boundaries, he liked it when Tony told him he was being an idiot or that his work was sloppy or ‘this should go here not there’. It wasn’t even just that, bouncing his ideas off of someone was great but he just missed the man’s presence; the muttering under his breath as he worked, the occasional humming, the cursing- all the little noises Peter took for granted because he was usually so stuck into whatever he was doing. But now there was no background noise. Music wasn’t the same without his dad either singing along or complaining about his choices.

The lab felt really cold and empty without Tony there and Peter wondered how he hadn’t noticed it before. It felt unnatural to be alone while he worked, he was so used to it. He was too used to it-used to having someone to talk to when he wanted, or someone to check over his work and problem solve with, or someone reminding him when it was time to take a break-

“Ohh, Jesus.” Peter groaned under his breath and dropped whatever tool he was using because he suddenly needed to use that hand for something else. He really had forgotten to take a break.

After running to the bathroom with embarrassingly little time to spare, he decided it would probably be best if he left the lab for the night. It was already gone seven o’clock which struck him as odd; not only because three hours had gotten away from him but also because Thor hadn’t been down to check on him. It wasn’t like he needed him too, but Peter half expected it. Oh well, maybe he was just respecting Tony’s rule against Thor going ‘anywhere fucking near’ his lab after the last time.

Peter made his way back upstairs and after changing his clothes which were covered in various stains and debris from his work, headed towards Thor's room and that’s when things got..weird.

Thor’s room was at the very end of the long hallway on the common room floor. Steve and Peter’s were opposite one another right off of the living room, then on Steve’s side there was Clint, Nat and Bruce’s room respectively, then right at the very end before turning a corner there was Thor’s (Tony’s was on the other side of the living room as before Peter had moved in he claimed he wanted to be as far away as the rest of them as possible). Peter had barely stepped out of his own room before he started hearing something, or rather not hearing something.

It wasn’t like the usual silence that had been plaguing the hall ever since Thor had begun being more reclusive, instead there was noise but it was maddeningly faint. It almost sounded like talking but Peter couldn’t make out the words. At first he figured that Thor just had his TV on for once but even when he got closer Peter still couldn’t make out any distinct conversation. It was odd, it was almost like when his neighbours in the downstairs apartment would fight back when he lived with May, he could hear it but never clearly- but he hadn’t experienced that since the bite. He could hear *everything* clearly, sometimes things that he really didn’t want to. He usually had to make a concerted effort just to not overhear what was going on in other people’s rooms. But now, now he couldn’t hear and that- that was really weird.
He even took his earbuds out so he could make use of the full potential of his super hearing- which turned out to be a huge mistake.

The moment he did Peter’s ears were assaulted with the sensation that they’d been filled with scalding hot water, like his head had been forced into a sink full of acid; it didn’t hurt it was just this intense overwhelming heat and he found himself shaking his head to try and rid his ears of the imaginary liquid. The sensation only grew stronger with each step towards Thor’s room he took at then it changed. It changed from a disorientating, balance disrupting to feeling a sharp pain running through his head. Excruciating pain and now his vision was blurry.

‘What the fuck?’

That didn’t seem good. It was almost like a migraine but Peter had never had those come on so suddenly and violently before and he- was his nose bleeding? It was. ‘What the fuck?! Am I in Stranger Things- what is this shit?!!’

Just as he was sure that he was about to faint he managed to struggle to Thor’s door, convinced that he was going to collapse before he even got the chance to knock. But he managed to and the second- the second his knuckles wrapped on the metal it stopped. It all stopped.

His hearing returned to normal, his head stopped hurting and he could see clearly again- which meant he could see how Thor’s face fell the second he laid eyes on him.

“Hello youngli- are you alright?!”

Peter went to say no, he wasn’t alright he just almost threw up for literally no reason but he noticed that Thor’s eyes were red rimmed. Had- had he been crying? Peter immediately forgot everything that had transpired in the last thirty seconds. “Yeah I’m fine, are you?”

“Your nose little one- come here.” Thor pulled Peter into his room and sat him down on his bed. The teen hadn’t even noticed the fact that his nose was still pouring. He barely registered when Thor reemerged from his bathroom with a fistful of tissues and held them to the boy’s face. “Are you okay? You look frightened? Are you ill?”

“No I-I’m okay I just..heard something. I don’t know it doesn’t matter.”
Thor’s face contorted again into that strange unreadable expression again. It was really starting to freak Peter out. “What did you hear?”

“Oh, nothing. Uhm, did you still wanna watch Doctor Who with me? It’s on in half an hour.”

“Yes, yes, I’ll be in in a moment.” Thor shook his head, simultaneously wiping the weird look off of his face. It struck Peter as odd that he didn’t just go to the living room with him, like he was hinting that he wanted Peter to leave so he could finish off whatever he was doing. Peter stood up, feeling a little wobbly on his feet but otherwise fine. He must’ve looked wobbly too because Thor was looking increasingly concerned, so much so he pushed Peter back to a seated position and put his palm on the teen’s forehead. “Spiderling are you sure you’re alright?”

“I think so? I don’t know what happened..”

“Mr. Jarvis?”

“Yes Thor.” The AI chimed in.

“Can you scan him please?”

“I already have, Sir. He appears to be in perfect health other than a slightly accelerated heart rate that I have determined to be due to stress.”

“Thor I’m okay really, I don’t know what happened but I’m okay now, don’t worry.” Peter said quickly.

The god still looked rather nervous and unsure but he decided not to push. “Hmm..if you’re sure. Just let me know if you need anything or it starts to happen again, alright?”

“Uh huh.”

Thor seemed perfectly fine throughout the rest of the evening. The only odd thing Peter noticed
from then on was that Thor would go and use his own bathroom instead of the one adjacent to the living room and he was getting up a lot, but Peter shrugged it off, blaming the vast quantities of ice cream for the man’s behaviour. Thor seemed to be keeping an extra close eye on him but Peter couldn’t blame him after that weird episode he had.

Overall, they enjoyed an average evening together just as they had done the night before; watching movies, binging on junk food and joking around. It helped Peter forget all about that odd feeling he’d had in the hallway and it helped take his mind off of how much he was missing his dad. Of course Peter was obligated to call Tony before he went to bed so he did so as he was brushing his teeth. Because why would he wait two minutes?

“H’y da.” Peter lisped with the toothbrush jutting out of his mouth.

“Wow Pete, that’s attractive.” Tony deadpanned.

“Who ‘ave I go’a ook goo for?” Peter shrugged and spat into the sink.

“Can I have that in English?”

“I said- who have I gotta look good for?”

“Not me apparently. Have you even brushed that hair? You look like you stuck your finger in a socket.” Tony rolled his eyes but he was smiling nonetheless. “So what did you get up to today? Other than trashing my lab.”

“Not much- and I’ll put it all back before you get home, don’t worry.”

“You better.” Tony said warningly, though it wasn’t sincere he knew Peter would tidy up after himself anyway. “Did you get anything constructive done?”

“I made Thor go with me to Baskin-Robbins. I think that’s constructive.” Tony had been talking about the Frankenstein creation Peter was putting together in the lab but obviously food was at the forefront of the teens mind. Who could blame him- the first time he was no longer under Steve’s sugar ban he was bound to go a little wild, especially with Thor’s help.
“Yeah he said.”

“He uh..he’s been acting a little weird though.” Peter mumbled and at first Tony wasn’t sure he’d heard him correctly.

“Weird how?” Tony was instantly alert. If Peter had noticed something too then maybe it wasn’t just a technical issue.

Peter shrugged looking a little nervous as he set his phone on his desk and set about changing into his Pajamas. “I don’t know, just been a little quiet, like he was before you left but I think part of that was me. I think I freaked him out a little when I had this..this- uh nevermind it’s nothing.”

Peter quickly tried to backtrack before he mentioned anything that would give Tony cause for concern but it was too late.

“Uh uh spill.”

“Dad I don’t want to worry you with nothing, I shouldn’t have said anything-”

“I’ll be more worried if you leave it there without explaining to me so spit it out.”

Peter sighed, knowing Tony was right. “I don’t know..I got this like, weird headache earlier.”

“What was weird about it?”

“Well it only lasted for like thirty seconds but it was really bad, like, migraine bad- and, well you know how my hearing sometimes goes funny when I’m having a panic attack or a flashback and stuff?” Tony nodded to show that he understood and Peter continued. “I got that, but it was different. Then my nose started bleeding.”

“Did you have Jar scan you?”

“Uh huh he said I was all good, it was weird though.” Peter mumbled but he saw his dad’s worried
expression and quickly regretted having mentioned it at all. “I’m sure it was nothing, maybe I had a bit of a flashback from the blood or something, I don’t know.”

“Are you feeling alright now?”

“Uh huh I’m fine really, jus’ sleepy.” Peter yawned and clambered onto his bed.

Tony was a little saddened by that. He wanted to talk to his boy for longer but he knew it was important for both of them to keep their calls short; if not for lessening the likelihood of Tony’s position being given away due to wireless signals, but for both of their mental health. They couldn’t become reliant on phone calls to get them through the day. “You wanna hang up and get some sleep bubby?”

But Peter was less than happy about that suggestion. “Noooo I didn’t even get to ask you about your day yet!”

“Well go on then before you fall asleep on me.” Tony chuckled.

“So how was your day?”

“Boring. I’m on a stakeout.” Tony said shortly. “The highlight of my day was fixing the AC.”

“Did my cat videos help?”

“They helped entertain Steve long enough for him to leave me alone if that counts-“

“You mean you didn’t watch them?” Peter asked in a slightly teary voice which made Tony sigh.

“No I did. They were very cute.” He assured him. ‘You might find it hard to believe, kid, but not everyone is as obsessed with cats as you are.’

“Good ‘cause I have a whole playlist lined up for you tomorrow.” Peter smiled dreamily and yawned again, mewling slightly like one of the kittens in his stupid viral videos he kept spamming
Tony with.

“Get some sleep you goof.” Tony shook his head fondly.

“Wanna talk to you.” Peter whined but his eyes started to close involuntarily, so he ended up scowling half lidded at his phone. Apparently one gets rather tired after a sugar crash.

“You can talk to me in the morning.”

“Wanna talk now.”

“Peter come on you can sleep—”

“Then you talk to me. I’ll jus’ listen.”

“About what?”

“I don’t care jus’ talk. Tell me about the mission or what you had for lunch or somethin’. Jus’ wanna hear your voice.” Peter’s eyes were barely open at this point and he’d already pulled his blanket up over his ears so Tony doubted the boy would be awake for much longer.

“You missing me that much already?” Tony softened his voice then. Peter really must be tired if he was essentially asking for a bedtime story without getting the slightest bit embarrassed. “It’s only been a day.”

“Lonely in the lab. Not the same without you.” Peter mumbled and Tony knew the boy been fully awake he would never have admitted to actually missing him; he would have pretended that he was totally fine so that his dad wouldn’t worry. As much as Tony appreciated the bravado Peter put on for his sake it brought him some comfort to know that he wasn’t the only one feeling a little alone right now. Even though he wasn’t, he was currently sharing a room with two other men (men who were fighting about who got to sleep on the double bed that night). He always somehow felt lonely without his kid there beside him. He knew it was something they’d both have to get used to again, and he knew it was going to be difficult. Maybe tonight he’d be able to get some sleep knowing Peter was doing so comfortably.
“Alright. You know I can’t tell you about the mission but I can tell you about how Clint almost blew our cover by sneezing and falling off the balcony.” Tony started telling the story, and though it was a short one after giggling a few times Peter was out like a light. Tony almost didn’t want to hang up and have Peter wake up alone but he knew he was just trying to find a reason not to end the call for himself. “Sleep tight Underoos.”

Chapter End Notes

A friend requested I had Peter say the 'I Love You 3000' line, please don't kill me lmao.
This chapter came out a little ehhh-
It jumps around a lot- I had a lot of ideas that I wanted to write in more depth but I
didn't get a chance to develop them or it would've ended up like thirty pages long
again and I didn't have the time to do that much proofreading so- I'm sorry about that.
But anyway- hope y'all enjoy this trashpile anyway lmao.

“What kind of school makes you go back during the summer?” Happy asked with a disgusted look
on his face. “I thought you were one of the smart ones- why do you have to go back?”

“I’m not going to classes.” Peter chuckled as he gathered up the boxes of materials he’d collected.
Tony had given him permission to raid his trash for usable materials. “I’m helping out with the
middle school’s science fair, our school hosts it.”

“Do you get extra credit or something?”

“No but my teacher asked and it’s fun hanging out with the kids and doing nerdy stuff.” Peter
shrugged. “I do it every year.”

“So you get nothing out of this?”

“I don’t do things for gain Happy, I’m doing it to help out because my teacher asked me. It’s just
two days out of my summer. Besides I do get something out of it, I get to play around with simple
science instead of work stuff. It takes me back to my youth.”

“You’re fifteen.” Happy deadpanned.

“That’s right Hap, so sweet of you to remember.” Peter grinned at him, ignoring the dirty look he
received completely; he could remember a time where he was petrified of Happy and his dirty
looks but now he was so used to them they didn’t phase him. They were practically a form of
affection nowadays.
The agent rolled his eyes and grabbed one of the boxes that Peter had stacked on top of one another, so the boy could actually see where he was going. “What time do you need picking up?”

“I can collect him Happy man.” Thor chimed in.

“Are you sure?” Happy looked nervous. Thor was notoriously bad at driving and he was meant to be babysitting the babysitter. He had to make sure Peter stayed in one piece and having Thor drive him didn’t seem like the best way of doing that.

“Of course!” Thor nodded enthusiastically. “We were planning to go out this afternoon anyway weren’t we youngling?”

Peter nodded and that made Happy suspicious. He hadn’t been informed of any outing. “Where?”

“Uhh-“

“Free running!” Thor belted out, not paying any attention to the rapid head shaking from Peter advising him not to tell Happy about their plans.

“No, no and no. No parkour unless you plan to be in your suit-“ Happy started.

“But I can’t wear my suit unless I’m patrolling or dad will get mad!” Peter cried. He’d spent all that time picking a spot where there were enough abandoned buildings where they wouldn’t be seen by the general public.

“Then no free running Peter, it’s not safe.” Happy said with finality, delivering one of the few scary looks Peter still found intimidating.

“But-but-“ Peter began to argue but he knew it was futile. Happy was just as stubborn as Tony was and no meant no- but that didn’t mean he couldn’t go behind his back later. He was better off not arguing and allowing the man to think that he’d backed down. Sure Happy would find out sooner or later but hey, that was a future Peter problem, for now he just wanted to avoid an argument and get going. “Fine. But we’re still going out, we’ll just go to a trampoline park or something instead.”
Happy eyed the boy up and down skeptically. After a moment he seemed satisfied that Peter had relented and nodded his head. “Alright but I’m still dropping you off. Come on.”

After loading all the various materials in the car they set off driving towards Peter’s school and Happy was treating it as though Peter was about to go away to summer camp. “You got lunch?”

“Nah I was gonna get something later.” Peter shrugged. In all honestly he completely forgot about having to feed himself and he’d forgotten to grab something before he left.

“You got money then?”

“Yes. I didn’t plan on bartering for it.”

“Did you eat breakfast?”

“Yes.” Peter rolled his eyes.

Happy wasn’t a fan of the mini Tony-like attitude. “Don’t get frustrated with me Parker, I’m just making sure you’re not gonna expire whilst under my care.”

“I won’t get shot again if that’s what you mean.” Peter scoffed. He didn’t think much of the comment until he felt the car suddenly jerk where Happy had pulled them to the side of the road and stopped the car; all so he could turn around and give Peter a filthy look.

“Boy, you do not want me to come back there.”

“It was a joke!”

“Yeah? Me having nightmares about you almost bleeding to death and going limp in my arms is a joke?” Happy half yelled but his voice broke towards the end of that sentence. It certainly got Peter’s attention and the boy fell silent.
“I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine just- don’t say that.” Happy sighed and turned back around in his seat. He hadn’t intended to get so emotional and he really didn’t mean to make the boy feel bad.

“I really am sorry.” Peter reiterated. He needed to rein it in with the dark jokes; he hadn’t meant to make light of something that the man was still traumatised over. He just tended to forget that it wasn’t only his experience, that other people were deeply affected by what happened, even more so than him. It rarely crossed his mind anymore other than when he noticed his scar or when Tony got that distant watery eyed look on his face. He could only imagine what that night must’ve been like to Happy and he felt awful for even bringing it up. “I shouldn’t have said that. I really am sorry Mr. Hogan.”

“Kid you’re fine.” Happy sighed again. “Tony’s anxiety is rubbing off on me I guess.”

That got Peter to chuckle slightly. “Tell me about it, the man’s a wreck. And I thought I was anxious. Can you imagine the earful the rest of the guys are getting about it?”

“I’d be surprised if they hadn’t duct taped his mouth shut by now. He texted me four times today already to see if you took your meds.”

“Uh oh..uhh..Hap you might need to turn around-“

“And this is why I asked if you ate breakfast.” Happy shook his head and lent over to the passengers side of the car, into the glove box where he retrieved a pillbox near identical to the one Peter had neglected at home. “Can’t take them on an empty stomach.”

“Oh my god Happy you’re a lifesaver!”

“Yup.” The agent said simply. It was his job after all. It wasn’t long until they pulled up outside the school and Happy turned around once again after he put the car in park; this time looking considerably more nervous. “Thor’s been, you know, feeding you ain’t he?”

“Yeah, all we’ve done is eat.” Peter laughed around a mouthful of water as he popped the various pills into his mouth. “Besides I don’t need him to cook for me, I can take care of myself.”
“Yeah sure.”

“I can!”

“You can, I know you can, but you don’t. You forgot to even take your super drugs, kid.”

Peter pouted. “I remembered yesterday.”

“After Tony called you and you lied to him.”

“Still I- hey! Are you spying on me?!”

“I didn’t need to. I didn’t know that’s what you did I just guessed and your reaction proved me right.” Happy smirked at Peter’s disgruntled expression and mentally marked his point on the scoreboard he kept in his head. So far today it was three nil to him. Hehe. “I just know he’s been off lately and I wanna make sure he’s treating you right.”

“He’s perfectly capable of looking after me- I’m perfectly capable of looking after me. Is dad paying you extra to be nosey or something?”

“Is it so wrong that I care?”

“You what? Who are you and what have you done with Mr. Hogan?!” Peter feigned shock and gasped dramatically.

“Ugh you’re such a brat.”

“Yup.” Peter popped the P and grinned cheekily. It was fun to wind the agent up.

“It’s my job to be nosey. Though it wouldn’t hurt for Tony to give me a tip now and then for putting up with your sorry excuse for humour.” Happy scoffed as he readied himself to hop out of
the car and help Peter pull boxes out of the trunk. “You sure you don’t want me to pick you up?”

“Nah it’s cool Thor’s got it and it’s easier for you not to have to drive all the way down here again.”

“Peter it’s literally my job and I really don’t mind I can pick Thor up first then come to get you.”

“It’s fine honestly. I’ll see you later tonight though.” Peter shrugged casually but he looked back at the agent who looked genuinely concerned; after Happy had highlighted his own personal anxieties in the car Peter was more conscious of not making light of the situation. “Seriously, Happy it’s all good.”

“I want you to call me when you get to wherever you’re going.”

“So you can track me?” Peter said dryly.

“I’m gonna track you anyway, so I know that Thor hasn’t crashed the damn car with you in it.”

“Aww, are you starting to grow a little attached to me Mr. Hogan?”

“Get out of my car.”

“I love you too, Happy.” Peter grinned and made as though he was going to hug Happy around his chair and the man flinched away like Peter had the plague.

“Out!”

Peter did as he was told, though Happy helped him bring the boxes out to the sports hall where the science fair was being held (mostly because Peter couldn’t carry all the heavy stuff in front of people unless he wanted them to realise he had super strength). But once Happy left Peter felt rather out of place. Ned had yet to arrive because he was late as usual and the other volunteers were all juniors and seniors trying to get that extra credit Happy was talking about, so he knew no one. The ones he did recognise were the ones that tended to hang around Flash when he paid them so Peter was not about to go over and talk to them.
So he was kinda just stood around by himself for a while before the teacher got there, feeling unbelievably awkward. Even once the teacher arrived and handed out jobs to everyone Peter was still attempting to push himself into a wall as not to be seen by anyone.

‘God damnit Ned, where are you?’ Peter looked at his phone and saw that Ned was only just leaving his house, meaning it would be at least forty five minutes until he got there. He sighed to himself. Usually he was okay at talking to people, but not people near his own age. Adults and kids he could do, but teenagers? Let alone teenagers that were part of the ring that had terrorised him for the past year? No thanks.

Though he did notice someone approaching him out of his periphery and he braced himself, readying himself for whatever verbal attack he was about to receive; he was surprised to hear a girls voice instead. “Hey, are you Peter?”

Peter looked up and saw a girl that he recognised from his Spanish class, Chloe. He’d never really spoken to her but they went to the same middle and elementary school and she’d been held back a year- so now they were in several of each other’s classes. “Uh, y-yeah? Hi.”

“You’re a little anxious one ain’t ya?” She smiled and Peter ducked his head down a little bit. The girl moved to help him setting up the tables and booths for the various kids to set up their science projects and she attempted to make small talk with him the entire time. At first it was clunky and awkward but she was patient and persevered with him. Gradually he managed to bring his nerves down enough to actually string a sentence together without stuttering; conversation started flowing freely once they began talking about school work and their upcoming exams the next year. Peter even ended up offering to tutor her in Spanish considering he was practically fluent.

They ended up hanging out for most of the day even as the kids started flooding in. They worked as a pair, going around and helping the middle schoolers setting up their projects, the only hurdle they hit was when Flash got there. Peter had that familiar sense of dread wash over him, that settled in his stomach and made him want to throw up, the second he clocked eyes with the boy across the room. He felt his jaw clench, his mouth go dry and his palms start to sweat. Great. Just what he needed.
Chloe noticed the look on Peter’s face and followed his eyes to where Eugene had emerged and immediately joined up with his group of idiots. “Oh, that’s..he’s not very nice to you is he?”

“Nah, But it’s fine.” Peter tried to brush it off. Everyone in his year, if not the entire school, knew that Peter was Flash’s favourite target. It was also well known that Flash and Chloe had ‘a thing’ going on since she joined their year group and Peter kicked himself for not having distanced himself earlier. “I’ll just stay over here.”

The girl looked conflicted. Clearly she wanted to stay talking to Peter but then again her reputation would most definitely be tarnished if she was seen talking to the nerd (it’s not like they were all at a science fair or anything, Jesus Christ). Peter expected her to just walk away but she hung back, a guilty look spread across her face. “Are you sure..? I don’t wanna leave you on your own again.”

“It’s fine I’m used to it.” He shrugged but then cringed realising just how sad that made him sound.

“I’ll make sure he doesn’t say anything to you.” She offered but even she sounded unsure about her suggestion.

Peter just chuckled. “I don’t think anyone has the power to do that. You should probably just go before he sees and well...you know.”

She frowned but turned to walk away. “It was nice talking to you. I’ll see you around.”

“You too.” Peter mumbled. Why did he have to be such a loser? Did he really just stop talking to someone he was making a good connection with so he could avoid getting picked on by a spoiled rich kid- who was gonna pick on him either way?

Feeling more than a little pathetic he decided now would probably be a good time to take a break and try and call his dad. Ned still had yet to arrive and the judges were going around looking at every kid’s project, so he had to get himself out of the way anyway. He hadn’t been able to call Tony that morning as the team were advancing on their target and he couldn’t afford to give away their position. But the man did say he could text him if he needed anything and right now he needed a little company and a distraction.

Peter: Hey Mr. Stark?
Mr. Stark: What’s up?

Peter: Wanna hear a joke?

Mr. Stark: No.

Peter: What’s DUM-E’s favourite snack?

Mr. Stark: Nothing. He’s a robot he doesn’t need to eat. He runs off of electricity.

Peter: …

Mr. Stark: …Fine. I don’t know P, what is DUM-E’s favourite snack?

Peter: Microchips! :D

Mr. Stark: You're grounded.

That little interaction certainly cheered Peter up a bit and he felt confident enough to go back into the building, even if his crippling anxiety was telling him not to. After a brief panic attack he headed back inside and walked towards the bathrooms but stopped once he spotted the group that was hanging around outside of said bathrooms. He sighed to himself and headed back to the sports hall. He didn’t need to go anyway, he was just heading there as a precaution and he’d rather not have to face Flash and his goons unnecessarily- especially surrounding the restroom. If Flash knew he had to go he’d use that as his main attack and bring up all the other various times Peter got himself into desperate situations- hence the birth of the awful nickname ‘Pissy Parker’ or its other variants, which he'd only just gotten rid of. He'd stick to being called Pukey or Penis for now, thank you very much.

No he could wait till later, he thought to himself but that thought was interrupted by Tony’s voice in the back of his head telling him not to wait until the last minute. For once he decided to take his dad’s advice; after all, he didn’t have Tony or even Ned to give him an out or help him if...something happened. He was better off going to find another restroom before it got too bad.
Only one of the school bathrooms were open for the science fair so he went back out of the school and used one of the store bathrooms down the street. By the time he got back he ended up running into Ned. Finally. “Dude!”

“Oh, Hey Peter!” Ned smiles cheerfully ignoring the glare he was receiving.

“Where have you been?!”

“I’m sorry I’m late I had to-“

“Aww did Penis miss his little boyfriend?” Ah of course, two losers makes for a bigger target. Of course Flash was drawn over to them.

Ned for once didn’t rise to the taunting and turned his attention back to Peter. “Has he been picking on you all day?”

“You’d know if you were here.” Peter muttered irritably but he felt bad about the guilty look Ned gave him. “No. He hasn’t even spoken to me- but even if he had I don’t need you here to protect me Ned.”

“Sure.” Ned rolled his eyes.

Though Peter was still mildly annoyed at Ned for essentially abandoning him, he pushed it aside in favour of not spending another awkward four hours alone. Ned did end up getting side tracked and pulled into something else though, but Peter wasn’t left alone for long. One of the lights on the stage malfunctioned and Peter was summoned to fix it- being the resident handy man of course, a title he personally relished in.

It was a simple task of rewiring a few things and fixing the framework, so it was a quick job but Peter felt someone watching him the whole time; only for him to turn around and see Chloe standing there.

“You’re pretty good at that.” She commented as she sat down beside him on the stage.
Peter looked around nervously before he answered. He couldn’t see Flash anywhere so he figured it was safe to talk to her. “Oh yeah, my dad’s been teaching me some engineering stuff here and there.”

“Oh..uh..I don’t mean to be rude but..” The girl had a strange look on her face, almost like she was embarrassed or uncomfortable.

“What is it? Don’t tell me I have ketchup on my face and you’ve waited until now to tell me.”

“No.” She giggled. “But uh, I thought your parents were..”

“Dead? Yeah.”

“Right, But you just said your dad.”

_Shit._

“I did? Oh I uh- I meant my f-foster dad.” The lie came to him quickly but it didn’t sound nearly as convincing as he needed it too. He couldn’t say he was adopted because that would raise suspicions and- well technically he wasn’t. Not to his knowledge anyway. Tony was his legal guardian but not his father; he’d never thought about it before but that..that made him kind of sad. Huh. Maybe he’d bring that up to Tony at some point.

Also his teachers knew his situation, but not that Tony was his dad now so he didn’t want them overhearing. Foster Dad was the nearest thing he could say to cover up his slip up and luckily the girl bought it.

“Ohh.” She nodded that she understood and Peter breathed a silent sigh of relief. “I’m sorry, I didn’t know you were in foster care. I thought- well I didn’t know what I thought.”

“It’s cool, I don’t really talk about it.” Peter said easily. He knew the girl was being nice but what she really meant she actually never thought about him before. He preferred it that way, being forgettable. It made leading a double life a lot easier. “It’s uh, kind of a recent thing.”
“So does he work for Tony Stark too?” She asked casually before she mistook the twitch on Peter’s face for him being uncomfortable, when actually it was just him feeling weird hearing his dad’s name out loud in a public setting after so long. “You don’t have to talk about it, I know you probably get a lot of questions-“

“No no it’s fine.” Peter shook his head, but he broke eye contact and looked back to what he was doing. “Y-Yeah he uh, he works for one of his uh, clean up companies. T-that’s how I got the internship-“

Yet again, a whiny, bitchy voice joined in on their conversation. “So that’s how you got it Parker! And here I was thinking you were some charity case ‘cause your aunt’s dying.”

“Flash don’t be a dick.” Chloe said quietly but Flash didn’t even look in her direction. Peter gave her a small smile to say that he appreciated the gesture nonetheless but he knew it wasn’t worth it.

“And you mean someone actually fostered you? Why would someone volunteer to have you in their house? Like, I get it your aunt was saddled with you- she had to get sick just to get rid of you-“

“Flash that’s enough- why have you always gotta be so mean to him?” Chloe said a little louder this time but Peter shook his head at her.

“Don’t. It’s fine don’t bother-“

But it was too late. Flash had already turned his attention to Chloe for her apparent insolence. “And why the fuck do you care? Since when do you hang out with Penis?”

“I don’t care I just don’t think you should say stuff like that.” She said quietly and shrugged.

“I can say whatever I want.” Flash sneered. “I never expected you to stick up for the low life’s-“

“Look Flash just leave her alone, go back to picking on me I know that’s way more fun.” Peter rolled his eyes and stood up, having finished fixing the light.
Flash took that as his cue to continue screaming insults at Peter, which he did with glee and Peter just stood there and took it. At some point Chloe snuck away, probably because she didn’t want to get caught in the crossfire again and Peter understood. Flash only stopped tormenting him when a teacher overheard some of the...colourful language he was using and the boy got in trouble for saying such things with kids in the room. Peter used that distraction to make his escape and he ran back to the classroom the volunteers were using to store their stuff and sat hidden behind one of the cabinets.

He stayed there for the remainder of the day, not even bothering to go out and help pack stuff up. He wasn’t in the mood anymore, he was starting to regret going in the first place. He’d had fun with the kids but he had broken his rule of a Flash free summer and now he felt even crummer than he had before. He just wanted a day away from home to distract him from how much he was missing his family but now he missed them more than ever. What he wouldn’t give to be able to go on one of his drives with Tony and just..

Three o'clock rolled around and everyone was flooding back to the classroom to collect their things and leave- and Peter ran into Ned again, physically this time; the larger boy almost knocking Peter onto his butt.

“Peter when did you go into foster care?!” Ned yelled, going wide eyed. “What happened with you and-“

“Ned shh!” Peter hissed and put his hand over his friends mouth until Ned nodded to show that he’d shut up. The pair quickly started walking towards the exit as Peter explained what had happened. “I accidentally said dad earlier and I had to try and come up with something on the spot.”

“Ahh. Yeah you’re not good at that.” Ned cringed. It was true Peter was an awful liar when he had time to come up with something let alone when he had to improvise. They were walking out of the back exit of the building when a familiar sky blue car came screeching into the parking lot, having made a turn at the very last second and going way over the speed limit. “Uhh, I think I just saw your ‘foster brother’.”

“Oh Jesus.” Peter groaned and covered his eyes. So much for keeping a low profile.

“Dude, I didn’t know he could drive.” Ned grinned.

“Saying he can drive is very generous. He can drive about as well as I can.” Thor highlighted Peter’s point by making another very illegal u-turn, narrowly avoiding hitting both stationary and
occupied vehicles as well as a few people.

Ned’s face dropped and he put a sympathetic hand on Peter’s shoulder. “I’ll tell a beautiful eulogy at your funeral bro.”

“I expect nothing less. I’d offer you a ride home but- well like you said someone’s gotta give a speech at my wake. See you tomorrow, dude.”

“Later.”

Sure enough Peter spotted Thor in his rudimentary disguise from across the parking lot and waved to him. Thor started waving back maniacally and managed to stop himself getting out of the car remembering in the nick of time that Peter had asked him specifically not to do just that. Peter smiled fondly and started crossing the open concrete square towards the car when out of nowhere someone walked into him. Hard. Barging their shoulder into his chest in a way that surely would have winded him before the bite.

“Watch where you’re going, Penis.” Flash spat. Literally spat, and Peter had to step backwards in order to avoid being hit by the disgusting fluid. Flash had obviously been waiting for Peter to leave the building because he hadn’t seen him until he jumped out from between two parked cars. Peter should’ve known he wasn’t going to leave the teasing there after he’d gotten the other boy into trouble.

“You literally walked into me but okay then.” Peter mumbled and attempted to step around him, but Flash stepped forward until they were chest to chest.

“I’m sorry what was that?” The older boy sneered. Though he was physically smaller than Peter now, he still towered over him by a good few inches and the height difference combined with his aggressive nature was enough to make Peter feel a lot smaller by comparison.

Peter sighed. He didn’t feel particularly intimidated or scared he was just done. He just wanted to go home. “Nothing Flash-“

“You wanna start shit, Penis? Out of school hours? Come on, even I know you ain’t that dumb.” That comment got Peter’s back up. It was the literal opposite of what he was trying to do, he hadn’t started anything, he was trying to avoid an altercation. But Flash was in a particularly bad mood that day and for whatever reason Peter was getting the brunt of it, so avoiding him was a very
difficult task.

“You wanna pick on me without your little buddies? You’re getting brave dude-“ Peter started to fire back but Flash did something he hadn’t done in a long time. He pushed him. Peter was shocked at first but quickly regained his composure. “Don’t touch me.”

“Or what?” Flash smirked and moved to do it again, but Peter grabbed his wrist.

“Don’t Flash.” Peter growled, more lowly. He could feel anger seeping into his chest, similar to that the day he beat the shit out of those guys at the compound and he didn’t want to lose control of himself; for his sake and for Flash’s. He could only tolerate so much but he didn’t want to hurt anyone. “I mean it.”

But Flash didn’t stop. He pushed Peter again this time with both hands, and he placed one of his feet behind him so that he lost his valence and fell to the ground. Once Peter was on the floor he kicked him in the chest, scattering the papers he had in his hand all over the floor and crushing all the items he had in his backpack (luckily mostly the things that were breakable were of little value though Tony was going to be mad that he’d broken what sounded like another phone).

“I said- or what, Pissy Pants Parker?”

Ugh, that name again. That one stung more than he cared to admit and he just prayed that no one around them heard or it was sure to start up again. Peter wanted to react but he knew better. He wasn’t going to stoop to that level, he was better than that. He fought his instincts. But part of it was because he just wanted it to end, if he kept his mouth shut and let it happen the moment would be over quicker and he could just go home. He just wanted to go home. “What are you gonna do? You gonna punch me again? Go ahead. You and I both know you ain’t got the balls.”

Peter didn’t respond, mostly because there was no right answer but also because he couldn’t will his mouth to move. He couldn’t will his lungs to expand either and he was getting increasingly short of breath. Apparently that was hilarious because Flash only laugh harder when he kicked him in the chest again, and this time Peter tasted blood.

“Just what I thought, you ain’t gonna do shit. You’re a fucking pussy.” Flash cackled and crouched down beside him, whispering teasingly in his ear. “You’re worthless Parker. You’re nothing. That’s all you’re ever gonna be.”
He tried to get up but Flash just kicked him again, this time in the face and that one hurt. Enough for Peter to feel his eyes stinging with tears just from the pain. “If I ever see you talk to Chloe again you’re fucking dead, you got it?”

“That’s what this is about? She doesn’t even like you bro she thinks you’re a dick! She’s just scared of you!” Is what Peter wanted to say, but he was too preoccupied with the pain in his jaw and the back of his head where it had smacked against the tarmac. That and he wasn’t brave enough to talk back. Peter opened his eyes to look up, to make sure that Flash had given in and he had- he was about to walk away but that wasn’t all Peter noticed.

Thor was out of the car.

_Thor was out of the fucking car._

Peter had forgotten entirely that Thor was even there. He scrambled to his feet and luckily Flash just saw it as another win for himself, thinking he’d scared Peter into running but really he was running to try and save Flash from the wrath of an angry god. Peter sprinted as fast as he could, forgetting about all of his belongings he’d dropped and only skidded to a halt when he almost slammed into Thor- who was still advancing towards his intended target.

“Hey! Hi sorry I’m late I had to-“ Peter stammered looking up at Thor desperately trying to stop him from walking but the man persisted. He continued pushing right past Peter, barely acknowledging that he was even in his path. He didn’t even look at him he continued staring with cold, bright blue eyes that almost seemed to be glowing with electricity, right over the boys shoulder and right at Flash. Oh shit.

“Who is that?” Thor asked lowly. His voice was a deep, flat growl that sent a shiver down Peter’s spine and was ominously reminiscent of how Bruce’s voice would change just before Hulk fronted.

“N-n-no one Thor, come on let’s just g-g-g-“ Peter couldn’t even get the last word out before Thor was bellowing across the parking lot, at the small figure in the distance that was Flash Thompson.

“YOU THER-“ Peter jumped up and put a hand over Thor’s mouth and the god looked down at him as though he’d gone insane.

“Thor please man, let’s just go home, please? I’m tired- I wanna- please Thor please don’t-“ Peter
begged, attempting to drag Thor back towards the car. He could feel eyes on them, the last thing he
wanted was people figuring out just who that big scary bearded man was and the fact that he was
standing with none other than Pissy Parker. He almost felt like crying—almost. He wasn’t about to
give Flash the satisfaction and he certainly wasn’t about to cry in front of Thor, that would only
send the god on the murderous rampage he was on the brink of.

But he was so humiliated. His teammate, one of his best friends, who he looked up to so much had
just seen him get his ass handed to him in broad daylight by a lightweight bully that Peter
should’ve been able to take with his eyes closed. It was bad enough that Flash was right, that Peter
was a pussy who was too scared to do anything— but now Thor had just seen it. Now Thor knew
how much of a loser he was. And now Thor was about to take matters into his own hands and he
couldn’t stop him— Peter couldn’t even stop Flash from acting out there was no way in hell he could
stop an angry god from doing what he wanted. He didn’t know what to do he just— he just wished
his dad was there. Or Happy— or anyone. Why did he say yes to Thor picking him up?

“Thor please.” Peter begged one last time, this time using his superstrength to pull Thor back. His
voice was breaking and he was so close to breaking down in tears it wasn’t even funny. Well
maybe it would be funny to Flash but it certainly wasn’t to him. “Please I just wanna go home.”

Thor stopped walking. He didn’t look down to make eye contact with Peter, he continued staring at
Flash as the boy got into his car, oblivious to who was watching him. At least he stopped walking.

The god stood there, silently staring after Flash’s car until it was no longer visible and even then he
only started moving when Peter pulled him back towards the car. He allowed himself to be
dragged there, like some kind of zombie, Peter having to manually push him into the driver’s seat
before he hopped in the passenger side. The car was deathly silent which was so startlingly unusual
that Peter was sure he was going to throw up from the anxiety.

They sat in silence for a few minutes before Thor started up the car. Peter was trying to will
himself to say something but again his vocal chords froze, rendering him mute. It was only after
ten minutes when he got his breathing under control that he managed to get a few strangled words
out.

“Thor I—” But the god cut him off immediately.

“Your father said you were no longer being bullied.”

“I’m... I’m not- dad told you about that?” Peter wasn’t aware that Tony had told anyone about the
‘bullying’. He had made his dad promise not to. That fucker. “Does everyone know?”
But Thor ignored his questions in favour of asking his own. “Don’t lie to me youngling you’ve done enough of that. I understand you lying to your father but don’t you dare even attempt to lie to me after what I just witnessed. Give me one good reason why shouldn’t call stark right now and tell him what I saw?”

“B-because I..because he-he’d be upset?”

“Well he bloody should be!” Thor snapped, yelling ear piercingly loud and making Peter flinch violently like he was being struck again. That seemed to snap Thor out of the angry daze he was in somewhat and for the first time he looked towards the boy beside him, and he softened his tone considerably. He put a comforting hand on Peter’s shoulder in an attempt to calm him down but the boy was still shaking. “Sorry- I’m sorry little one, I didn’t mean to- I didn’t mean to yell I just- I just don’t understand why you felt it necessary to lie to us all again . Have we not built your trust by now?”

“No no it’s not- it’s not like that I just..I don’t..I don’t wanna make a big deal out of nothing you know? I-I don’t want everyone worrying ‘bout me. I’m fine it doesn’t bother me anymore I’m fine-“

“It’s not nothing and it’s definitely not fine. Nothing about that is fine.” Thor said shortly. There was another small moment of silence where Peter wasn’t brave enough to speak. “What happened to that brave confident little spider I know? He wouldn’t let someone treat him like this-“

Peter shook his head and huffed a quiet joyless laugh. “That’s just a character Thor. When I’ve got the suit on I’m...I’m different. It’s easy being confident and cocky when no one knows who you are but everyone at my school knows me. They know Peter Parker, they know I’m a loser.”

“You are not a loser. Not in any sense of the word and I won’t hear it.” Anger seeped back into Thor’s tone that time and Peter..Peter really wasn’t sure that he liked it. He wasn’t used to being scolded by the god and frankly it was highly uncomfortable. “I know Peter Parker. I knew him long before I got to know Spider-Man and I know if he saw that happening to another child he wouldn’t stand for it.”

“Exactly tha-thats the point. While he’s focusing on picking on me he leaves the smaller kids alone.” Peter shrugged, trying to explain it in the same way he had to Tony all those months ago.

“There are kids smaller than you?”
“Hey!” Peter scowled. “I meant like, the ones who don’t have any friends or wouldn’t be able to handle it. I-I can so it’s not a big deal.”

“He laid his hands on you.” Thor shook his head, as though he was watching it over again in his mind. “What makes you any less valuable than those other children? Why do you deserve to get hurt but they’re allowed to be spared? What was it he was calling you?”

Peter felt his face flush red. “I don’t..I’m not gonna say it.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s embarrassing and awkward and honestly I don’t know how he says it without cringing constantly.” Peter said with finality. Thankfully Thor didn’t push too much and returned to his original point.

“I can’t believe he had the audacity to touch you.” He growled, gripping the steering wheel even tighter and Peter felt the car accelerate slightly. “He thought it was okay to touch you. My Spiderling. That boy has no idea who he’s dealing with but he will.”

“It wasn’t bad. Not- not like, _bad_ bad. Like I’m fine, I can take a punch you know and he’s not, he’s not exactly a hard hitter it was more..humiliating than anything else.” He was trying to calm Thor down so he didn’t start driving even more recklessly than usual; mostly because, well, he didn’t want to die and he also didn’t want Happy to have a heart attack when he tracked them. And the way the god was talking was scaring him more than he cared to acknowledge. “That’s what I mean. If he hits me I get a scrape that disappears in two minutes if he does that to someone else he could hurt them. So I don’t mind him taking his anger out on me.”

“You mean to say he makes a habit of hitting you?” So much for calming Thor down-

“What? No no! Not a habit it’s happened like- I don’t know, it’s not a big thing seriously.” He actually did have a number in his head of the instances where Flash threw a punch or two, or asked his entourage to do it for him; but considering the mood Thor was in (and how embarrassing Peter found the number to be anyway) he decided it was best to keep it to himself. “I can handle it Thor, really. So it’s okay.”

“Whilst I understand the sentiment Spiderling I don’t agree. Just because his victim can handle it
doesn’t excuse his behaviour I think someone ought to take him down a peg or two.” Thor said menacingly, gripping the steering wheel with such force Peter was surprised it didn’t snap entirely. In fact the circular wheel was starting to bow slightly, resembling a stretched oval instead.

“You can’t do anything you’ll get in trouble- he’s a kid Thor you can’t-“

“No I can’t. But I know someone who can. Leave it to me Peter.” Thor said quietly. Too quietly, too calmly- that was scarier than him ranting and raving. Peter saw a very small devilish smile creep onto the gods face that made his stomach twist.

“But- but-“

“Or I can tell your father what I witnessed. Your choice.”

Peter crossed his arms and slammed himself back into his seat to emphasise his discontent with that threat. “Wow that’s low, Thor.”

“You don’t get to speak of ‘low’ not after you’ve spent the past year lying to us all.” Thor snapped irritably and Peter sank down in his chair slightly. He really wasn’t used to Thor taking such a tone with him, in fact he couldn’t recall even a single incident where the man shot a raised word in his direction. Peter found being on the receiving end of something that had made Thor angry was highly uncomfortable and he didn’t plan on making a habit of it. He’d never understood it before but now he could see why people found the god a little scary. “Nothing for you to worry about this way. I shall handle it for you since you are clearly unable.”

“...I’ll do something myself alright? I’ll stick up for myself I-I’ll put a stop to it...just, please don’t do anything..” Peter dropped back into begging because he was starting to become increasingly scared of whatever the god was scheming.

“Okay little one. I trust you. Just trust me when I say I won’t be leaving the issue unresolved.” Thor said in a much calmer tone of voice, closer to his usual lilt as he looked at the boy beside him. He placed a hand on Peter’s shoulder again and squeezed lightly. “Now no more sad faces and no more worrying, hm? We’re finally getting out from under Happy's watchful gaze today and I intend to put it to full use.”

Peter let himself relax a little, hoping that Thor would keep his promise not to tell Tony about what had happened. God he wasn’t sure he’d be able to face his father if he found out... “How? Where
“are we going?”

“Oh you’ll see.” Thor grinned.

Peter did see, and it certainly helped to improve his mood after the god awful day he’d had. Thor had found his own secret place for them to go free running after all and Peter had a whale of a time chasing Thor around (as well as scaring the absolute shit out of him by popping up out of nowhere—similarly to how Clint had with him) and helping refine the gods movements. For someone so spry on his feet Thor was a little.. Clunky, to say the least. He definitely needed help with his technique and Peter was more than happy to help him; it was fun for Peter to be the teacher rather than the student for once and Thor, surprisingly, was a very receptive and willing pupil. There was one scary moment where Thor fell from the top of an abandoned six story apartment complex after the crumbling roof gave way but Peter caught him- and the god was completely unphased. He even made a game out of suddenly throwing himself off the edge to ‘test Peter’s reflexes’.

“More like test how strong my heart is- will you stop!”

Their fun was only cut short when Happy arrived looking furious and demanded that they both got in the car immediately. But the pair didn’t allow Happy’s (very angry) rant to dampen their spirits and only when Thor highlighted that fact did the atmosphere change.

“Calm down Happy man, no harm was done we were merely cheering the boy up.” Thor said coolly.

“Well did you even remember to feed him?! He- wait, what do you mean cheering up?” Happy looked in the rear view mirror trying to make eye contact with Peter but the boy was avidly avoiding his gaze. “What happened kid?”

“N-n-Nothing I was just- just bored.” Ugh! Stupid stutter!

Happy turned his gaze towards Thor. “Thor. What happened?”

Peter looked pleadingly at the blond beside him, silently begging him not to say anything. The god gave him a blank look that made the teen panic. “Nothing Happy man, the youngling was just rather over excited after being confined inside all day and it was making him anxious. I thought he needed the opportunity to exert some of that pent up energy.”
“Hmm.” Happy hummed and Peter mouthed Thor his thanks. “Well did you get him something to eat?”

“Uhh, no I forgot.” Thor said guiltily.

“Of course you did.” Happy scoffed and Peter suddenly became hyper aware that he was feeling a bit shaky... “Kiddo when was the last time you ate?”

“Uhh…” Peter debated on whether or not to tell the truth but due to his poor lying skills and how loud his stomach was growling now it was being talked about he decided to just be honest. “Uh- at like eleven? Eleven thirty?”

“Jesus Christ Peter.” Happy groaned. “You’ve gone six hours without eating?”

“Uhm..yes.”

“Right. Take your bloods, I’ll stop on the way home.” Happy shook his head and threw back the test kit he kept in the glove box.

“What else have you got in there?” Peter chuckled amusedly.

“Anything and everything, now shut up and check your blood sugar.” Happy snapped.

Peter giggled drunkenly to himself and for some reason he was finding it difficult to work the zipper on the bag containing the kit. His fingers felt oddly numb and he fumbled with it for a while before Thor took it off of him to do it for him. “You’re like Mary Poppins.”

“Christ how long until Tony’s back? Another twelve days? I can’t handle this for that long.” Happy mumbled to himself whilst Thor was tasked with trying to prick Peter’s finger; he managed to but Peter would always jerk away before he was able to get a drop of blood onto the testing strip and the boys accelerated healing made it a very difficult task.

He got there in the end though and Peter’s bloods were indeed at scary numbers- but nothing that a burger couldn’t fix. Once they got home and Thor had already exited the vehicle Peter sat back for
a moment to catch Happy alone. “Uhm..Happy?”

“What’s up kid?”

“Could..could you pick me up from now on? Like just you, no one else.”

Happy turned around to make direct eye contact and he looked Peter up and down a few times before he nodded. “It would be my pleasure. Go on kid, go get some rest. I’m taking you to Ned’s tomorrow night right?”

“Uh huh.” Peter confirmed as he hopped out. “See you tomorrow, have a good night.”

“See ya kid.”

Peter had all but forgotten about the incident with Flash, that was until Thor very brutally reminded him. Whereas he’d been chatting with him freely once they’d started training together Thor fell silent again as soon as he entered the building; something Peter had come to expect by now. “Peter.”

“Hm?” The hairs on the back of the teens neck tingled at the adults use of his first name, something he rarely did.

“Is that boy going to be there tomorrow?”

“W-What at the science fair?” Peter stuttered and Thor nodded. “I-I don’t know maybe. I d-d-didn’t know he was gonna be there t-today.”

Peter wanted to explain further how he probably wouldn’t have gone had he known he was going to be there or how he doubted Flash would bother with the second day; but he was too frustrated with his stuttering to continue. That and he was tired considering he’d missed napping that day. He started to feel that tight choked up feeling again, the one that caused his selective mutism, but Thor didn’t seem interested in asking anymore questions either. The atmosphere became tense again, though not in the same way it had been in the car when Thor was angry. No, it was as though the god was scheming again, which frankly made Peter more uneasy than when the man was visibly upset. He couldn’t tell what he was thinking and that scared him.
Once they got back up to the common floor and the pair stepped out of the elevator Peter headed straight towards the couch after kicking off his shoes, expecting Thor to be right behind him, but he wasn’t. Peter looked over the back of the couch expectantly but Thor was already halfway down the hall. “I’ll be in my quarters should you need me youngling, I have some arrangements to make.”

“O-oh. Ok-kay.” Peter mumbled. He wasn’t sure whether to say goodnight, it was only quarter to seven after all so he doubted Thor would stay in his room all evening. After the long day he had the teenager was content to spend a couple hours by himself anyway, so he stuck a movie on and relaxed.

Though after a while he started to feel the same cold empty feeling he had from the day before in the lab. The living room was usually the beating heart of their home, even when it was empty, there was always someone passing through or in an adjacent room. Peter had always complained that he needed some quiet time, but now that he had it, total silence, he realised that he hated it. He would’ve given anything to hear the usual humdrum and constant vibrations that came with living with six other people. Even though he knew Thor was a couple doors away he felt so alone and his mind went to MJ, how she must’ve felt being well and truly alone so often.

He couldn’t even FaceTime her as he usually would have done as for once her father was in town and she said that he wasn’t the type to appreciate her talking to boys under any circumstances. Peter understood but he couldn’t help but he a little resentful that both of his friends had the luxury of their family being under the same roof as them.

He wanted to text Tony but he knew he couldn’t. He didn’t want his dad to worry about him and he could wait a few hours until bedtime when the man said he would call. So he waited.

And waited.

And waited.

It was ten forty before he even got a text.

Mr. Stark: Hey kiddo, still up?

Peter: Uh huh
Mr. Stark: Sorry it’s so late. Ran over longer than we expected.

Peter: Is everything okay?

Mr. Stark: Everyone is safe and accounted for we just don’t have a secure base right now.

Peter: So you’re on the run?

Mr. Stark: Eh. I like to think of it as we’re staying on our toes.

Peter: Does that mean we can’t call tonight?

Mr. Stark: I’m not sure bubs. We have to be careful not to give away our position.

As much as Peter wanted to cry just reading that, he couldn’t let that on. It wasn’t fair, not when Tony was out there facing real problems- not just some stupid teenage crap. Peter couldn’t put that on his shoulders too, he had to be strong.

Peter: It’s cool. Stay safe.

The teenager expected the conversation to end there but Tony replied quickly.

Mr. Stark: I’ll call you as soon as we get to a safe spot to rest, I just don’t know when that will be.

Peter: I’ll stay up, I don’t mind.

Mr. Stark: No can do kiddo, you need some rest.

Peter: Well you and I both know I can’t do that without seeing your ugly mug. :p
Mr. Stark: Wow. Feeling the love there, Pete.

Peter: (: <3

Mr. Stark: Okay brat, I’ll call in a couple hours or so.

Peter relaxed somewhat after that, though he could no longer do so in the living room comfortably; so he retired to his own room. He considered knocking on Thor’s door to say goodnight but decided against it. He could see the glowing red ‘Do not disturb’ sign on the panel next to his door from the other end of the hallway. As much as it saddened him slightly, and he hoped that Thor was both okay and not mad at him, he didn’t have the energy to go and knock anyway. He was emotionally burnt out and he was getting there physically too, he could barely keep his eyes open. He intended to stay awake until his dad called but he couldn’t, he fell asleep almost as soon as he laid down in his bed which he would regret not a few hours later.

He wasn’t awoken by his phone ringing as he had hoped for, he was awoken by a disgustingly familiar wet feeling between his legs.

He wasn’t particularly surprised that it had happened, he’d been in the midst of an awful dream. Peter sat up and rubbed his eyes trying to simultaneously rub away the feeling the dream had left him with. He’d been out on patrol with Tony and the rest of the team when suddenly Flash came out of nowhere and started berating him just as he had been the day before; only this time Thor didn’t attempt to come to his aid, no one did, they just stood and watched and allowed it to happen. Slowly they started to join in, nodding and agreeing with Flash that Peter was pathetic and that he was worthless and then everyone was pushing him and pushing him until he- oh god. Not again.

Peter let out a muffled scream of frustration into his pillow before throwing it at the wall. Of course he pissed the bed of course he fucking did- everything the dream was saying was right. He was pathetic and stupid and worthless and- and- He didn’t wanna think about it anymore, he was starting to feel sick. Even though he knew his family would never say anything like that it didn’t make it any less humiliating. Especially considering that’s how Peter thought the rest of the world viewed him anyway.

It was routine by now, but it never got any easier; having to drag himself up after coming out of a deep sleep (deep enough for him to pee without fucking noticing) then having to about changing the sheets and the mattress protector and- “No, no, no- shit!”
During his last midnight load of laundry he’d neglected to put another protector on his mattress and as a result he’d soaked the entire bed. He could have actually kicked himself but he didn’t have time, he had to try and do—well something before the stain set in—but what? He had no clue. He’d never had to deal with this before. Whenever it happened when he was younger he’d had May to help him, before she could afford to get him one of those fancy reusable protectors, and Tony had always kept one on his bed even before he started having...regular issues. All he knew was that he had to do something before he ruined the mattress entirely

He started to panic, like, really panic. He thought about googling it but he didn’t exactly want whatever government agent who monitored his internet history knowing he’d researched how to get pee out of a mattress. So he went with the next best option. “J-J-JARVIS?”

“Yes Master Peter?”

“H-help.” Peter whimpered out pitifully. He knew what he had to say but he couldn’t bring himself to say it out loud. Fortunately the AI wasn’t programmed to be cruel.

“Might I suggest you try flipping the mattress first to assess the damage, sir.”

Peter nodded and set about to do that. He vaguely remembered his aunt doing that when he was younger but then his bladder had been small enough not to cause too much damage; however, now he was older, flipping the mattress wouldn’t help him. He’d wet enough for it to soak through completely into the other side. In fact, he could see a small wet spot on the carpet beneath his bed frame too. That was it, the tears were falling freely now; god Flash was right. He really was pathetic. “It— it’s gone all the way through.”

“In that case you need to absorb the excess moisture with a towel and cover the area with baking soda to absorb the liquid that has soaked into the fabric.”

“Baking soda?” Peter clarified, as he was sure he was hearing the computer wrong.

“Yes sir. There’s a large tub of it down in the laundry room on the floor below your current location.” Peter rolled his eyes at that. As if he didn’t know where the laundry room was. Like he hadn’t made a hundred midnight trips down there before he got a washer put in his bathroom.

“Why in the laundry room and not the kitchen?”
“For this very purpose. Accidents happen.” JARVIS said in a neutral tone but Peter could swear it sounded as though the computer was talking more gently than usual; just the idea that his dad had thought to programme the AI to make him feel better about pissing the bed made him cringe.

“Okay...then what?”

“I think it’s best if we do this one step at a time, Peter. The list of steps is rather extensive according to my research.”

“Great- great! That’s just fantastic! Fabulous! It’s not like I wanted to sleep anyway!” Peter sobbed dramatically. He was fucking exhausted he didn’t want to deal with this- he should have had to deal with this! He was almost sixteen! Sixteen year olds don’t piss the bed. Well apparently the pathetic ones with nicknames like Piss Pants Parker do- god fucking dammit!

He stormed around his bedroom, stripping his clothes and changing into just some loose boxers and a T-shirt; there was no point getting fully dressed before he got to shower anyway. He quickly gathered up the soiled things to take with him, figuring he might as well since he was heading to the laundry room anyway. That ended up being a big mistake.

As soon as he entered the hallway he saw Thor standing there. “Fuck.”

“Youngling are you- Oh dear.” Thor noticed the state Peter was in immediately. He’d heard the boy slamming around his room and he figured something had happened. “It’s okay-“

“No.” Peter shook his head, going pale. “Y-y-you’ve seen enough today I’m not- no. Not this too.”

Thor sighed and started walking towards him. “Come now, it’s alright. It’s nothing-“

“No!” Peter yelled and took off running in the other direction, but Thor was quicker than he looked and caught Peter’s arm.

“No child. I won’t allow you to run away and deal with this alone. We’ve been over this before, have we not?” Thor said gently.
“Yes b-b-but it’s different!”

“How so?”

“Because y-y-you a-already saw me get- get-“ Peter let out a noise of frustration. Like it wasn’t bad enough that he couldn't control his bladder like a toddler apparently he had the speech capacity of one too.

“Yes I saw you get picked on today but that’s a separate issue and it has not changed how I view you. Therefore that doesn’t pertain to our current situation. Nothing has changed. It still doesn’t bother me that you wet your bed, just as it hasn’t every other time. Now calm yourself down, take a deep breath and let me-“ Thor trailed off and his eyes snapped up, looking behind him. Peter’s eyes followed where he was looking- back to his bedroom because he could..he could hear that noise again. The one he’d heard before, the one that made his head feel funny...

Thor let go of Peter’s arm and ran back to his room, sticking his head into the doorway and hissing. “No you mustn’t. It hurt him last time you cannot. Just be quiet.”

Okay..That...that wasn’t normal behaviour. Peter was more than a little freaked out- he was damn right scared of the gods reaction. Who was he talking to..and why did that noise stop after he asked it..? “Thor are you okay..?”

“Yes Spiderling sorry I- I left my TV on.” Thor said quickly shaking his head, but it was evident on the teenagers face that he didn’t believe him. “I lost the remote for the blasted thing and now I have to do that stupid voice recognition- and it never works!”

“Oh..” Peter sniffled. He wanted to believe him because frankly any other possibility was freaking him out and he didn’t have the capacity to deal with anything else that day. So he chose to ignore it. For now.

Mostly because his legs were starting to get itchy where he had yet to shower and he felt gross, tired and completely emotionally worn out. He just wanted to go back to bed and for the past twenty four shitty hours to be over with. “Y-you sure you’re alright..? I know it’s been an o-o-off day..”

Thor smiled and nodded. “Yes youngling. Now come along. I’ll put these in the wash while you change the mattress.”
The god held out his hands expectantly but Peter didn’t move, instead he stared down ashamedly at his feet. “Uh..I um..”

“What is it?”

“I kinda..Uhm..I f-f-f.“ Peter got totally stuck on one particular word and the harder he tried to speak the worse his stutter became; soon he was hyperventilating and Thor took a step closer to him so he could put his hands on the boys' shoulders.

“It’s alright. Deep breaths, give yourself a moment, you’ll get there.” Thor said calmly.

Eventually Peter got the words out but in that time tears started running down his face again. “I f-f-forgot t-to put the protector back on..”

Thor connected the dots quickly without having to ask further questions, sparing Peter’s pride ever so slightly. “Ah. Do you need help to flip the mattress?”

“I-I already did...It...I-it went through.”

“Oh.” Thor sighed and looked at the floor for a moment before his eyes snapped up again. “Okay change of plan. You put these in the wash I’ll handle the bed.”

“But-“

Thor waved his hand cutting Peter off. “No buts. I’ll handle it.”

“Thor I don’t want dad to find out..”

“He won’t youngling I’ll take care of it.” Thor said confidently and gestured for Peter to continue down to the laundry room before adding. “Just..don’t take your earbuds out for a while, alright?”
Peter’s face was the picture of confusion. “Why?”

“Just don’t.” Thor said seriously. Then he cleared his throat and ushered Peter down the hallway. “Run along.”

Though his instructions struck Peter as very strange he was too tired to care. He made sure to store all of the man’s odd behaviours in the back of his mind to be questioned later but right now he just wanted to shower and go back to sleep. Once he’d dealt with the laundry, the itching on his legs became too much to bare and he ended up slipping into one of the common floor bathrooms and taking a five minute shower- of which he was famous for.

By the time he got back to his room he came back the mattress was clean and dry, with new bedding readily made. Peter was bewildered, he knew that it wouldn’t have been possible for Thor to have dried the mattress completely in that time but when he gingerly placed his hand on the centre of the bed it was bone dry; there was also a distinct lack of any odor which he was incredibly grateful for but he knew that wasn’t right. All he could smell was laundry detergent, which with his sensitive nose was very odd- but he was not about to complain.

Thor was still standing there waiting for him so Peter took the opportunity to question just how the god had managed to pull it off. “You didn’t steal this from someone else’s room did you? Because I don’t want Clint screaming about his mattress being stolen when he gets home.”

“I didn’t Little one, I assure you.” Thor chuckled and peeled Peter’s quilt back for the boy to clamber into it.

“I ain’t little.” The boy yawned.

“Of course you’re not.” Thor said seriously as Peter rubbed his eyes tiredly, looking about ready to pass out right where he stood. “Come on, back into bed with you.”

“Thank you Thor.” Another sure sign that Peter was utterly exhausted was the fact he didn’t protest to Thor practically tucking him in. He crawled into bed and allowed Thor to pull the covers up and around his ears the way he liked, his eyes being shut the entire time. “Promise you won’t tell dad?”

“I promise. I know this was likely due to all the liquids I allow you to consume past your bedtime.” Thor smiled and brushed the boy’s hair away from his face. “I know it’s been an emotional day
also, so that’s a contributing factor.”

“Mhm..m’sorry I didn’t tell you about bein’ bullied. W’s jus’ embarrassed.” Peter slurred tiredly, not being fully conscious of what he was saying.

“I understand. I don’t blame you, Spiderling.” Thor sighed and continued petting the boy’s hair without realising he was doing so. In the hours he’d spent locked in his room...thinking, the anger had left him and he felt nothing but sorry for Peter, despite the boy lying to him. “I just want you to know that you can tell me anything. I’ll never judge you or belittle you, that’s not what big brothers do. But you understand you have nothing to be ashamed of, don’t you?”

“Shouldn’t let myself get picked on like that.”

“Maybe not but that doesn’t make it your fault. You’re a sensitive soul, that’s all. And whilst I think that is an amazing attribute, one of your strongest assets and makes you an amazing hero-others will take advantage of that, but that’s their fault not yours. As you get older you’ll learn to shield yourself from such people, but you are young. You made a mistake in not telling us, yes, but I shan’t hold that against you and I won’t tell your father. I’ll keep it between us so long as you promise to let me help you.”

“How?” Peter asked innocently and due to his eyes being closed he didn’t see the dark grin that grew on Thor’s face as the god thought about his plan.

“In any way I can.”

“Like what?”

“I have some ideas.” Thor hummed simply as he stepped away from Peter’s bedside and moved across the room to dim the lights. “Now, it’s time to go back to sleep, Hm? You have another early start tomorrow.”

“M’kay. G’night Thor, love you.”

“I love you too, little one.”
Chapter Summary

I knooooow I'm dragging this thing out and I'm sorry- two more chapters and I'll wrap this ting up I swear.
I knew where I wanted to go just not how to get there and I kinda fucked things up in the middle soooo here we are.
Everyone's probably guessed what's going on anyway so I kinda ruined the whole thing by dragging it out..meh.
Anyway! Here's a filler chapter with some fluff if you squint.

“Good morning Youngling.”

“Hi.”

“Did you get some rest?” Thor asked as he set about placing a plate in front of Peter. He’d actually cooked a decent breakfast that morning as opposed to serving up random junk food; the incident the day before where Peter’s bloods had dropped highlighted the fact that he’d neglected to fulfill one of his most important babysitting duties- though in fairness, it was merely a ruse for what he really planned to do for the boy. What he’d spent all night planning.

“Mhm.” Peter mumbled.

“Is everything alright?” Thor asked tentatively as he sat beside the boy. He figured that Peter was upset from everything that had happened the day before. He was half right.

“Have you heard from anyone? Dad and the others I mean?”

Thor frowned slightly. “I messaged back and forth with your father yesterday afternoon but not since then.”

“M-me either.” Peter swallowed, trying his best to remain calm. “He..he said he would call me when they got to a safe spot last n-night and he didn’t. He hasn’t even texted me since before I went to bed.”
Thor also looked visibly nervous for a second but he shook it off with ease and gave Peter a confident smile. “I’m sure everything’s alright, my boy. I wouldn’t worry yourself too much, as you understand plans tend to go ajar on these kinds of missions.”

“What kind of missions?”

“Well when we deal with such-“ Thor cut himself off and gave Peter a pointed look. “Very sly youngling, you almost had me there.”

Peter sighed exasperatedly. “Thor can’t you just tell me what they’re doing?”

“No. I’m not permitted to tell you anything and even if I were I wouldn’t. There’s no use in worrying you when our peers are perfectly capable of tackling the situation.” Thor said simply as he set about stacking Peter’s plate with food as the boy had neglected to do so himself.

“But I’m worrying now because I have no idea what they’re doing or how dangerous it is or-“

“There’s no use in tormenting yourself over things you cannot control, that’s a life lesson you truly need to learn Spiderling, in all aspects.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Peter questioned, irritation seeping into his tone. He wasn’t quite sure what Thor was implying but it sounded mildly patronising and he wasn’t in the mood to deal with it. Not today.

“I mean, you tend to pick yourself apart over attributes that are out of your control. Such as the bedwetting for instance.” Thor shrugged as he took a bite of his own meal.

Peter put his head in his hands. “Ugh do we have to talk about that-“

“Not at all. I’m merely using as an example but your reaction alone proves my point. Something you physically cannot do anything about, that you cannot control you ridicule yourself over- why? Why worry so much about something you cannot change?”
“Oh I don’t know because I have anxiety. That I’m on medication for.” Peter snapped. It was all well and good Thor putting it in black and white, logical terms but that’s not how human brains work. Logic and emotion don’t mix, Peter’s entire life was testament to that. “Like diagnosed, textbook generalised anxiety disorder- my life is full of things I can’t change. And while I can’t change them, it would be nice to actually understand what’s going on instead of being told to not worry. I can’t help worrying, but I’d worry less if I knew what they were doing.”

Despite Peter’s ranting Thor remained completely calm even as Peter got heated and starting gesticulating; looking like a mini version of Tony right down to the expressions he was making. “Yes well, I believe that you’d worry more if you knew what they were doing so as a group we’ve elected not to tell you.”

“How do you guys know that I’d worry more or less? That’s not for you to decide.”

“Actually it is, little one. It is our job to decide that. Just trust me.” Thor shrugged again.

“How can I trust you when you’ve been acting so weird?!” Peter snapped without catching himself. He hadn’t meant to say that it just slipped out. Thor looked up at him, with a blank look on his face. “I’m sorry..I didn’t- I didn’t mean that.”

But Thor looked unphased by his minor outburst. “I understand little one, truly I do. I understand you’re stressed about more than just what’s going on out there, hm?”

“Yeah.” Peter mumbled, hanging his head slightly and pushing his breakfast around his plate. He hadn’t really thought about the whole Flash thing since he woke up but it was obvious that’s what Thor was referring to. He’d been too preoccupied worrying about his dad to remember all the shit from the day before god.

“That’s why I took the liberty of packing your bag for you. One less thing to worry over.” Thor hummed cheerfully. A little too cheerfully. “I remembered to make you lunch this time too- well rather Steven did. We have to use up some of his meals after all, or he may murder us when he gets home.”

“You, you mean. I’m a sweet innocent baby boy that can do no wrong, remember?” Peter smirked.

“Ah yes, how could I forget? You truly are the apple of your mother’s eye.” Thor chortled.
“Honestly you have him wrapped around your little finger, youngling.”

“Oh like I don’t have all of you like that.” Peter laughed.

Thor pointed his fork accusingly at the teen seated across from him. “Aha, so you admit you’re a brat.”

“And a damn good one too.” Peter grinned as he crossed the room to pick up his backpack. “Thanks for breakfast and for packing my bag for me.”

“The pleasure was all mine, Spiderling.” Thor said. As the blond was faced away from him Peter couldn’t see the dark look in his eyes when he said that. “Have a good day. I’ll see you tonight.”

“I’m staying at Ned’s remember?” Peter reminded him. Had the god forgotten what day it was again? That worried Peter slightly..he remembered how odd he’d been acting the day before too..maybe he ought to stay home after all and make sure that Thor was okay.

“Ah, ah yes of course. Don’t mind me, must have slipped my mind.” Thor shook his head. “In that case you better not be thinking about leaving without giving me a hug.”

Peter smiled and walked back over to say a proper goodbye. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Have a good time- and be good.” Thor mumbled the last part under his breath which Peter found weird but whatever. He didn’t have time to wait and think about it he was already getting threatening texts from Happy telling him to get his ass down to the car. “Oh and Peter?”

“Yeah?”

“Remember to leave your school bag in Happy’s car once you leave to go to Edward’s okay?”

“Uhh, yeah sure.” Peter nodded. Another weird request. Peter was going to have to start writing these down. As soon as Bruce got back he was going to suggest the doctor do a psychiatric evaluation because Thor was really starting to act in a way that made Peter worried about his mental health.
On the drive towards the school Peter was feeling increasingly anxious. All the feelings he’d had the day before started to bubble up again. Happy tried to chat with him, after all the agent had driven the teenager to school enough time to spot the anxiety signs; the fidgeting, the leg bouncing, the restless hands. Though all of those signs were synonymous with the beginnings of a potty dance so Happy did have to clarify more than once that Peter didn’t need him to stop on the way there. Once Peter assured him that his bladder had already been taken care of the agent went back to trying to distract him; but the topic of conversation soon fell onto the boy’s father which set Peter off again.

“Have you heard from him?”

“Got a signal through early this morning saying they’d found a place but it hadn’t been secured yet.” Happy sighed. He’d been hoping to avoid talking to Peter about it until he had good news to give him, not more vague jargon.

“What does that mean?”

“It probably means their hiding out in an abandoned house somewhere until they can get to the next safehouse.”

“W-why? Does that mean something went wrong? What if they get found-“

“Kid. Slow down. It doesn’t mean anything and alright it just means they had to change their plans a little- you know better than anyone that happens all the time so don’t get your panties in a twist.”

“You know you and Thor need to do some kind of counselling course or something, get your certification because you’re honestly the best and getting someone to feel better.” Peter snarled venomously. “Telling someone not to worry is about as helpful as telling someone to calm down- it doesn’t work.”

Instead of rising to it Happy remained calm. He was used to dealing with Tony’s bad attitude so a usually mild mannered teenager was a piece of cake; especially when he knew that teenager was only being rude because he was scared. “Easy kid. I ain’t the enemy here, alright? As soon as I hear anything else I’ll be sure to let you know.”

“Okay..Wait did you say this morning? What time this morning?”
“I don’t know, around fiveish? Before you’d have been awake.”

Peter slumped against the window. Why hadn’t Tony texted him instead? He understood if the man had limited signal but Peter would have passed on any important information, why would Tony waste what was assumedly his only text on Happy? Peter couldn’t deny that he felt a little hurt, though the logical side of him understood the kid side, who missed his dad and needed him round about now, was less than thrilled. Oh well, at least he knew that they were okay. For now.

Peter’s anxiety was also eased when he saw Ned outside the school, waiting for him as opposed to being late for once. At least he wouldn’t have to face Flash again by himself. He was also lucky that Ned hadn’t witnessed the other boy pushing him in the parking lot or he’d have to worry about holding Ned back from a fight and he couldn’t handle the responsibility today.

Flash unfortunately did show up for the second day, although Chloe didn’t, so Peter was confident he’d be able to make himself scarce enough not to get lambasted again. He found himself actually able to enjoy the science fair as he usually would have done without the added distraction. The only time he came face to face with his tormentor was when Flash had made one eleven year old girl cry because, according to him, her potato battery was ‘unoriginal and stupid’; even then Peter had sent Ned in to scare him off while he comforted the girl and helped jazz up her battery just a teensy bit. It’s not like he juiced it up enough to power the school for a month or anything. Nope. And it wasn’t cheating if he just showed her how to wangjangle it- right?

Anyway, his escapades of spicing up middle school science were cut short when he felt his phone vibrate in his pocket and he ducked out of the hall to check it. And he was glad he did so in a timely fashion.

Mr. Stark: Hey Underoos- you busy?

Peter: No what’s up?

Mr. Stark: Fancy a call?

Peter: Is that even a question?

Mr. Stark: Can’t talk for long though.
Tony called Peter straight away and it didn’t take two seconds for Peter to notice just how bad the man looked. “Hey bubs-“

“What happened?”

“Not bad how are you?” Tony said lightly.

“Dad.” Peter sighed angrily. He wasn’t in the mood for banter, not after seeing the purple and red marks littering the side of the man’s head; as well as looking exhausted and for Tony, the man who once went four days without sleeping to the point that he was delirious, that was saying something. “What happened to your face?”

“I beat Bruce at blackjack, you know, Hulk smash.” Tony said the last two words in a terrible impression of the green giant and Peter was less than impressed.

“Do you really think now’s the time to be making jokes after I spent all night up worrying?” Peter snapped with more bite than he had intended. “Can you be serious for like two minutes please?”

Tony’s face fell slightly. So much for trying to act normal. “No, you’re right. I’m sorry bub, we didn’t get anywhere safe until early this morning-“

“When you texted Happy.” Peter said too quickly. It was obvious he wanted to have a fight about it but Tony just sighed tiredly.

“Peter-“

“I’m not mad! I’m just stating a fact.”

“Yes, when I texted Happy. Everything’s fine the mission just went off track for a second there, but it’s all good now. We made an advance on our target but lost sight of them and had to track
them down by foot. Then we lost signal for awhile- I only just managed to boost it.”

“Well the quality is terrible. Did you set up a wireless range extender I made?” Peter grumbled. Though he didn’t like the explanation he’d got it was better than being told he’d been forgotten about or something had gone disastrously wrong.

“Yes Richard Branson, I did.” Tony rolled his eyes. Honestly, sometimes the teenager treated him as though he was as technologically inept as Steve simply because he was older. “I’m sorry it’s not up to your standards.”

“Well I’m just happy to see your face. Even if you look like a minecraft character.” Peter allowed himself to smile slightly, even though he was still sore about Tony not texting him it was hard to stay mad.

Tony smirked too. “Likewise. How did the science fair go yesterday?”

“It was good, it-“ Peter cut himself off. He didn’t want to say anything incriminating but his eyes drifted towards Flash who was currently yelling at a nine year old. He knew if he gave any information his dad would sniff out the lie immediately so he thought it was best to keep his mouth shut entirely. “It was good.”

“What happened?” Ah. Apparently Peter’s plan of keeping quiet wasn’t as foolproof as he’d hoped.

“What? Nothing!”

Tony gave Peter a dry look. “You usually talk my ear off about it.”

“Well excuse me.” The teen huffed and rolled his eyes. They’d only been talking for a few minutes and Tony was already dragging private information out of him, and he wasn’t a fan.

“Someone needs a nap.” Tony chuckled.

Peter just pouted. “Don’t tease me. And to think I actually missed you.”
“I miss you too bubby, more than you know.”

Tony’s tone had dropped down into a more emotive one, one that Peter didn’t feel capable of handling right then and there. He couldn’t afford to let himself get so upset, not out in public like that. He blinked quickly to rid his eyes of any mistiness and cleared his throat. “So uh- so, h-how long are you gonna be staying there?”

“Not long I imagine.” Peter hadn’t expected an answer any less vague than that. This was Tony talking after all, trying to get information about their mission was like trying to squeeze blood from a stone.

“Good because I can’t deal with this level of quality for two-”

“What? The audios funny P, I can’t hear you.” At first the teen assumed his dad was trying to be funny again but the screen pixelated and froze alongside it; he could vaguely see Tony moving around attempting to get a better signal, whenever the video feed decided to play. After a second or so it evened out but the audio was crackly and distorted.

At exactly the same time Tony and Peter both decided that whacking their respective phones would solve their technical difficulties, and proceeded to slam them into the palm of their opposite hands simultaneously. By some miracle it actually worked. Sure it may have been a coincidence- but then again it may not have been. Okay it was but sometimes hitting things is just fun.

After a moment of clarity Tony nodded. “Better?”

“Better.”

“Now what were you saying?”

“I said I can’t-“ Peter was cut off again but not by the poor internet quality. By the sound of screaming. But it wasn’t emanating from Tony’s end of the phone.

Peter’s body went straight into Spidey mode; all of his muscles tensed and he felt an instant rush of adrenaline course through him, calling him to action. “I gotta go-“
“Peter what was-“

“I’ll text you. I love you.”

“Peter wait-“

But Peter didn’t wait. He’d already hung up. His legs automatically carried him towards where the screams were emanating from, now a chorus of several terrified voices as opposed to the one. It wasn’t coming from the sports hall, but the classroom where the volunteers were storing their bags.

“It bit me! It fucking bit me!” Flash? Had some fire ants from that fifth graders terrarium got out? But he was screaming, a lot more than one would expect from such a minor injury. Then again this was Flash, he was known to be a little melodramatic- but no, other people were screaming as well.

“Did you get it?!”

“No I didn’t fucking get it Sarah- do I look like Steve Irwin?!”

Peter rounded the corner and skidded into the classroom only to see Flash on the floor curled into a ball and clutching his arm whilst three or so other students were standing on a table in the far corner of the room. “What happened?!“

“Oh fuck off, Penis!” Flash groaned in between sobs hit Peter wasn’t concerned about what his mouth was doing, he was more focused on the blood seeping out between the boy’s fingers.

Peter crouched down beside him and pulled the affected limb closer so he could take a better look. “Move your hand.”

“Fuck you-“
“Flash, I’m medically trained. Stop being a little bitch and move your hand.” Peter said calmly and forcefully pried the hand away. Sure enough there was a mark but not one Peter would have expected for the amount of blood. There were two small perforations in his skin, about an inch apart, almost like someone’s crappy attempt at vampire bite makeup only it was very real. Peter could feel the heat coming off of the boys arm and he didn’t need to be medically trained to know that that wasn’t good.

“What the hell—"

“It’s your fucking fault don’t act like you don’t know!” Flash spat accusingly which only made peter more confused.

“How is it- what did I do?!"

“It’s your fucking snake!”

“Snake?!” What the hell was he talking about? That was when Peter followed the boy’s eyes to his backpack which’s contents had been strewn all over the floor no less, papers and remnants of his lunch scattered around the room. And when he looked towards his now practically empty bag he noticed it was..moving slightly. “What were you doing in my bag?!”

“What were you doing putting a fucking snake in there?! Don’t act like this wasn’t on purpose!”

“I didn’t-“ Oh no.

Thor.

‘Fuck.’ Peter knew he should have been more suspicious about the man’s helpfulness that morning, but as Flash had quite rightly put it- a fucking snake?!

“I’m gonna die!” Flash wailed pathetically, though in all honesty Peter didn’t know if that was an exaggeration or a near truth. Thor had been furious after all, furious enough to endanger Peter as well as every other person in the building just to get back at Flash but he sincerely hoped that the snake wasn’t of a venomous variety. Though the swelling of the other boy’s wrist seemed to disprove that theory.
By that point all the yelling had alerted several members of staff who set about taking over the situation, ignoring Flash’s cries about it being Peter’s fault as they assumed he was hallucinating or just—well being typical Flash; that and they figured that the animal was an escaped science fair exhibit. But Peter didn’t stick around for them to ask questions, he got the hell out of dodge.

Obviously Tony had been frantic when Peter dropped the call and immediately alerted Happy who was already entering the building as Peter ran out.

“Kid what ha—“

“Take this.” Peter growled and shoved his backpack (that he was holding at arms length and had webbed shut when he was sure no one was looking) into Happy’s hands. “Give it to Thor and tell him he’s a fucking idiot .”

“Uhh—” For once in his life Happy was shocked into silence and Peter used the opportunity to retrieve his overnight bag from the trunk and walk back towards the building to retrieve his friend. “Peter wait! What—“

“Ask Thor!” Peter yelled and stormed away.

“Are you okay at least?!“

“ Do I look okay?!“ Peter screamed and Happy held his hands up to admit defeat. If the kid was well enough to scream he clearly wasn’t hurt and Happy wasn’t sure he really wanted to deal with the situation anyway. He just made sure to text his boss that the kid was fine.

Peter practically dragged Ned out of the building, who had heard what happened and was more than interested to see how events were unfolding. Fortunately (or unfortunately) Flash wasn’t going into any kind of anaphylaxis and it looked like he would be okay; probably due to Peter’s quick thinking and the rudimentary venom extractor he made out of a syringe and an asthma inhaler.

“Dude I wanna see if he loses an arm—“
“Like they’re gonna amputate it in the middle of the school!”

“They might! And I’ll never be happy again if I miss it!” Ned whined as he continued to be pulled away by his arm but when Peter gave him one of perfected angry Tony Stark looks he soon stopped complaining.

“Am I driving you or-“

“We’re walking. Thank you anyway Hap, I’ll see you in the morning.” Peter growled. He was trying his best not to direct his anger at Happy but he was seething. After the rant Thor had gone on about children not deserving to be hurt he’d just intentionally injured a fucking child- yes Flash was a dick, yes he deserved some kind of punishment but that- that was just- how could the blond be so stupid?!

“How do you know it was Thor?”

“Because I just do- a snake came out of my bag and bit Flash - then conveniently disappeared back into my bag.”

“Okay yeah that’s a little- okay so Thor has a snake he’s been training?” Ned relented.

“I don’t know! Maybe that’s what he’s been doing hauled up in his room all the time!” Peter cried. His theory made sense..except it didn’t. How did that make any sense? Even if Thor had somehow trained the thing, how would it know to exclusively bite Flash? It wasn’t as though Thor had something of the boy’s with his scent on it to use as an incentive. Unless it was some kind of Asgardian snake that could take instructions or something? Either way what the fuck-

“But you said no one knows about the Flash stuff except Tony and you like, lied to him about it so how would Thor know?”

“I d-don’t know.” Peter stammered and looked towards the ground. The anger slipped from his tone which had Ned staring at him in a way that let on he knew Peter was lying. “Don’t look at me like that.”

“Tell me.” Ned said flatly.
“No.”

“Peter-“

“I said no Ned.”

“Fine.” Ned said calmly as he abruptly stopped walking. And sat down.

“Ned not again!” Peter groaned. Ned had developed this tactic pretty early on in their relationship. Peter tended to take a passaphist approach, so simply annoying him when he was being stubborn didn’t work, Peter would never rise to it. But a seven year old Ned realised the other boy was susceptible to becoming highly embarrassed whenever he did- well anything odd in public. So embarrassing Peter by throwing himself on the floor and refusing to move tended to do the trick.

“Go ahead Spider-Boy, pick me up. I’m sure all these people would love to see a skinny little kid like you fireman carry me.” Ned grinned knowing full well he had Peter backed into a corner. “I’m sure everyone would just love to know how you’re so strong.”

“Okay fine . Just get. Up.” Peter hissed. People were already starting to stare, probably wondering if the boy on the floor needed some kind of medical intervention or psychiatric help- and while Peter agreed with the latter he really wasn’t in the mood to cope with anything else. He pulled Ned up by his elbow. “God you’re like a toddler.”

“Coming from you.” Ned rolled his eyes.

“What’s that supposed to-“ Peter started to yell but Ned immediately let his knees go weak signalling he was about to throw himself on the floor again. Peter grabbed him. “Okay okay!”

Peter gave in and explained the situation. As much as he tried to leave out the details of exactly what Flash did and said, Ned got them out of him, much to his humiliation. He felt Ned growing ever more silent and angry beside him as they walked. “Nah dude. He fucking deserved it.”

“You’re gonna say that Ned you’re my best friend-“
“Which is exactly why you should’ve told me so I could’ve beat his ass-“

“Ned-“

“I know I know but- look Peter. You have your morals. You have your limits that’s fine dude, you do you. You don’t wanna hit Flash or anything? Fine but you can’t control how I react to shit. You’re right, you are my best friend so excuse me for wanting to defend you. He hurt you so I wanna hurt him- so did Thor. That’s up to us, stop trying to control everyone.”

“You hurting him makes you just as bad as him-“

“No it doesn’t. That’s bullshit and you know it.” Ned deadpanned. He didn’t even sound angry anymore just frustrated. “When you punch an armed robber after he just mugged an old lady- does that make you as bad as him?”

Peter gave Ned a dry look. “That’s not fair-“

“Well does it?”

“No.” Peter sighed. He accepted defeat, he didn’t agree with Ned but he didn’t want to argue anymore. He was angry enough at Thor he didn’t want to be angry with his other best friend too. He just wanted to go to Neds house, play with his dog and watch Star Wars like every other weekend he spent there.

“Exactly. So-“

“Okay. You’re right. Can we stop talking about it now?”

“You’re just saying that because-“

“Yes I am. Please? I’m..I’m kinda done for today, man.” Peter begged and Ned caved in.
“Fine.”

“And don’t say anything to your mom, please..” Peter said sheepishly. The last thing he needed was Donna and May calling the school or even worse Tony.

“If she asks why we’re home early, I'm gonna tell her.”

“You’re gonna tell her that a Norse god who’s actually an alien charmed a snake to bite a sixteen year old?” Peter quirked an eyebrow.

“Okay maybe not..”

“And whatever you tell her will get back to May, which will get back to dad, which will get back to me being in trouble for not telling him about everything.”

“I think you should.”

“Yes Ned, I know you do. But like you said you can’t control how I react to things.” Peter said defensively, using the boy’s own point against him. “I am never going to tell Tony about it. Ever.”

“You’re an idiot.” Ned rolled his eyes as he and peter ascended the steps to his house.

“I know you are but what am I?” Peter mumbled petulantly.

“Potty dancing.” Ned smirked looking at Peter’s crossed legs.

“Screw you.” Peter hissed, bouncing on his toes.

“I swear you have that latchkey incontinence thing.” Ned shook his head as he went to open the door. Peter just scowled at him. It wasn’t his fault he always had to go when he got home, seeing the front door made his bladder get excited that was all. Besides he thought that was normal. Maybe not to the extent he experienced it but still, he didn’t appreciate Ned googling his symptoms of various illnesses and conditions all the time.
He scowled even harder when Ned made a show of deliberately dropping his door key three times. “Neeeed! Not funny!”

“The last one was an accident I swear!” Ned laughed when Peter attempted to push past him in the doorway but they both got stuck.

“I’m gonna have an accident if you don’t move, you asshole!”

Ned’s chaotic household really helped put Peter’s mind to rest for a while. The family home was so familiar he practically grew up there and the people were equally as familiar. The many people. Ned’s house being a fraction of the size of his own still housed close to double the amount of housemates he had- even if they didn’t all live there, Ned’s various cousins and siblings always inhabited every room of the house and Peter was in his element. He’s missed all the noise that came with communal living and he missed all those people.

And many of Ned’s family members hadn’t seen him for a while so Peter’s mind was certainly kept occupied as he was essentially passed around from sister to brother to cousin to say hi; most of his afternoon and into the evening was spent downstairs hanging out with everyone before Ned had enough and dragged Peter up to his room. “Dude you’ve gotta visit more often. I can’t go through this every time you come over, it’s like a goddamn family reunion.”

“I know, I know.” Peter grinned. “I’ll talk to dad when he gets back.”

“I want you to have more weekends off anyway- it’s almost the end of summer and we haven’t done anything!”

“Well excuse me for getting shot dude.” Peter snorted.

“You’re excused.” Ned shrugged. He hadn’t exactly been talking about that part. “But for real, we gotta do some more fun stuff before we go back to school.”

“Like what?”

“I don’t know man. Are you still coming on the trip?”
“I’m not sure..you know how Tony’s been with the whole separation anxiety thing..” Peter hadn’t really thought about the trip he’d signed up for. It was only a couple days but a couple days apart when Peter was at home at the tower was likely a lot more manageable for Tony that if Peter was somewhere else- somewhere less safe. Though maybe after being away for two weeks the man would be more lenient. Then again there was his whole other little issue to consider.

Thinking of Tony, Peter realised he’d forgotten to text the man after he’d left school. He knew Happy would have let him know that he wasn’t dead but he probably should have updated his dad on the situation sooner- he’d just forgotten. He pulled his phone out and to his dismay he did have a text that he’d missed, though it wasn’t one he’d ever wanted to read.

Mr. Stark: Hope everything’s okay on your end kiddo, can’t say the same for ours. I’m not sure when I’ll be able to call you next. Don’t be scared if you don’t hear from me until tonight. Have fun with Ted, tell him I said hi and thank his parents for having you. I love you.

What did he mean not everything was okay on their end? And the fact that the man highlighted ‘don’t be scared’ had the complete opposite effect. Shit.

Peter texted Happy to ask what was going on but he got an equally vague but ‘reassuring’ message from him, so that was useless. Peter considered texting Thor for more answers but he quickly remembered that he was furious with him. But maybe that didn’t matter right now- not when something was potentially wrong with his family.

Peter kept his anxiety to himself. Mostly because he didn’t want to spoil Ned’s good mood and also because his friend tended to get a little over excited when they talked about Avengers stuff. Of course he would take things seriously when he needed to but to him the idea of their mission going rouge would be cool and dangerous and Peter didn’t wanna hear that right now. Tony had suggested that he’d call him that night so he tried not to panic too much. So long as his dad at least texted him before they went to bed he’d be fine. Everything would be fine.

He let himself enjoy the rest of his evening, though he did periodically check his phone just to see if his dad had texted, which he never did; it was hard to be sad for long when Ned’s nieces and nephews kept begging him to play games with them- which of course he couldn’t resist. And might he say that he was a very, very pretty princess and Ned’s niece was right, pink was most certainly his colour.

Even once the little ones went to bed (after saying goodnight to princess Peter and not Uncle Ned, much to the elder boys annoyance) the rest of Ned’s family kept him entertained and distracted too. Everyone asked about his career and though he had to tell several white lies he got to share a lot of
his experiences working in the lab too and he always enjoyed talking about that; even if it did still sting to have to switch back to saying ‘Mr. Stark’ it came naturally enough. Though it didn’t do much to help his anxiety every time he spoke about him.

Eventually it was time for Ned and Peter to retire to the formers room, but Peter wasn’t ready to sleep. A familiar sickening dread had filled his stomach steadily over the course of the evening as all of his anxiety accumulated into one mass. Not only was he worried about his family he couldn’t stop going over what had happened with Flash. He wasn’t just worried about the boy’s condition (according to Flash’s Facebook he was well enough to have spoken to several lawyers already) but he was worried about the repercussions.

At worst Peter and Thor were going to be sued- or attempted to be sued- then everyone would find out who Peter was; at best Flash was now going to torment Peter even more thanks to Thor’s stupid plan. He felt less anger towards him now, it was still there but it had lessened. Ned’s point of view has helped the empathetic side of Peter understand why Thor would do something so idiotic, but it didn’t make it any easier.

And to top it all off Peter was petrified of wetting the bed. He hadn’t had a dry night all week and he really, really didn’t want to have an accident at his friend house. He knew Ned and his parents would never make a big deal out of it, it had happened more than he cared to admit, so he knew they’d be cool about it- albeit those instances had happened when he was a bit younger (not by much but still). But after the past few days he’d had he didn’t want to add peeing his friend’s bed on top of it.

Even after Ned fell asleep Peter laid there tossing and turning, waiting for a text from his dad that never came. After around midnight he’d resigned himself to the fact that he was going to spend another sleepless night up worrying about his family and he was miserable. The longer he laid there the more upset he got. None of this was fair, why couldn’t he have just gone on the stupid mission? Or a least why could S.H.I.E.L.D have devised a way for them to be able to keep in contact? There must be a way surely, S.H.I.E.L.D had to monitor them, so why couldn’t Tony hack the system or something so Peter could see what was going on?

He probably could but hadn’t because he knew how Peter was. The boy would obsess over it. But anything would be better than lying awake not knowing where his family are or if they’re okay. ‘Don’t be scared,’ you just fucking try to not be scared when you get a message like that, Tony.

Peter glanced over at the alarm clock on Ned’s night stand. It was three am. Peter sighed and sat up, considering messaging Happy again to see if the man had any news but he didn’t. The agent was probably asleep like he should have been but his stupid mind wouldn’t shut the hell up.

He wanted to wake Ned up so he wasn’t just sitting there alone and upset. He knew that his friend
wouldn’t mind, Peter had done it before countless times, but that raised the issue of him having to actually talk about what was upsetting him, and he just couldn’t do that. The only person he wanted to talk to was his dad and he couldn’t. Just the thought of having to say out loud what was bothering him made him want to cry.

‘Stupid Flash, if it wasn’t for him I’d have been able to talk to dad for longer- stupid Thor- no. No this is all Flash’s fault- I didn’t ask for him to pick on me like that no wonder Thor did something so dumb-‘

Peter made it through until five am when he heard other members of the household moving around, and by then he’d built himself up into a complete state. All he wanted to do was go home and though he was meant to be staying there until midday he was sure that Ned’s parents wouldn’t mind him going home early.

He got changed quickly and crept down the stairs where Ned’s dad was sitting at the kitchen table. “Hiya Pete. What’s got you up so early?”

“Hey, uh, I couldn’t sleep."

Ned’s dad pulled out a chair next to him for Peter to sit down. “Is everything okay?”

“Yeah..I mean no but..it’s not a big deal."

“Avengers stuff?” The man asked knowingly and Peter nodded. Whilst Ned’s parents didn’t know that Peter was Spider-Man (at least he didn’t think they did) but they still knew that he was heavily involved in that side of things. After all how could he not be? He lived with them. “Anything I can do, kiddo?”

“No I’m fine just..is it okay if I go home a little early?” Peter asked shyly.

“Of course it is bud, we ain’t gonna keep you prisoner. Well, Donna might but that’s another story.” Ned’s dad laughed. “You wanna leave now? I can drive you.”

“No no, it’s fine uh, H-Happy said he’ll come and get me.” Peter said quickly. It was a complete lie but in all honesty he wanted to go home alone, use the long travel time to clear his head.
But Ned’s dad had known Peter since he was a little kid, he could tell when he was lying. In honesty you didn’t need to know Peter for five minutes to know that but it’s certainly helped. “You sure Pete? It’s no bother.”

“I’m fine, th-thanks anyway. And thank you for having me.”

“It’s our pleasure as always, you call when you get home safe though, alright?”

Peter nodded and made a quick exit, per Neds dad’s instructions, both of them knowing Ned's mom wouldn’t let him leave so easily. Peter was grateful for the man letting him go home, even though it was obvious he didn’t want him to.

The commute home really didn’t help the boy clear his head much, but it was better to be moving around than laying stationary in a bed with his thoughts. He considered going to see MJ, he really missed the girl. Being in school without her there had felt unbelievably unnatural- but it was barely six in the morning and he doubted she’d enjoy such an early wake up call in the summer holidays. That and Peter knew her dad probably would be even less appreciative.

After walking past her apartment (which was way off of his usual route home) he walked the rest of the way to the subway and caught on of the early trains home. Well homeish, he still had another train and a bus ride before he’d actually get home and even then he decided to walk instead of getting the bus. All in all his commute was a lot longer than usual but Peter didn’t mind, walking around helped him to stop obsessively checking his phone though he was distracted by something else’s for the last twenty minutes of his journey.

By the time he got to the tower he was dying to pee, having bought himself an energy drink on the way home, a mistake he was paying for. He neglected to use the restrooms in the lobby to avoid any extra face time with the workers so early in the morning; he didn’t want anyone asking any questions. So he hopped in the elevator and crossed his legs to avoid wetting the linoleum floor. Maybe Ned was right, maybe he did have that latchkey thing because he could swear he didn’t need to go that bad when he was in the lobby or he would have gone then.

Peter had barely stepped out of the elevator doors when he was face to chest with a very angry man- just not the one he had half expected. “Peter!”

“Ah! Jesus Christ- Urgh not now!” Peter half yelled half whined and immediately stepped around Happy and took off running towards the bathroom.
“Excuse me?! What do you mean-“

“I have to go!” Peter called over his shoulder but Happy stormed after him.

“I am talking to you!”

“And I am peeing! Shut up for five seconds- god damn!” Peter grabbed his crotch to emphasise his point (that and he kind of had to because he really was peeing) and ran the rest of the way into the bathroom before Happy had a chance to protest further. He just about got his pants off before the sliding doors shut behind him and he was steadily leaking the entire time. Luckily a majority went into the bowl and not into his pants. Well, not enough to be too noticeable and he planned on changing back into pajamas anyway.

When he exited the bathroom Happy was right outside the door again, giving Peter a look like he’d just punched his grandma in the face. “What?!“

“Don’t you take that tone with me! Sit down!” Happy shouted and aggressively gesticulated to the couch.

“What?” Peter shook his head, not because he was disagreeing but because he was confused. He just wanted to go to bed he didn’t understand why he was being screamed at for using the bathroom. He took a couple more steps towards his room but Happy looked even more furious.

“Parker don’t you dare walk away from me because I’ll pull you back kicking and screaming!”

“But what did I-“

“I said sit. Your butt. Down.” Had he not just visited the restroom Peter was sure he would have wet his pants when Happy gave him that look; he’d never been quite so scared of the man in his life, even when he first met him. He promptly sat down on the couch in the spot Happy was pointing at and braced himself for,.well whatever he was about to get in trouble for. “Why the fuck did you think it was okay to leave Ned’s without telling me?!“

Ohh. So that’s what this was about. Peter internally rolled his eyes at what he deemed to be the
man’s overreaction and crossed his arms over his chest. “Because I didn’t realise I was a prisoner—“

“Well guess what? You are! And I’m the fucking warden so shut up and listen to me instead of giving me attitude like a spoiled little brat!” Happy bellowed. There was such bite and ferocity in his words that Peter visibly flinched—but that didn’t make the agent calm down any like it may have done with Tony. In fact he just seemed to be getting angrier. “I spend all day running around after you, trying to make sure you’re safe wherever you’re at— you suddenly take off after Tony told me he heard screaming but I let you go, have you the benefit of the doubt— then I wake up to an alert text saying you’re on a train at six in the morning— no call, no text, nothing! What the hell do you think my first reaction was?! Then you don’t get off at your stop— where I was fucking waiting for you! Didn’t you learn your lesson last time you went awol and Tony had the the avengers running around half the city looking for you when you fell asleep on the bus?!”

Throughout the rant Peter had curled further and further into himself until he was practically curled into a ball on the couch. “I-I forgot..”

“You forgot. You forgot? Well what about if I just forget to tell everyone that you made it home safe so they spend four hours worrying too—“

“You could’ve tracked me!” Peter snapped. He didn’t appreciate Happy threatening him with upsetting the rest of the group, especially after he’d spent all night worrying about their welfare.

“I did track you! Unlike you I’m not an idiot!” Happy spat and for once Peter felt that he actually meant those words. “I tracked you going a different route, at a different time than usual and you didn’t even try and tell me where you were or who you were with—“

“I’m sorry!” Peter cried. He was trying not to look at his phone but he’d forgotten that meant he’d neglected to answer texts from other people too, namely the very angry agent.

“Well sorry doesn’t cut it! Do you have any idea how worried I get when you don’t text or call me?! Do you?!” Happy practically screamed and instead of arguing or trying to defend himself Peter hung his head. And then he started sniffing periodically. Happy fell silent, surely he hadn’t upset Peter that badly? “What—what are you doing?”

“What d-do you mean what am I d-doing?” Peter sniffled and angrily rubbed his hand across his face. As if it wasn’t humiliating enough to start crying he really didn’t need Happy pointing it out. “You m-m-made your point and I’m s-sorry I won’t do it again.”
“Are you- ah shit. Kid, I’m- I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to yell at you- I shouldn’t have- ah fuck.” Happy sighed and ran a hand through his hair. He hadn’t meant to make the boy cry. It really had never occurred to him that he would have the power to do that and he suddenly felt sick. He’d never wanted to make the kid cry, as annoying as the little shit could be. He sat down beside Peter on the couch trying to think of what to say. “Look, I was just worried okay?”

“S-s-So am I!” Peter cried and flinched away when Happy went to touch his arm. That statement confused the agent a bit.

“What about kid?”

“Dad hasn’t answered me all day- ’nd he- and he said he’d be able to text me but that was last night and- J-JARVIS won’t lemme see their location ‘c-cause it’s classified.” Peter hiccupsed. It was bad enough that he didn’t know what they were doing, why they were or out there or how dangerous it was; but he wasn’t even allowed to access their accounts to see when they were last online. For all Peter knew the last time he spoke to Tony was the last time he was able to contact anyone. What if they needed help and they couldn’t call for backup? All the fears from the night before came bubbling up again and it wasn’t helping Peter to calm down any. “I couldn’t sleep because I was- I was scared something happened that’s why I came home early- I w-was gonna ask Thor to check f-f-for me- I forgot to text you then I realised how early it was and I didn’t wanna wake you and I’m- I’m sorry okay!”

Peter was practically sobbing now and Happy felt awful. Awful and helpless. He didn’t know how to calm the boy down; the kid was exhausted and worried sick and he’d just spent five minutes screaming at him, no wonder he was crying. He’d really screwed the pooch on that one. “Ah kid. Don’t- don’t cry it’s alright- Peter it’s- ugh, fuck it- Come here.”

Happy took a deep breath and scooted up the couch before he wrapped an arm around Peter’s shoulders.

The teenager thought he was hallucinating. “Are you-“

“Yes I am. Now this is the only one you’re ever gonna get so shut up and enjoy it.” Thankfully the kid didn’t say anything else and did just that. After Peter stopped crying (probably due to the shock of Happy hugging him in all honesty, that would be enough to stop anyone in their tracks). Happy broke away and cleared his throat. “Figured you needed one with your dad ghosting us. I’ll see what I can do, I know he hid his location from you but I could probably access-“

“You just hugged me.” Peter looked up at Happy, still stunned.
“Yep. And if you ever tell anyone I’ll make sure it’s the last thing you ever do.”

“Am I in a coma or something?”

“What?”

“You know- like I’m in a coma and they bring in a psychotherapist to make me dream of something that would never actually happen so that I realise its a dream and I wake up~”

“I’m going to murder you.”

“Ah okay, nope you’re the real Happy. Never mind.” Peter yawned and leaned back against the couch, his eyes half lidded.

Happy rolled his eyes and stood up, trying to flatten the wrinkles that had appeared on his shirt out with his hand. “Go to bed kid.”

“I don’t wanna.” Peter mumbled.

“Well you gotta.” Happy grumbled leaving no room for argument as he pulled the whiny teenager off of the couch. “Next time if you wanna leave early, I don’t care what time it is, you call me alright? Day or night. Don’t worry about waking me up the alarms will wake me up anyway if you don’t lemme know.”

“Yeah I didn’t think of that.” Peter mumbled. He always forgot about the alarm systems they had in place.

“I just wanted to clear my head.”

“I would’ve let you walk you know.” Peter shot the man a dry look. “I would have. If you had just explained that to me then instead of running off.”

“Didn’t run off. I just came home.” Peter huffed. Happy was making it sound as though he’d
attempted to run away.

“It’s the same thing when you don’t communicate kid. Now come on. Go get some sleep, a’ight? By the time you wake up I’ll have your dad tracked down.” Happy ever so gently pushed Peter in the direction of his bedroom because the kid was practically swaying on his feet and he knew it wasn’t long before he crashed out completely.

“Promise?” Peter asked innocently and Happy couldn’t take those big sad eyes looking at him anymore.

“I promise. Go on.”

“M’kay. Thanks Happy.”

“Don’t mention it kid.”

After Peter staggered off Happy set about fulfilling that promise. He logged onto the SHIELD databases and tried to pinpoint the last time Tony or any of the others had checked in and Peter was right. It had been over seventeen hours since anyone heard from them. Shit.

He attempted to make emergency contact but he didn’t receive a response, not for half an hour which was deeply concerning so in that time he contacted Fury. Nick let him know that he was already aware of what was currently transpiring and that they were managing- by the time that he’d gotten off of the phone with Nick Steve managed to send a reply to Happy’s emergency signal.

Captain America: Intercepted. Planned capture. Under control. Can’t talk yet. Peter okay?

Happy breathed a sigh of relief. So their change in plans wasn’t deliberate but they were using it to their advantage- typical Tony if he’d ever heard it. He fired a quick reply back to let them know that Peter was fine but that Tony needed to call him as soon as he got the chance because the kid was freaking out.

The agent considered waking Peter up but when he went into his room he found that he wasn’t there. “Shit,” he muttered under his breath. “Kid please don’t runaway on me, my heart can’t take it. JARVIS?”
“Master Peter is down in Master Tony’s quarters asleep, Agent Hogan.” JARVIS supplied helpfully.

Happy sighed and left Peter a message on his phone before slipping quietly out of the common floor and went to talk to Fury in a little more detail about what they were currently dealing with.

Peter woke up only a few hours later, after crying himself to sleep in Tony’s bed hugging one of the man’s T-shirts. Was that babyish and pathetic? Absolutely. Did Peter give a fuck? Absolutely not. He woke up to a text from Happy that made him feel exponentially better as well as a few confused ones from Ned asking why he left so early and if everything was okay. He decided to just call him, he was feeling pretty alone and upset anyway and he was starting to regret not just staying at Ned’s house all together.

He made his way back up to his room while he was talking to Ned, keeping Tony’s shirt firmly in his grasp (the man had a thousand T-shirt’s surely he wouldn’t miss if Peter took just one, he’d already stolen a bunch anyway). He was just rounding the corner into the kitchen when a loud scream which caused him to drop his phone.

“AH!” Thor screamed at a pitch far too high for the man’s size and stature. “Peter! By Odin what the hell are you doing?!”

“Going to my room?” Peter asked confusedly.

“What are you doing here?!”

“Uh I live here.” A little bit of attitude seeped into the boy’s tone which usually would never have seen the light of day. He didn’t want to sound like a typical teenager (or a spoiled brat like Happy and said..he understood the man was worried but his words had hurt) but he couldn’t help it. He was exhausted and upset he didn’t need a seven foot God’s screaming at him when he just woke up after a very, very rough night.

“Yes well you weren’t meant to be here for another four hours!”

“Sorry should I just leave again? I didn’t realise I was meant to book an appointment?” Peter snapped and he didn’t notice but he sounded remarkably like his dad.
Thor seemed to be getting agitated in return now. “You could have let me know at least! Announce your presence instead of sneaking up on people!”

“Sneaking up on- I- you know what? Whatever. I just got an earful from Happy I don’t need it from you too.” Peter said quietly and walked back over towards the elevator, picking up his bag as he went.

“Where are you going?”

“Out. I’ll come back in four hours like I was supposed to.” Peter growled through gritted teeth.

“Youngling Wait-“

“Don’t youngling me now! I don’t have to stand here and get yelled at when I didn’t do anything wrong! You’re the one who wants to be alone all the time anyway so have fun! I’ll leave you alone! Go back to charming snakes or whatever other dumb shit you do when you’re by yourself nowadays!”

The teen shouting made Thor go wide eyed. “Peter I need to talk to you-“

“What about?! The fucking snake?! Do you have any idea how wrong what you did was?!”

“So that’s why you’re annoyed.” Thor said calmly and leaned against the kitchen counter sighing.

“You think?!”

“I was just trying to-“

“I don’t care! I don’t care what you were trying to do! Next time just don’t bother all you do is make things worse!” Peter screamed, throwing his bag down on the couch, all the emotions from the past few days seeming to pour out at once- directed at Thor. “What is wrong with you?!”
He didn’t even wait for a response. Peter could hear the god calling after him but he ignored him, getting straight into the elevator and heading downstairs before Thor could catch up.
How Iron-Man Met Spider-Boy

Chapter Summary

Another attempt at a flashback chapter- please don't hate me I just missed peter calling Tony Mr. Stark, okay? XD

As much as things were degenerating at home, the rest of the Avengers remained blissfully unaware. Not that they were having a particularly enjoyable time either but at least they got to live with the illusion that Peter was perfectly fine. Steve, Nat and Bruce had been intercepted and captured by their intended target and Tony and Clint were tasked with trying to infiltrate one of their warehouses to get the stupid bastards back. They were currently hauled up inside a vent (i.e Clint's natural habitat) overlooking the room they were being held in, waiting for a chance to drop down and break them out without getting themselves shot- which Tony already had been. Twice. It was going great.

Luckily he'd only been clipped in the leg by the bullets but good god it hurt- and the rest of the guys weren't in much better shape. It was hard to tell from where they were but it looked like Bruce was unconscious and Nat's arm was most definitely not meant to be bent at that angle. Everything had gone wrong so quickly but Steve was right not to send out an alert; they still had it under control, so having reinforcements run in all guns blazing would have ruined all their progress.

Now it was just Tony and Clint and it was obvious the latter was becoming increasingly frustrated with Tony’s rambling. Now that the man couldn’t use his tablet to check up on his kid he was panicking more than ever, especially after his brief phone call with him that had ended every abruptly.

“I just hope he’s okay-“

“Happy said everything’s fine.”

“He said that Pete’s freaking out-“

“Well wouldn’t you if he didn’t answer you for hours?”
The archer sighed and shook his head. He was trying his best to be patient with his friend, he really was, after all, he totally understood the fatherly anxiety. But right now, while they were in the middle of an impromptu stake out after three days of pure shit- with Tony ranting the entire fucking time- he was at the end of his tether. “Look, just talk about something else. Like why we’re here.”

“You know why.” Tony shook his head. What was the point in talking about that? Everyone already knew everything about their target. “And that’s not exactly going to take my mind off of Peter is it? Considering we’re here for him.”

“Okay well..you said these were the guys who had him the first time around right? The ones who gave him the serum initially.” Clint continued. Tony simply nodded. “You never told us about the first time.”

“Because I don’t know anything. Just the location, a list of names and the dates.” Tony sighed. “I know about as much as you do.”

That confused the archer considering Tony was their resident Peter expert. He’d automatically assumed Tony knew everything the kid did. “Didn’t Peter tell you?”

“He doesn’t remember. All the intel we’ve got is from the last time.” Tony shuddered. After being kidnapped by the MV he and Nick had been working their asses off trying to track down the ones that got away. They were so close to finishing this thing, so Peter would finally be safe and right at the last minute shit went south again. It was unbelievably frustrating.

“What about Nick?”

“It’s complicated, Clint.” Tony sighed. “It all happened before we knew him, he didn’t even tell me he was kidnapped until I found out about his powers.”

“Wait- hold up. You didn’t know Peter had powers until after he interned with you?” Clint asked incredulously and Tony nodded. The man had kept his early relationship with Peter very private but everyone had assumed that Tony knew Peter as Spider-Man first not the other way around. “Seriously? What are the odds of that?”
“Yeah well it wasn’t exactly a chance encounter.” Tony grumbled as he went on to explain just how the kid fell into his lap.

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Of course, Nick had known exactly who Peter was, both because of the boy’s IQ and his fate from the spider bite and had deliberately introduced the pair when Tony mentioned perhaps hiring an intern; along with many other candidates of course, the agent knew not to make it conspicuous. But the man had failed to mention any of his knowledge to Tony and for him it was like some kind of social experiment- a study. He wanted to see how long it would take Tony to find out about Peter’s alter ego and it definitely took longer than he had anticipated, as Tony was later teased about. Three and a half months almost and the initial meeting between the two heroes was hilarious in hindsight.

Peter had come over to the lab after school, as per their routine, and they were working on tweaking one of the proton blasters on one of Tony’s old XII’s; Tony was just trying to get Peter accustomed to the technology, hence why he was demonstrating on such an old model but the teen practically combusted with excitement the second he walked in the room.

“Hey Mr. Stark I- Woah! Is that-“

“Kid, go take a leak first before you come and look at this.” Tony deadpanned, causing the teen to blush before he rushed into the adjacent bathroom. A big part of their routine was Peter immediately running to the toilet before he even said hi to the man, but he never brought it up. A, because it was an awkward topic and he felt weird about broaching the subject and B, he knew Peter would be too mortified to talk to him for a week; which was understandable. Tony had always figured the kid forgot to go before he left school in his excitement to get to the lab as soon as possible or that it was just a nervous habit. Peter did seem to act like an excited puppy half the time so his bathroom habits only seemed to add to that energy. It never caused any issues thus far (to Tony’s knowledge at least) and the genius wasn’t about to let such issues arise when he was about to introduce the teenager to their most potentially dangerous project to date.

Peter came out very red faced, but considerably less jittery, and he still had that bounce in his step that he constantly had whenever he got to try something new and Tony found it incredibly endearing. His enthusiasm was infectious and luckily Tony commenting on his need to use the bathroom didn’t seem to put a damper on his mood for long as his eyes lit up again the second he saw the work bench. He bounded over so quickly Tony had to literally put an arm out to stop him running into the table. “Uh uh, no touching. Slow down, kid, clear head before we work remember?”

“Sorry, Mr. Stark.” Peter blushed again after being chastised.
“It’s fine, I just don’t want you blowing up because you got over excited. Figuratively and literally in this case. Delicate work.” He clapped a hand on Peter’s shoulder before he sat down, pulling up a chair for the boy to sit beside him.

He got to work immediately, demonstrating to Peter in his normal fashion that he’d developed with the boy’s input; Tony found Peter learnt best if he was first allowed to play with the piece, deconstruct it, the attempt to reconstruct it on his own first before Tony corrected mistakes or pointed out flaws. Then Tony would repeat the process, letting the teen observe so he could take mental notes of what he had done wrong in a practical sense, using the visuals as a reference, and by that point more often than not Peter would be able to construct the piece himself without fault. Sometimes the boy would get it right on the first try but this was not one of those times, Tony had to take some extra precautions to ensure both his and the boy’s safety so the process was a little bit slower than usual.

After around an hour and a half Peter had it down to a T, much quicker than Tony had expected though he’d learned to be amazed at Peter’s ability to pick things up from the get go. Once he was confident that the teen wouldn’t blow himself up he moved over to his own bench, having gone over all the safety procedures should anything go wrong- which he strongly doubted it would. He trusted in his apprentice’s abilities otherwise he wouldn’t have left his side for a moment. He kept a watchful eye over the boy, staying close to him rather than moving around the lab as he usually would, just in case.

It was a good thing he did, as just as he was getting comfortable with taking his eyes off of the boy for prolonged periods of time he heard Peter hiss and something clattering to the floor, followed by a dripping sound. “Hsss- ah!”

Tony’s eyes whipped up, preparing himself to have to knock the kid to the ground under the reinforced desks to avoid the explosion but much to his relief that wasn’t the issue at hand. The issue was Peter’s hand itself as he was gripping one finger in particular that was steadily spewing out blood. For the first time in front of the boy he lost some semblance of his composure, moving around to Peter’s side of the desk much quicker than his usual, calm, collected pace but luckily the boy didn’t notice him lose his cool slightly. He was too busy muttering apologies.

“I-I’m sorry Mr. Stark! I’m so sorry! It-it-it was an accident m-my hand slipped and the wire-“

“Well, no shit it was an accident, kid. If you’d done it on purpose we’d have a whole different issue on our hands.” Tony allowed himself to smirk as he pulled Peter up by his elbows into a standing position and pushed the boy gently towards the sink. “Run it under the faucet, I’ll get the kit.”
Peter did as he was told and Tony didn’t fail to notice how deep the cut looked; it spanned across the entire finger tip of his left pointer finger, deep enough that Tony could see peeks of white underneath the fatty tissue. He hoped the teen didn’t need stitches because he’d need Bruce’s help for that, but it would at the very least need gluing or some kind of steristrips. He moved quickly, tapping on DUM-E to mop up the blood whilst he patched up his intern and he made his way over to where said intern was rinsing his wound.

When he stood next to Peter he found it odd how the teen flinched at his presence; god knows the boy never had issues with personal boundaries before but Tony chalked it up to him having gotten himself in a state over his minor accident. It wouldn’t be uncharacteristic for Peter to assume he’d be in trouble for hurting himself, the boy apologised for breathing for crying out loud. Literally, that had happened before.

“Let me see.”

“No it’s fine really Mr. Stark- I’m sorry I-” but Tony hadn’t left any room for debate, grabbing Peter’s arm from under the tap and pulling it towards him for closer inspection. Peter had been too stunned at the touch, which Tony rarely ever initiated, to pull his arm back before Tony saw the cut. What the hell?

It wasn’t nearly as bad as it had been less than a minute ago, in fact it looked like it had already started scabbing over. The wound was a lot more superficial than it had been and Tony knew better than to assume he’d just overreacted to it in the moment. Yes, he had been in a mild panic when he realised the child was injured but not to the point where he would have overdramatised the cut in his own head, he wasn’t delusional. He was the owner of one of the greatest minds in human history so he was adamant that his eyes hadn’t deceived him. He knew what he saw.

In the split second it took for him to make that determination Peter yanked his hand back, his eyes going wide like a deer in headlights. He looked petrified and for a moment Tony was distracted from Peter’s cut because he was more concerned about how scared the teen looked. He’d seen Peter nervous, the kid was like a walking ball of anxiety, but this was different. He looked like he was waiting for Tony to scream at him and the man didn’t understand why, he had yet to even raise his voice in front of the child. Tony could only imagine what the boy’s face would look like should he ever actually shout at him.

Tony scanned his face, trying to figure out why the boy was so terrified. He had yet to ever shout at him for anything, so his mind started to race to some horrible possibilities. He’d had to do some safeguarding classes for him to be able to have a child in his employee- was this a sign of abuse or something? He knew it wasn’t normal for a fourteen year old boy to be so scared over an accident, but then again Peter wasn’t a normal boy (he’d soon find out just how abnormal he really was). Shit he should have listened to Steve’s training course a little more closely. “Kid are you-“
“S-s-see Mr. Stark? I-I told you it’s fine. Just a scratch.” Peter put his hand back under the spray of water for a moment to obscure it, then immediately grabbed a paper towel from the roll on the wall above them; maneuvering it in just the right way that Tony didn’t see his digit again as he wrapped it up. He grabbed his finger protectively, as to further hide it from prying eyes and he tried to distract Tony again. “I-I’m sorry about the mess, s-sir.”

“The mess is gone, DUM-E took care of it.” Tony eyed the kid up and down. Peter had always been a little odd in his behaviour but Tony had never seen him act like this. His instinct reaction was to just grab his hand again and force the boy to show him but something about the way the teen was shaking- literally shaking in fear- was deeply unsettling to him and he desperately wanted the moment to end. He wanted Peter to stop looking so frightened, his big brown eyes were making the man’s chest feel weird and his teeth were being set on edge. As confused and intrigued and concerned as he was, Tony was willing to drop the subject completely if it meant Peter would stop looking at him like that. Like he was about to hit him or something- it felt awful. “Are you feeling alright..?”

“Yeah, I mean- yes sir. I just, Uhm, I uh-“ Peter stammered and turned his back to Tony for a moment, trying to think of a decent excuse. “I’m n-not so good with blood, sir.”

“Oh.” Tony said quietly, not believing that was the reason for the kids behaviour but the admission did make sense to him. Peter seemed like a sensitive kid, it wasn’t out of the realms of possibility that an aversion to blood was adding to his current state. “Sit down. Keep pressure on it, once the bleeding lets up, bandage it appropriately then come back over when you feel better, okay?”

“Yes, sir.” Peter nodded quickly, a little too enthusiastically Tony noted.

Tony turned to walk away but only made it a few paces before he turned back and added; “You’re not gonna pass out or throw up or anything are you?”

“No, sir.”

“Do you need some water or something?” Wow, Tony was really not accustomed to dealing with kids, let alone one who was clearly having some kind of panic attack. But what could he do? The boy looked like he was too scared for him to touch him.

“I’m fine Mr. Stark, really. I’m- I’m sorry for wasting time.”
“Peter it was an accident, quit with the apologies.” Tony used the boy’s name for once, which he didn’t use often, only when he was really trying to drill something into his head as it never failed to get his attention.

The pair were silent for a time whilst Peter patched himself up and Tony tried to wrap his head around what the hell had gone on. When Peter did return to their now clean workstation Tony couldn’t help but notice the measly bandaid Peter had slapped on what was a gaping wound. The bleeding had apparently stopped altogether too but Tony thought that to be impossible. He tried in vain to bite his tongue but after ten minutes of standing there silently, watching Peter work the boy’s hand movements had caused the band aid to ruck up and bunch together, exposing the skin underneath and to Tony’s dismay it was practically healed. He couldn’t stop himself from saying something, or grabbing the boy’s arm again.

“Wha- hey!” Peter jumped but Tony made quick work of ripping the band aid off and his eyes were right. The wound had already sealed shut, leaving only a thin, dark, red line where the small hole had once been.

“Kid, what the fuck?” Tony said harshly, his confusion coming across more as anger and Peter yanked his arm away again, despite the grip he had on him. The skinny teen was stronger than he looked, alarmingly so, Tony wasn’t able to keep hold of his arm. In fairness he hadn’t grabbed the boy that tightly in fear of hurting him or overstepping boundaries but he had a fair amount of force on him, an amount that should have been much more difficult for a thin prepubescent kid to break away from.

“W-what is it Mr. Stark?” Peter’s eyes grew wide again as he stood up abruptly, sending his stool rolling across the room behind him when he took a step back, holding his arm to his chest away from Tony. That look again, like he expected Tony to hit him, god it was awful. It made Tony feel like his dad and he hated that- but he couldn’t just leave it. He had to know what was going on.

“That cut was open ten minutes ago. What gives?”

“I-I glued it shut?”

“Bullshit, I watched you.” Tony said dryly and folded his arms over his chest, waiting for Peter to respond which took a minute since the boy was stuttering so badly he could barely get a word out. He stayed silent for around thirty seconds as he tried to will his mouth to cooperate and Tony started to regret saying anything; he’d never seen the boy have an anxiety attack like that before and when the realisation hit him that he’d caused it he felt sick. He hadn’t meant to make him uncomfortable but he didn’t think before he acted, as he so often didn’t back in the early days
before he realised how anxious Peter was. Finally Peter managed to speak, after a very tense minute and Tony didn’t get the explanation he was expecting.

“I-I think I should go..” Peter started to back away slowly at first but then quickly, scrambling to the door to retrieve his backpack and making his way down the hall quicker than Tony could protest. What the fuck?

Peter had never left early before, ever. Whenever he did leave it was almost a fight to rip the boy away from his work, only managing to get him to put whatever he way toying with down with coaxing and promises that he could return to it the next day. But Peter had just fled the lab like someone had lit a fire under him, leaving his workstation still a mess of tools and materials—another thing the polite well mannered teen would never have done under normal circumstances. It was a rule Tony had set in place on their first day and even had it not been Peter would never have usually left any sort of mess in the lab.

Shit, he looked really upset...he was meant to go after him right? He wanted to undeniably, but maybe he shouldn’t since he was the one who seemed to have upset him...Christ, he didn’t know. Tony didn’t know how to deal with kids he’d never had to before. Well, other than Harley, but that was different. Harley wasn’t so skittish around him, he never had been and Tony didn’t feel like he was walking on eggshells just to stop the kid from being scared of him. Jesus had he really just scared Peter? He didn’t mean to, he didn’t even yell. But maybe he shouldn’t have grabbed him like that, he didn’t know Peter well enough to know how he’d react to that kind of thing. There was the strong possibility that Peter could have some kind of trauma he didn’t know about. Of course he had done extensive research into his background before hiring him; medical records, school reports, police records (all of which were squeaky clean of any untoward activity- he really was a good kid) but then again not everything gets reported. In fairness the kid may just have boundaries that he didn’t know about since he had never crossed them before but Peter didn’t seem like the type to be adverse to physical touch as Tony recollected from the ‘hugging’ incident in the car that one time. So, why else did Peter’s demeanour change so quickly? Tony couldn’t think of another explanation for Peter getting so freaked out about the situation unless he was hiding something.

Oh he was definitely hiding something. There was no way Peter’s body could heal the cut that quickly, no way. Something was going on and rather than brushing it off like anyone would have expected, Tony included, he couldn’t get the thought out of his mind that something was wrong with the kid. He cared a lot more than he thought he would even though he had told himself repeatedly from the beginning not to get attached. But he couldn’t help it, Peter was so nice and charmingly enthusiastic about everything and his mind was brilliant. He was one of the only people Tony felt like he could have an intelligent conversation with who would actually gave him a new perspective on things, instead of just nodding along and agreeing with him; no, Peter was nowhere near knowing as much about technology as Tony did, he was still learning, but he had such potential. An abundance of it and Tony found himself getting more and more excited to share things with him as soon as he got off school. That day in particular Tony had been counting down the hours to when Peter would get there as he knew just how pumped up the kid would be to work on the proton blasters with him. And he had to admit, despite his deliberate reservations and
boundaries he had tried to set himself, Peter was really good company. Not too pushy but would engage if conversation should Tony prompt him for it and he was funny…

Shit, Tony liked the kid. He’d told himself not to like the kid, dammit. He couldn’t just pretend that nothing had happened and let Peter run away like that with no explanation, something wasn’t right. The idea that something could potentially be wrong with the young teen when he had been in his care made his stomach twist uncomfortably so he knew he had to do something but running after him after he’d already scared him off was a less than good idea. He whipped out his phone.

“Boss?”

“Hap, take the kid home. I want you to put a tracker on him. Get visuals outside his apartment building and audio inside if possible.”

“Why, what happened?”

“Just do it.” Tony hung up. He wasn’t quite sure what he was doing either or why he decided stalking a fourteen year old was appropriate but he had a gut feeling it would give him the answers he was looking for. He was also interested in what the teen would tell his aunt about him getting home early; he wanted to see if Peter would be honest with May and say what happened, to see if he really had scared Peter and maybe he’d be able to avoid doing the same thing next time.

Tony busied himself by cleaning up the lab, careful not to interrupt Peter’s progress where he’d been forced to abandon his work, just moving it to a better spot where it wouldn’t be disturbed. He found himself regretting having pushed the boy about his hand in the first place. What if he had just overreacted to the minor injury? If that was the case no wonder Peter was so freaked out with the man continuously demanding through physical force to see his bandaged hand- why couldn’t he have been more tactile? Less abrasive, more gentle with him?

He was a kid, a young kid, a young kid who looked up to him- no wonder he was spooked by his mentor suddenly grabbing at him when he hadn’t done anything wrong. Just as Tony was starting to convince himself that he was a god awful person who should never be left alone around children lest he emotionally scar them with his lack of empathy or impulse control, JARVIS chimed in letting him know that Peter had arrived home safely, asking whether or not Tony would like to hear the live audio feed. Despite his reservations Tony instantly said yes and he settled in to listen, after having DUM-E run tests on the boy’s blood he had cleaned up.

“Thank you for the ride Mr. Hogan.” Peter said quietly not expecting a reply of course.
The video feed from Happy’s car also played simultaneously, playing on a holo screen that had appeared in the centre of Tony’s lab. For a moment he considered how excessive he was being over a minor incident; Peter had cut his finger then left early, was that really just cause to video him without his consent..? Tony’s gut conceded yes even though the logical side of his brain was telling him he was acting insane. He was worried. He needed to make sure the kid was okay, he was his mentor that was part of his responsibility. As soon as he was assured that Peter was alright he’d turn the feed off.

He watched Peter jog up the steps to the apartment building and disappear inside, then just listening in to the footsteps and jangling of keys as Peter made his way up to his floor. The heard the creaky door opening slowly like Peter was trying to make as little noise as possible. Probably as not to alert his aunt to him getting home early but that didn’t work.

“Pete? Is that you baby?” Tony heard the familiar dulcet tones of May Parker calling from what sounded like the kitchen which was followed by Peter ‘cursing’ under his breath.

“Ah, sugar, honey, ice tea- uh, y-yeah.” The boy called out unsurely and Tony wondered how he could make one little word sound so guilty.

Footsteps, then May’s voice sounded closer, but not right in front of you close. Tony guessed she was in the living room. “I wasn’t expecting you back so early. Everything alright sweetheart?”

“Uh, yeah I just uhm, Mr. Stark had a meeting.” Peter stuttered and he didn’t sound remotely convincing, even to Tony, so obviously the boy’s aunt who had raised him from a toddler saw right through the lie.

“Peter what happened?”

“N-Nothing! I have homework s-so I thought I’d just leave since it would be easier and M-Mr. Stark was busy anyway and I told Ned we’d work on the death star tomorrow and I have to prep that and I uhm- I- I really have to pee.” Peter said all in one breath. Wow. Peter was impressively bad at lying though the last part didn’t seem to be untrue as May sighed at the admission.

“Go on.” She said tiredly as though the interaction was a usual occurrence and Tony guessed that it probably was. As soon as she said that Tony heard Peter take off in the other direction, clearly thankful for the out but May wasn’t letting him off the hook so easily. “Then bring your butt back here and tell me what happened.”
Tony heard Peter sigh as he entered the bathroom and he realised that Peter hadn’t just been lying about having to go as an excuse to evade May’s questioning as he heard Peter fumbling with his belt. “JARVIS mute!”

“Certainly sir.”

“Resume feed after he’s...you know.” Tony covered his face with his hands flusteredly. He really did not need to hear a fourteen year old take a leak and the thought of that nearly happening alone made him feel like a creep. If they weren’t at hugging level closeness yet they certainly weren’t close enough for that. Tony shuddered imagining Peter’s face if he ever found out about the whole thing and he started to second guess his decision about spying on the kid. Maybe he had overreacted, this was definitely crossing a lot of boundaries and nothing that crazy had really happened; one cut finger and a jittery teen surely wasn’t just cause to go through this invasion of privacy. But Tony had a weird feeling, a really weird feeling. He couldn’t explain it he just knew something was up and he had to find out. He’d learned a long time ago to trust his instincts about things like this.

Once the audio feed resumed, hearing the distant sound of a flushing toilet and a door shutting as Peter slowly made his way back into the living room Tony ceased his internal debate in favour of listening in.

“Come here.” May said gently but authoritatively and Peter obliged, sitting down next to her on the couch. “No more lies Mister Man we talked about this.”

By the sounds of it May must’ve poked or tickled the teen because Tony heard Peter giggle slightly, which in turn made him smile. God he was getting soft, this kid was gonna be the end of him. If only he knew then.

“I know. M’sorry.” Peter mumbled shyly.

“What’s going on with you lately? You’ve been acting so weird.” So it wasn’t just Tony who had noticed something was up? The boy had been acting strange at home too? Interesting.

“I-I don’t know..just got a lot on my mind, I guess.”

“I know you've had a lot on your plate, Cookie-“ Cookie? That was cute. “-but come on. I know
you wouldn’t have left the tower early for no reason. Tony didn’t have a meeting did he?” Tony heard the rustle of fabric, indicating Peter was either nodding or shaking his head. “So what happened?”

“I..I had a panic attack..” Peter said, his voice barely above a whisper and the words cut straight to Tony’s heart.

“Oh sweetie.” May sighed softly, but she didn’t sound surprised. “Do you know what set you off this time?”

“I cut myself and I freaked out ‘cause I thought I’d get in trouble.”

“Well did you?” Mays voice sounded slightly stern. Though he’d only met the woman twice Tony could only imagine the kind of pain she’d inflict on him if she found out that he’d yelled at the boy.

“N-no. Mr Stark said not to keep apologising but it was too late I was already panicking so I just left..”

“Honey it’s okay. It happens, I’m sure if you call him and explain it’ll be fine-“

But Peter’s tone changed completely. He went from shy and upset to almost angry. “May it’s a job, like a real job I can’t just walk out whenever I feel like it I can’t go back I have to quit- I don’t deserve to be there anyway-“

“Okay, I’ll call him. And you’re right, you can’t do that but you didn’t do it because you wanted to. Your body was trying to protect your brain from something that it seemed a threat at the time.” May said fluidly. It was apparent to Tony that the woman had plenty of practise dealing with the boy in such an anxious state and Tony felt awful. She was way too well versed with that speech, he hadn’t realised Peter was that anxious all the time. He’d always just assumed it was because he was nervous around him. His ego had made him blind to what was really going on, god if only he’d noticed sooner he wouldn’t have scared the kid shitless that day in the lab.

“I’m such an idiot.” Peter sniffled.

“Stop that. I’m sure Tony will understand.”
“I’m never gonna be able to face him again if you tell him I had a panic attack, May, please don’t. He doesn’t seem like the type to understand that kinda thing...”

Ouch. He’d really made Peter feel like that? That stung a lot more than Tony cared to admit.

“What do you want me to say?”

“Say I freaked out ‘cause of the blood and I thought I was gonna puke or something just please, please don’t tell him that.” Peter begged sounding as though he was on the verge of tears and Tony’s heart broke.

“Okay, okay just breathe honey, I don’t want you to actually throw up. Go start on your homework I’ll take care of it, okay?”

Tony’s phone started ringing so he quickly muted the feed. “Mrs. Parker, I was just about to call you.”

“You were?”

“Yeah, I was concerned about what happened with Peter earlier. My driver just called to let me know he made it back in one piece, is he alright?”

“Yes, yeah he’s- well no not really.” May’s voice changed in a way that made Tony feel nervous and he hadn’t felt nervous in a long time. “He hurt himself in your lab is that correct?”

“Yes ma’am.”

“And you didn’t think to call me when he left suddenly? You do realise he could have been ill or worse don’t you?”

“Yes ma’am but I made sure he was accompanied all the way home and-“
“That’s all very well and good Sir, but I’d appreciate if you called me next time.”

‘Next time. That’s good, she’s not barring me from seeing him.’ Tony thought. In the background he could hear Peter hissing to his aunt, likely trying to stop her from berating his mentor too badly but Tony didn’t mind one bit. He agreed with her. “You’re right, Mrs. Parker I’m sorry. I should have called you straight away it’s just, he left in a bit of a state and I was wracking my brain trying to think of what I’d done to upset him. But that should’ve been more cause to call you immediately, I’m sorry.”

Hearing Tony Stark apologise twice in one breath was unheard of and May very quickly changed her tune. “Yes well, it’s alright. Like you said he made it back in one piece.”

“Is he alright?” Tony asked again, hoping for a deeper explanation.

“Well he-“ There was a long pause that Tony surmised was due to Peter begging her silently once again not to tell his mentor the truth. The man half hoped that she would as it would avoid him having to force the conversation with the teen later, but then again she probably had the teen’s trust to consider. “He wasn’t feeling too well. He was scared he was going to throw up and he wasn’t sure how to tell you, so he bolted.”

Tony was sure to keep his voice calm and level, despite his disappointment. “Ah, poor kid. Well can you tell him next time he can leave as soon as he wants? He doesn’t have to stick around if he isn’t feeling well. I know he tends to get into his work but it’s not worth him making himself ill over.”

“I’ll be sure to pass on the message.”

“I hope he feels better.” Tony and May exchanged goodbyes and Tony was quick to pick the audio feed back up as soon as he ended the call.

“See honey? He was fine he wasn’t mad at all-“

“Are you sure? Because what if he was just being nice to you but then he-“

“Peter. We’ve talked about this. Catastrophizing.” May sighed. Again it was clear to Tony this wasn’t the first time she’d had to deal with Peter in varying states of panic.
“Right. yeah, y-you’re right uh- t-thanks for calling I’m gonna go- do something to take my mind off of it.”

“Don’t you want something to eat?”

“I-I’m not hungry.” Peter scurried off before May had a chance to catch him and Tony heard as the boy immediately called his friend Ned. The adult was vaguely aware that he should have stopped listening in then; after all he knew the boy was okay- but then again he wasn’t okay. He was upset, very clearly upset and Tony wanted to keep listening, just to see if he could help, maybe Peter would tell Ned something that he could use to fix this. And he still had no idea how the boy had healed so fast. No, he was going to keep eavesdropping just a little bit longer.

“Dude, I fucked up today.” Was how Peter started the conversation and Tony found himself audibly laughing in shock. Hearing the kid swear was weird but kind of amusing, it sounded so unnatural coming from the sweet, innocent kid he knew. He was almost surprised that the mild mannered teen knew such language, but then again he did grow up in some of the worst parts of New York. The boy had a similar conversation to what he did with May just with more cursing and name calling himself- which Tony certainly didn’t approve of. He especially didn’t like it when Peter called himself ‘a little bitch’ which he did several times.

It seemed the teens friend had a way of cheering him up though, which Tony was glad to hear as Peter was laughing by the end of their short conversation.

“I’m gonna head to bed man, yeah, yeah I know but- I’m just tired after- yeah. Okay. I’ll see you tomorrow bro. What? Ugh Ned- yes I love you too- I said it! I love you . Bye.” The boy ended the call sounding mildly frustrated, but significantly happier than when he had started. Tony also heard the change in his voice once Peter read the text he had sent him.

“May, imma head to bed.”

“Okay sweetie, do you need anything?” Tony heard the rustling indicating Peter was nodding/shaking his head again. “Are you sure you’re alright?”

“I’m fine. Just embarrassed. I texted Mr. Stark to say I was s-Sorry and he said it’s all good and he’ll see me tomorrow.” Tony could hear the smile in his voice which in turn made the older man smile.
“See? I told you it would be fine. Get some sleep, you.”

“G’night.” Tony heard as the teen kissed his aunt on the cheek and headed back to his room.

“Goodnight Cookie, I love you.”

‘Cookie. That’s too damn cute and too damn embarrassing for me not to use.’ Tony smirked before realising he couldn’t embarrass the teen with it as he wasn’t supposed to have heard it.

“I love you too.”

Tony figured as Peter was retiring to his room that he was age to turn the feed off, he’d spied enough. Now that he knew the boy was in a better mood he felt more at ease, even if he had no idea how the kid had healed so quickly at least he knew that he hadn’t traumatised the sensitive kid beyond repair. Besides, he had samples of the boy’s DNA to run some diagnostic tests so he could be a little patient. He was busy writing his apology in his head for the next day when Happy called him.

“What is it?”

“There’s someone on Peter’s roof.”

“What?” Tony’s heart jumped into his mouth as Happy’s patrol video came through. The agent was right, though it was marginally less scary than he had thought. Tony half expected to see some black clad masked killer up on the roof but instead he just saw some weirdo in what looked to be red and blue pyjamas. Still, he couldn’t afford to ignore it, worst case scenario it was something serious and best case some random crazy person was about to wake his protégé up after he’d had a rough day- and Tony wasn’t having that. His- the kid needed his sleep. He was a growing boy after all. “I’ll check it out thanks Hap.”

“Want me to stay out for backup?”

“If you wouldn’t mind.”
So Tony suited up and headed down to Peter’s neighbourhood, and he spotted the small figure almost instantly. By the time he arrived, the red and blue PJ’d person was crawling back up the side of Peter’s building after Tony had witnessed them jump from rooftop to rooftop— with little to no effort that was certainly unusual for someone so small. Even Nat would have struggled to make those kinds of jumps. “Phew-“

“Well hi there.” Tony greeted the character casually.

“AH!” The masked person screamed and jumped so hard that they fell back onto their butt- but they didn’t seem phased by that. Whereas the figure had been incredibly spry and shown amazing physical feats- they were now crawling backwards on the floor in an attempt to get away. Tony watched as they scooted all the way until they were backed up against a wall.

“Who are you?” Tony asked sternly but the figure continued to shake and breathe heavily. He couldn’t say he blamed them, most people would have that reaction if they’d been caught doing something shady by Iron-Man himself but come on. “Can’t you talk?”

Tony’s patience wore thin after a few minutes, so he tried another tactic. He shrugged and stepped forward, leaning to grab the person off the floor. “You better give me some answers or I can just take you to the police station and let them figure it out? No? Still don’t wanna talk? Okay the-“

As soon as he’d plucked the smaller frame off of the ground the figure yelped. “M-M-Mr Stark please!”

Tony froze. He knew that squeaky voice anywhere. It was the same petrified one he’d heard only hours before.

“Peter ?” Tony dropped the kid back onto the floor but this time he managed to keep himself upright. “What the-“

Peter pulled back his mask and revealed it really was him. “Please don’t get mad! I- I just-“

“What the hell is this?!“ Tony found himself bellowing and Peter cowered, but he couldn’t stop. “What the fuck have you been- have you been running around the city alone at night?!“
Peter made a bunch of noises of confusion but no words game out and Tony was too shocked and suddenly angry to listen. “What do you think you’re playing at?! You’ve been playing superhero-is that stuff from my lab?!”

“I-I didn’t steal it! It was from the trash and I-“

“I don’t care about you stealing I care about you using stuff that I gave you access to to get yourself killed!” Did the kid really think he was concerned about anything other than him getting hurt?! What kind of monster did Peter think he was?! “What the fuck do you think you’re doing kid?! Answer me right now!”

“M-Mr. Stark I- I’m-“

“What?! You what Peter?!”

“I’m not normal!” Peter yelled louder than he had ever in front of his boss in an attempt to be heard but Tony simply laughed.

“Well I know that already kid-“

“No I mean I- can you stop screaming at me please?” Peter mumbled and shuffled uncomfortably on his feet.

“Why?!”

“Because you’re scaring me!” Peter’s voice cracked and he suddenly sounded like he was going to cry which startled Tony into taking a step back. The boy was quick to backtrack, looking uncomfortable by what he’d just admitted. “A-a little b-bit- and I don’t want you to wake up my neighbors- I’m s-sure you don’t want them seeing this either..”

Tony peered around at the densely packed buildings around them, some of which had stories at the same height as Peter’s rooftop. The kid had a fair point, if anyone spotted Iron-Man on the roof with a little boy in his PJ’s that was bound to cause a bit of a stir. So he lowered his voice down considerably before turning back to the kid. “Okay. Now what do you mean you’re not normal?”
Tony had been expecting a verbal response, he certainly wasn’t expecting for Peter to take a running jump off of the side of his eight story building. Tony almost threw up as he rushed forward to try and catch him, but he wasn’t fast enough. The kid disappeared over the edge and- and he was gone.

There wasn’t a Peter shaped blob in the alley next to his building thank fucking god - but, then where did he go? Just what in the fuck was going on?

Tony peered around frantically only to hear the kid clear his throat from behind him.

“What the fuck-“

Tony was cut off by Peter putting his hand over his mouth. “Mr. Stark please stop yelling!”

The teen blushed and quickly removed his hand once he realised just who he had been grabbing at and stood back. “For Christ’s sake kid- don’t you know I have a heart condition?! Peter. I’m gonna need you to start explaining just what the fuck is going on, because if you don’t I’m gonna drag your sorry ass downstairs to May and I’m gonna tell her everything I’ve witnessed over the past twenty four hours, do you understand me?”

“Yes.” Peter squeaked meekly.

“I’m gonna take you back to the tower, okay?”

Peter started shaking again, fiddling with the mask he had clasped in his hands and his knees trembled, threatening to give way beneath him. “Am-am I being arrested?!”

“For running around in your Pajamas and- whatever those are?” Tony looked down towards the boy’s interesting looking shoes. “No. I just figured you’d wanna do this somewhere a little warmer.”

He’d noticed the boy shivering, it wasn’t exactly a warm night and the combination of fear and shock probably wasn’t helping.
“Oh..right..yeah..uhh, I should probably go and tell May-“

“That you’re coming over to my place in the middle of the night? Uh huh sure that sounds like a great plan, why don’t you just tell her I’m using you for medical experiments while you’re at it-“

“Okay okay I get it don’t worry May but- Wait you’re-“ takes a step back looking just as frightened as he’d looked in the lab. Like Tony was going to hurt him. “Y-You’re not gonna experiment on me are you?”

“No. I promise. I just want to help.” Tony said seriously.

“O-okay good, ‘cause I’ve been through enough of that..” Peter mumbled and wrapped his arms around himself, shivering more than he had been and Tony had the feeling that it wasn’t due to the chill in the air.

As much as Tony wanted to ask further questions, it wasn’t the right time or place. Right now he was more concerned with getting the boy into warmer clothes and to a safe spot where they could talk. “Right. You’re gonna sneak back into the house and go and tell May goodnight-“

“But I already told her that an hour ago.”

“You go to bed this early?” Tony couldn’t help but smirk slightly. Even in the serious situation they were in he couldn’t pass up such a golden opportunity to tease the kid.

Peter’s expression soured, suddenly indignant. “No, I go on patrol-“

“Uh uh. You don’t get to call it patrol that’s what I do- what you just did was midnight parkour with a side of saving cats from trees.”

The teen huffed slightly but didn’t argue. “I can’t say goodnight again that’s suspicious-“

“Okay, then go back in, change back into your-“ Tony looked the boy up and down. “- other Pajamas and go get a drink of water or something, just make sure she sees you. That way she won’t have the urge to check on you before she goes to bed herself. Once you’ve done that sneak back out
the window and we’ll head down the fire escape to the car.”

“I don’t know Mr. Stark, you don’t know May she’s pretty-“

“Just trust me.” Tony cut him off, starting to grow impatient with the boy’s stalling.

“I do or I wouldn’t be going with you.” Peter practically whispered, but Tony heard him and he cringed. This really wasn’t how he had expected the night to go at all.

Tony watched as the boy scaled down the building with unnatural ease, resisting the urge to rush forward and grab him. There was no way the child had just been practicing climbing, the kid was practically walking horizontally down the wall. As Peter followed the man’s instructions Tony pondered just how he was managing it- had he made some kind of device to help his feet suction to the wall? But that didn’t explain his ability to move so quickly and silently, or his ability to heal- and stepped out of his own suit, waiting anxiously for the boy to reappear.

Peter soon did, popping back up into view in his actual sleep clothes that Tony just couldn’t resist commenting on. “Wow kid, now that’s dedication. I’m honored.”

Peter looked down at himself. Clearly in his panicked daze he hadn’t realised what set he’d actually changed into and just his luck it would be his Iron-Man themed ones. “Oh my god-“

“Repping that merch.” Tony grinned at the boy’s mortification.

“Can’t you just kill me and get this over with? You don’t make to make me die from embarrassment.” Peter grumbled.

Tony ignored the comment because a light came on on the top floor of the neighbouring apartment building, practically level with where the pair were standing. “Come on kid, lead me to the fire escape.”

The pair clambered into the car silently, Happy looking decidedly confused though he didn’t say anything. The car ride was deathly silent and it was obvious that a thousand anxious thoughts were running through both of their heads at the same time. Tony could practically feel the waves of fear rolling off of the boy and he just hoped by the end of the night that he would be able to make the fears go away. But hell he was scared too he was terrified; his mentee had fucking superpowers.
Fuck.

As soon as they headed inside the building Peter opened his mouth to say something but Tony pressed a finger to his lips. “Not here. Wait until we get to the lab.”

It was the only place Tony deemed safe enough for the boy to talk, plus he figured that Peter would be more at ease in a familiar environment. He ushered the boy into the room and over to the nearby couch and by the point the boy was like a zombie. Frankly it freaked Tony out more than a little bit but he chalked it up to the boy being in shock. The kid was shaking like a leaf when Tony manually sat him down on the couch and he was staring at the floor as though he intended to bore a hole through it.

The man wasn’t really sure what to do. He just knew he wanted to make the boy relax and he couldn’t exactly offer him alcohol. “You drink tea right?”

Peter looked up briefly with a confused look on his face but nodded slightly; Tony didn’t fail to notice how red the teens eyes looked and he also didn’t fail to notice just how much that made his chest ache. Shaking off the emotion (and attempting to bury it deep, deep down because he was not getting close with this kid. nope.) he promptly went over and fixed the kid and himself a drink before sitting himself across from him.

“Look at me kid.” It was a clear struggle for the boy but he forced himself to sit up and follow his mentors instruction. “You’re safe. Anything you tell me stays in this room unless I think you’re in danger, okay?”

Peter nodded and fortunately it seemed that Tony’s promise of confidentiality made him relax somewhat. Not by much but there was a noticeable difference, like the fact that the kid was breathing again.

Tony took a deep breath before continuing, deciding to cut straight to the point to try and avoid prolonging the awkwardness. “First of all, who else knows about this?”

“Uhm..I’m not sure..” Peter mumbled, shifting uncomfortably on the couch. Tony patiently waited for further explanation, making sure to keep his face neutral so Peter didn’t get scared into silence. It was taking the boy a while to get his words out but Tony did his best to silently convey that they had all the time in the world. “No one I know, jus-just some doctors, I guess but I haven’t heard or seen anything since they brought me back.”
“Brought you back?”

“Mhm..” The boy’s eyes dropped to his lap where he was nervously fiddling with his hands.

“Back from where?”

“I..I don’t remember..”

“Okay. That’s okay.” Though he was confused Tony reassured the boy. “What do you remember?”

“It’s gonna sound stupid and like I’m making it up and you’re not gonna believe me so what’s the point-“ Peter started to ramble anxiously and his breathing picked up.

“Peter, I promise you I will believe every word you say. If I had any doubt that you’d tell me anything but the truth I would’ve called in for back up already.”

The boy’s eyes grew impossibly wide again and he sat bolt upright. “Y-you haven’t have you-? Told anyone else about me I mean-“

“No. It’s just me and you and Happy- but he doesn’t count. I’m gonna keep it that way so long as I can keep you safe.” Tony reiterated. He waited for Peter to sit back comfortably against the couch before he prompted him to continue. “Keep going kid, what do you remember? The whole story.”

“I-it’s pretty fuzzy but, but it started after a field trip at school..back in October, we were touring some labs that had all these animals-“

“LiveTech labs? The ones that got closed down for health violations?” Tony knew full well that they were shut down for their experimental drug use but he wanted to see how much Peter knew or didn’t know.

“Uh huh I guess after what happened to me they got found out or something..”

‘Or got too much interest in their product,’ Tony thought.
“We were touring the arachnid and reptile room and all the girls were freaking out because this spider had gotten out of it’s enclosure and a few of the guys in my class were threatening to stomp on it, but I stopped them. I mean, I hate spiders as much as the next guy but what they were doing was just mean. It wasn’t right, sir, they were being cruel and I know it was stupid but I went to pick it back up and put it back in its tank and it...it bit me.” Peter shuddered and rubbed the palm of his left hand, assumedly where the injury once was. “I got him back in there though, he was fine.”

“It bit you? What kind of spider was it?” Tony asked confusedly, was Peter suggesting a spider bite had caused this or was he treated for some kind of poison that lead to him getting superpowers? Or was the kid just rambling- Peter did have a tendency to tell stories filled with irrelevant information.

“I’m not sure, it was this little blue guy. I didn’t say anything to my teacher because I didn’t wanna get in trouble, we weren’t meant to be touching anything..” Typical teenager- Typical Peter. “And I felt fine anyway, until that night..that’s- that’s when it gets a little blurry Mr. Stark, m’not sure how much of my memory is real after that..”

“That’s okay. You can tell me all of it, I’m not gonna judge. Anything you remember could help me understand what happened to you.”

‘And track down the motherfuckers that did this.’ Tony mentally added, knowing he couldn’t let any of his anger show without scaring the already skittish boy.

“I felt fine anyway, until that night..that’s- that’s when it gets a little blurry Mr. Stark, m’not sure how much of my memory is real after that..”

“Uhm...well some of it is what May told me but..” Peter looked up towards his mentor for clarification that it was okay to use his aunt’s testimony to fill in the gaps in his memory and Tony nodded. “Well like I said I was okay until later that night. W-when I got home I got super hungry- like super hungry. I started eating everything and at first May thought I had just skipped lunch but then- then I started eating gross stuff...”

Tony raised an eyebrow. “Like what?”

“Like, anything and everything I could get my hands on. When all the real food was gone I drank a whole bottle of ketchup and some raw chicken then apparently I started digging through the trash-“ Peter cringed at the thought and blushed brightly. “I-I don’t remember any of it- it wasn’t me don’t judge me.”

“I’m not judging anything.” Tony said seriously and he wasn’t. Peter was describing something
that sounded oddly familiar and Tony prayed that the kid hadn’t gotten himself assimilated by a symbiote. God the mess that had caused last time.

“Well after that I suddenly got really sick, like really sick.” Peter grimaced and starting hugging himself again as though he could feel phantom pains in his stomach. It was clear that Peter could remember that part for himself because his eyes started to become dangerously glossy. “I just remember, e-everything hurt, like I was on fire..it hurt to breathe or even open my eyes and- and.”

“It’s okay. Hey.” Tony didn’t want to interrupt but the boy was clearly building himself into a panic and Tony couldn’t afford to let that happen; not only did he not want the boy to be upset in general, he had to get to the bottom of what was going on and he couldn’t do that if the kid had some kind of nervous breakdown. “Kid look at me, it’s okay.”

“Sorry.” Peter sniffed and shook himself off, blinking wildly. Before Tony could comfort him more Peter continued, obviously trying to avoid breaking down in front of one of his heroes. “So uh, May took me to the hospital- she thought it was food poisoning- I mean understandably ‘cause of the chicken- god that’s blerguh - Uhm- Sorry- and uh, once- once we were there I think- I think that was when they took me. Or maybe I was at the hospital for a while, I’m not sure the fever made everything really, really weird..like I was underwater or something, it all felt like a weird dream- well I guess it was a fever dream.”

“Who took you?”

Peter’s face grew grave. The serious expression looked disturbingly out of place on someone so young, let alone someone as bubbly as Peter. “The...the doctors.”

“What doctors? The ones at the hospital?” Peter didn’t respond to Tony’s questions. He had his eyes cast back down to the floor and he swallowed thickly. “Did they transfer you?”

Peter still didn’t respond and Tony was worried he’d pushed the boy too far. He didn’t want to startle the teen back into their current reality by touching him, so he leant over and pushed the boy’s cup a little closer to him. That worked, encouraging the boy to drink seemed to help ground him, snap him out of the daze he was in and Peter shook his head. “No. Different doctors.”

“How do you know?”

“Because they didn’t take me to no hospital.” Peter said tightly- before realising he shouldn’t get
snappy with Tony but the man understood. “They...they didn’t do very n-nice things to me, Mr. Stark.”

“What kind of things Peter?” Tony wasn’t sure it was a question he should of asked, or that he really wanted to know the answer to but he *needed* to. He needed to know everything if he even had a hope in hell of protecting the boy and that’s all he wanted to do.

“I-“ Peter bit his lip. He paused for a long moment, probably for a minute before he even attempted to speak again. “I don’t know, I can’t remember much like I said. I just k-k-knew they took me because they lied to May- they said I had a super contagious virus and had to be quarantined but every time she asked to see me they wouldn’t let her. Eventually she got sick of it and reported me missing.”

Missing? Tony had done *extensive* background checks on Peter and no records had shown any of that. There wasn’t so much as a detention on the boy’s school reports- there was no way Tony would have missed something like that. But he believed Peter wholeheartedly, which meant someone had messed with the boy’s file. Someone in a position of great power if they were able to snuff out even Tony Stark’s databases. He could only think of one company in the world who could do that..maybe S.H.I.E.L.D knew of the kids existence after all...

“How long before she filled the report?”

“About a day and a half, it didn’t take long for her to freak out.” Peter chuckled slightly. “Which, I mean, is good since they, like, kidnapped me but it’s not like it helped me get found any quicker.”

“How long were you missing for?”

“Two months.” Peter said casually. Tony’s jaw would have hit the floor if he’d let it. “Or maybe three? I can’t remember-“

“Months?” As much as he tried the man couldn’t fully hide his horror.

“Yeah..it’s uh, a bit of a mind fuck losing that much time- oh my gosh sorry!” Peter covered his mouth realising he cursed and Tony chuckled. They were having a serious conversation about him being *kidnapped* and the kid was more concerned with accidentally swearing- though Tony had to admit it was a slight shock he couldn’t exactly hold it against the kid. “I’m- I’m sorry M-Mr. Stark!”
“Don’t worry about it I’ll let you have that one. I can’t imagine how much of a mind fuck that must really be.”

“Yeah, well, I got home in time for Christmas so I’ve got that going for me.” Peter chuckled and sipped at his tea awkwardly. Clearly seeing his mentors reaction had made the boy a little uncomfortable so Tony made a concerted effort to dial back his shock.

“Christ kid…” Tony shook his head before regaining his composure. He knew his poker face was important but fuck. Three months. “So what happened for you to get out of there?”

“Uhm..that’s the part that’s the fuzziest..” Peter mumbled. “Sorry I know that’s like, really not helpful but I’ve tried and I just can’t-”

“Peter it’s not your fault. Frankly I’m glad you don’t have to remember half that shit, it’s awful.”

“Yeah..I remember you know, enough..though…” Peters face fell again, letting Tony know the kid had more memories than he cared to share, but he couldn’t say he blamed him. He didn’t expect the boy to give him the nitty gritty details and though part of him really wanted to know so he could give Peter’s captures the exact same treatment- he also knew he was going to struggle to sleep enough as it was. He didn’t want to have images of his kid- uh, the kid being tortured in specific ways to boot. “I don’t even remember getting home or like, a week of being home..it’s weird..the first thing I really remember clearly is Ned coming over to see me and he was- he was bawling his eyes out and I was super confused because I thought I’d just seen him the day before..b-but he kept saying ‘no P, it’s been months you-you missed Halloween’. I know it’s dumb but we were meant to go to this- this con together and- sorry-“

Peter teared up a bit again when he recalled that incident. “Yeah that was..that was hard to see, gosh sorry I don’t mean to get upset about it-“

“Don’t you dare apologise.” Tony snapped much more harshly than he intended, which he instantly regretted when Peter jumped. But he held his ground. “I mean it. One more sorry and I’m gonna try that janky suit of yours on and post a selfie in it on Twitter.”

The joke got Peter to laugh at least. “No you won’t.”

“Try me, Parker.” Tony smirked. “I like a good onesie, they’re comfortable. And I don’t have a
blue one so be careful or I’m adding it to my collection.”

“You’re such a dork, M-Mr. Stark.” Peter laughed, obviously trying to imagine his mentor wearing one piece pyjamas in his spare time. After Peter calmed himself down a little more he continued.

“May told me about it though, the-the night I came back I mean...She said I just turned up at the apartment in the middle of the night, covered in blood and stuff. Obviously she freaked out and called the cops, she’d had the FBI looking for me- but they wanted to take me in for questioning about what had happened and she, like, kicked this officer dude in the balls for touching me after she said not to- almost got herself a battery charge.”

“Hell of a woman, your aunt. I like her more and more.” Tony smirked. That woman deserved a goddamn medal.

“She said this one guy turned up later though, he wasn’t with the normal police but he came with us to the hospital. May’s still not sure who he was and I don’t remember what he looked like o-or anything- but he stayed with me when she had to be kicked out while they ran some more..tests..” The boy trailed off and Tony had the feeling that he was about to tell him something bad. If it would get anymore bad at that point.

“What is it Pete?” Tony prompted gently as Peter started to shake slightly again.

“Well..that was when things started, for me I guess- I don’t remember doing it but apparently I attacked some of the doctors at the actual hospital. I guess it was because I thought I was still in the d-d-dark place or something- and they blamed it on adrenaline after trauma but May kept telling me how I took out, like, fifteen people before they managed to sedate me- I really, really didn’t mean to Mr. Stark it- it was an accident- I- I never wanted to hurt anybody I was just- I was just scared and-” Peter cut himself off and closed his eyes, taking a deep breath before attempting to continued. “Even after they sedated me, I only stayed knocked out for five minutes before I woke up again because my body burned through the sedative so quick. It burns through everything nowadays- I can’t even take Tylenol or anything because it just doesn’t work.”

Interesting. Very interesting. Heightened metabolism. That explained the accelerated healing Tony had witnessed the day before.

“The guy who came with me, he asked for all the other doctors to leave and he swapped them with new ones and I- I think- well I don’t know but...”
“What?”

“I think they might have been S.H.I.E.L.D staff, Mr Stark. Like, it’s the only thing that makes sense because I know my body works differently now and they must’ve seen that, but they didn’t say anything. They just gave me IV fluids and sent me home- and they didn’t even charge us! Which is good because lord knows we can’t afford more medical bills but-“

Tony didn’t mean to interrupt but he wanted to keep the boy on task. “Peter has anyone been in contact with you since then?”

“Not that I know of, sir.”

“So they’ve just left you? Whoever took you in the first place and that second group of doctors?” Despite himself Tony felt some anger seep into his voice then. Why would S.H.I.E.L.D just abandon this child after finding out he had super powers? That didn’t make any sense unless..they hadn’t. Fury you sly motherfucker, he lead him right to you Tony. He knew you’d take care of him. Goddamn it- a heads up would have been nice!

“Yup. Thankfully. I mean they’re probably still watching me or planning to get me back or something, but I try not to think about it. Plus I know that I can protect myself and May, with all the superpowers and junk- so long as I’m not some kind of sleeper agent, which worries me as well, like what if they’re a trigger word like- I don’t know- ‘bananarama!’ And I just start killing people-“

It was obvious the child was building himself up into a panic again so Tony was quick to put a stop to it. “Peter. Calm down. I’m gonna help you.”

“H-How, Mr. Stark?” Peter asked fearfully, looking up at Tony with his big brown eyes in a way that made the adults heart pound painfully in his chest.

“I don’t know yet, just know that I am.” Tony had no idea just how he was going to do it, all he knew was that he was going to protect this child if it was the last thing he did. Plans quickly started to form in his head. The good thing about Nick leaving Peter to him was that he could start fresh with his security measures. “You don’t have a tracker on you I’ve checked, but your address is public knowledge so I’m moving you and May out of there tomorrow.”

Peter’s head was obviously spinning at the onslaught of Tony’s plan. “Woah..uh, okay but- but
what are we gonna- Mr. stark please don’t tell May.”

“I’m not going to. Not yet. The less she knows the better and I’m gonna keep you safe. She doesn’t need to know.”

“Oh thank you, Jesus.” The relief on Peter’s face was very visible.

“Tony is fine.” Tony smirked but Peter ignored or just didn’t register the joke.

“Then what’re we gonna tell her about having to move?”

“The burst pipe in your building.” Tony shrugged but Peter looked at him, clearly confused. In fairness it was almost one in the morning at this point and the teen was clearly up way past his bedtime.

“But we don’t-“ Tony gave the boy a pointed look until realisation showed on his face. “Oh.”

“No more ‘patrolling’ either. It’s not safe.” Tony said seriously, making Peter squirm uncomfortably. He always hated when Tony used his stern voice. “You’ll have to wait until I can make you a proper suit.”

“Really? Y-you’re serious?!“

“Yes- But only if you prove to me I can trust you. So that means no more vigilante shit until I say so, you got that?”

Peter nodded to feverently Tony was worried he’d snap his neck. “Yes Mr. Stark.”

“Good. I’m gonna need some time to deal with all this, okay? You’ve got to keep a low profile until then, like you said we don’t know who’s watching.”

“Thank you Mr. Stark. So much, like really. Thank you.”
“Don’t mention it kid. But I gotta know something else, and I want you to answer me truthfully. I won’t get mad I just want the truth.”

“O-okay?”

“Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“Because..because I was scared, sir.” Peter’s voice was barely above a whisper and even after all that time Tony still heard those words echo in his mind every now and then, and they broke his damn heart.

“Of?”

“Everything, in-in case you’d be mad, in case they found me or-or someone else got a hold of me and did those- things- those awful, awful things to me and I just- I just-“ Peter started hyperventilating again and Tony could tell the boy was reaching his emotional quota for the day. It had been a lot all in one evening even he was struggling. So much had happened in such a short amount of time and it was- it was a lot to take in. Too much. The adult could only imagine how the poor little boy sat across from him was feeling, a little boy that had already been through far too much. That just made him more determined to destroy whoever thought they could lay a finger on that curly head. Who the fuck did they think the were messing with his intern-

“Okay, okay, that’s enough for tonight pal, alright? You did good.” The man stood up and clapped a hand on the boy’s shoulder He wanted to hug him but that would surely send Peter over the edge, him too. “Come on, let’s get you home, huh?”

Peter nodded. “I feel really weird sitting here in my Pajamas.”

“You didn’t seem to be worried about running around Queens in ‘em.” Tony smirked and Peter’s face went bright red. “Cute design though, maximum comfort I guess.”

“Shut up-“ Tony raised his eyebrows and Peter covered his mouth. “M- Mr. Stark.”
“Wow.” Clint blinked slowly after hearing the story. “The kid- you didn’t- he was- just wow.”

“Yeah. It was a lot.” Tony sighed. “Not to mention I had the whole Steve vs. me thing going on, ‘twas a stressful year.”

“No wonder you started drinking again.”

“Oh honey, I never stopped.” Tony barked a cold laugh. “It was shit but hey, look where we are now. I adopted that little kid- me! A dad. Like, what the fuck?”

“It suits you.”

“You know, I keep getting told that.”

“Why didn’t you ever tell us?” Tony just looked at him. “Not at the time I mean, before the mission.”

“I gave you all the relevant information.” Tony shrugged. “I don’t really like thinking about it. The early days..they were hard and I don’t like bringing it up, not even with the kid. He still has nightmares from time to time about it, but they’re fading now- especially since he thinks we caught them all last time. I just want this to be over with.”

Clint nodded understandingly. It was clear there was more he wanted to say and ask but he knew it wasn’t the right time. He settled for the short but sweet; “We’re gonna get those sons of bitches.”

“Fuck yeah we are.” Tony muttered; as he did a few armed guards burst into the room. That was their cue. Time to get those sons of bitches.

Back home Peter was reminiscing too but not over distant memories. He was thinking about the mean things he’d said to Thor and he felt rotten. He’d spent the majority of the afternoon running,
taking the route he and Steve usually would and it gave him a lot of time to think. He deeply regretted what he’d said, how he said them what little consideration he’d had for Thor’s feelings and how he’s used the man’s mental health issues against him.

He’d been such an asshole.

Thor had only been trying to help him, that’s all he ever did and Peter had essentially thrown all that back in his face. No, Thor hadn’t gone about it in the right way but that didn’t excuse the way Peter handle it either. He’d taken out all of his pent up anger on the god who had only been doing his best to take care of him- whilst he was in the midst of his own depression. Thor had taken the time to hang out with him, forced himself to leave his room which he’d been unable to do for weeks all for Peter’s sake and that was the gratitude he’d shown him. Peter made his way back to the tower after a few hours, hellbent on reconciling with the blond but he was interrupted, once again, the second he exited the elevator.

“Hey kid-“

“Oh no! Happy I’m sorry I- I just went for a run and I lost track of time- I-I texted you so that-“

“Peter you’re not in trouble. I got your text, thank you for remembering this time. I’m not here to yell at you.”

“*Ohh thank god* - you’re not?”

“Nope.”

“Then..Oh god. Did something happen? *Isdad dead?!*” Peter’s eyes went wide and he instantly looked like he was about to cry.

It was Happy’s turn to look panicked. “What?! No no no- Jesus kid! Why did your mind jump there?!“

“I-I don’t know- he’s not is he?!”
“No!”

“Or Steve, Or Bruce Or-“

“No ones dead!”

“Hurt?!“

“No! Boy just- just sit down.” Happy grumbled, growing frustrated.

Though Peter calmed down upon hearing no one was injured or expired, he didn’t move to follow Happy’s request. “Can...can I pee first?”

“Yes.” Happy sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose exasperatedly as Peter dashed into the restroom.

“Sit.” Happy said again when Peter reappeared. “Movie night.”

Peter just stared at him like he’d gone mad. What was with the people around him and their shifts in personality? “Who even are you?”

“Someone who’s very stressed and wants to make sure you’re okay. So sit and pick a movie.”

“Did dad ask you to?” Peter asked suspiciously as he sat down on the couch.

“No. If he could talk to me right now he probably would have but that’s not why I’m doing this.” Happy shook his head. Had the hug earlier that morning not shown the boy that Happy cared about him in his own right too? Man for a kid so bright he could be so dumb sometimes. “Thor told me about your fight kid. And he told me about your fight kid. And he told me what he did.”

Peter stiffened and looked apprehensively at the larger man. “D-did he tell you why..?”
Okay..so if that question confused Happy, Thor had clearly muddied the truth somewhere. Peter just had to tread carefully if he didn’t want to get the god into trouble. “What did he tell you..?”

“That he put that snake in your bag as a prank and it got outta hand.”

“Oh. Right.” Peter nodded, trying his utmost to sound convincing. “Yeah it- it was a dumb prank.”

“I fixed it by the way.” Happy said casually, causing Peter to look questioningly at him. “School don’t know shit, wrote it off as an accident and the antihistamines they gave that kid knocked him out good, he doesn’t remember anything.”

Peter breathed an audible sigh of relief. So Thor wasn’t going to end up going to jail and he wasn’t going to get tormented by Flash. Well, he’d probably still get tormented, someone would tell the boy what happened- but at least Peter wouldn’t have to worry for another couple months before he went back to school. “What about the CCTV?”

“Funny thing. There wasn’t anything on the footage.”

“What?”

“I mean you can see all the kids freaking out and running away, then you busting in going all field medic on them, but there’s no snake. Guess it was just really small or something.” Happy shrugged. That struck Peter as odd, the bite mark didn’t look small, not microscopically can’t be seen on camera small anyway. Then again maybe in his panic he’d just misremembered how severe the injury was and it was obviously not a normal snake. Either way he was just glad that Happy had spent his day making sure everything was okay.

“Are...are you gonna tell dad..?” Peter asked apprehensively.

“I would have to.”

“Yeah..” The teen nodded glumly. That meant he’d had to tell his dad who was bitten and then
Tony would know for sure that it wasn’t just a prank gone wrong. He’d have to tell him about the bullying...he couldn’t do that he just couldn’t.

“If there was a problem.” Happy continued, sighing gently and leaning back against the couch. “But there’s no problem now, everything worked out. The kid’s fine, the trail doesn’t lead back to you and Thor ain’t gonna pull anymore shit while I’m watching him, so it’s all good.”

Peter’s eyes shot up. “W-Wait? You mean it?”

“I gave Thor an earful about it, Tony doesn’t need to know he has enough to worry about as it-“

“Thank you so much Happy.” Peter said earnestly.

“Don’t mention it kid.” Happy shrugged. He still wasn’t great at dealing with high levels of emotion and Peter looking up at him gratefully was a little too much for him to handle. “So what’re we watching?”

“I don’t mind, sir, you can pick.” Peter said and he was surprised to discover that the man had impeccable movie taste. Peter found himself relaxing a lot over the course of the evening and Happy even chatted with him in between movies. “You know, you’re actually pretty good company when you’re not being grumpy.”

“And you’re pretty good company when you keep your mouth shut.” Happy quipped, but there was no real bite to his tone.

“Touché.”

“It’s getting late kiddo, you should head to bed.”

Peter glanced at his watch. The agent was right it was almost eleven and Peter was exhausted. “Yeah..I was just hoping we’d hear from the guys before I went to sleep..”

“If I get anything I’ll wake you, but I doubt we’ll hear from them until tomorrow.” Happy said gently. He understood the boy’s anxiety, he’d been hoping for the same thing, but he also knew
there was nothing to truly worry about. There had been no emergency signals sent out so he trusted that the team had the situation under control.

“Okay..” Peter sighed noncommittally. He knew he wasn’t going to win the argument of staying up later and frankly he didn’t want to for several reasons. Namely because he was sick in arguments, he knew better than to test Happy and he was really, really sleepy. It had been an emotionally taxing day and he was ready to crawl into bed and pretend like everything was normal, even though it wasn’t. “Goodnight, Happy.”

“Night, kid.” The agent stood up and began to walk towards the elevator. “I’ll swing by tomorrow afternoon yeah?”

Peter nodded. “I’d like that.”

Ugh this kid was getting him all over emotional, dammit Hogan get it together. “Alright. See ya kid.”

Before Peter went to bed he was sure to slip the apology note he’d written Thor under his bedroom door. He wanted to knock but he wasn’t brave enough, and he figured Thor didn’t want to see him right now which Peter understood. He’d pushed the god enough he was going to allow him some privacy. He just hoped things would be better tomorrow.

As he lay in his bed he clung to Tony’s shirt and wondered just how the hell he was going to manage another week without him. In an attempt to calm himself before he ended up like he had the night before, laying awake and staring at the ceiling, worrying about every possible situation his family could be in- he found himself squeezing his eyes shut and imagining; imagining he could hear the TV in the living room, playing one of the medical documentaries Bruce and dad liked that he wasn’t allowed to watch, while Thor and Clint argued over nothing in particular, Steve humming to himself as he washed dishes and meal prepped in the kitchen. He imagined all the little noises, all the usual stuff and to his surprise it helped a lot. He found himself relaxing slightly and mumbling to himself just as he drifted off, content in his little daydream.

“Goodnight dad.”
An Unwelcome Houseguest

Chapter Summary

Here it is
The mischief boi is back
Only a short wee chapter this time and I hope I tied in everything in a way that made sense XD

Peter stretched and yawned. After yet another late night he’d slept in till gone nine o’clock, something he hadn’t done in months. He took his time down in the gym then in the shower, eventually going to the kitchen to grab something to eat at around eleven. Steve would have had a field day if Peter rolled into the kitchen at that time and the teen smiled to himself as he thought about that.

After having such a horrible few days it was nice to wake up in such a decent mood. Though he still missed his dad he had enjoyed getting to see a different side of Happy, as weird as that was, and he knew the man was to thank for lifting his spirits. He was sure to literally thank the man the next time he saw him too and he put that on his mental list of To-Do’s. Peter also made it his mission to reconcile with Thor after their ‘little spat’.

Not long after he left his bedroom he felt his phone vibrate.

Mr. Stark: Did you take your pills?

Finally.

Peter rolled his eyes at the text. No ‘good morning son’ or ‘so we didn’t die, sorry for making you cry yourself to fucking sleep for two nights straight’, nothing like that. Hell not even an explanation of where they’d been. But Peter couldn’t be too bitter, if he had gotten some kind of emotional text he’d probably start crying again so a little harsh normality was just what he needed. And so long as his dad was being a bit of an asshole, he knew he was just fine.

Peter: Yeah.

Mr. Stark: Liar.
Peter: I was about to.

Mr. Stark: Uh huh. Sure.

Peter: Why bother to ask if you already knew the answer? I know JARVIS is watching me anyway.

Mr. Stark: His sole purpose isn’t to babysit you.

Peter: No that’s Happy’s job right? :p

Mr. Stark: Go take your damn pills.

Peter: Of course Mr. Stark! Anything for you! 0:)

Mr. Stark: Oh wow, look who just lost access to the lab? It appears the codes have changed.

Peter was about to send a faux angry text back as he walked into the living room something immediately felt off. He felt a presence in the room with him which in itself wasn’t alarming as he wasn’t home alone completely. But the energy felt unfamiliar, his heightened senses kicked into overdrive telling him to prepare himself for something- he just didn’t know what. Though the logical side of his brain was telling him he was being ridiculous- the tower was one of the safest, most secure places on earth, he had learned to trust his instincts. His spidey-senses had yet to fail him.

He turned the corner of the living room that allowed him to see the kitchen and he saw the refrigerator door was open. There was someone standing there rummaging through it. One of the cleaners maybe? No, they wouldn’t be going through the fridge..He couldn’t see who the person on the other side of it was, so he called out, the hairs on the back of his neck standing straight up. “Uh, hello?”

The figure stilled. Where there had been the clinking of jars moving around in the fridge there was now silence. Peter’s training kicked in and he scanned the room, looking towards the figures shadow on the tiled floor. The figure was male, but their shadow was too short to be Thor or Steve;
too tall to be Bruce’s or Clint’s and Peter knew it couldn’t be Tony. Well logically he knew it couldn’t be Steve, Bruce or Clint’s either but the comparison still ran through his head.

The person remained still as though Peter would walk away if he pretended to disappear. “Who are you?”

The figure popped his head around the door. It...it was Tony. “Hey kid.”

“Uhh..h-hi?” The shadow changed, becoming completely proportionate to his dad’s. Peter felt himself jump.

“Are you alright?”

“W-What are you doing here..?”

“Oh I was sent back early. Had something I needed to pick up.” Tony said casually with a shrug as he turned his attention back to the fridge. But Peter saw how the man’s expression twitched.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Peters heart was racing and his mouth went dry. He’d just been texting his dad moments ago that didn’t make sense. He knew that wasn’t Tony. It looked and sounded like him but it wasn’t. Peter could just tell. He didn’t...feel right. Not physically obviously as Peter was a good fifteen feet away but his aura was wrong. And he smelled different.

That wasn’t Tony.

So either Peter was hallucinating or something else was very, very wrong. He almost hoped it was the former. Maybe his tactic of pretending everyone was still home the night before had pushed him over the edge and he’d finally cracked.

“Sorry kid, I thought I had.”

Peter tried his best to act casual as he slipped his phone out of his pocket.
“Peter: Mr. Stark?”

“Mr. Stark: I’ll grant you access back when you go and take your pills. Get moving brat.”

The Tony standing in front of him didn’t move. Didn’t pull his phone out. And Peter was going to take his medicine- Tony should know that from JARVIS’s footage...unless his files had coincidentally corrupted again. *What the fuck-*

Peter had to do something he just didn’t know what. He tried to fall back on his training as an agent but Sam hadn't exactly gone over what to do of an imposter version of your dad appears in your living room.

Instead he tried to think of what Tony would do, the real Tony. He’d act smart, think about it logically, try to gather some intel- some evidence to back up his theory- but it was hard to do that when your body was going into fight or flight mode and leaning towards the latter. “Uh- s-so What uh-”

‘Tony’ shut the refrigerator again and peered around at the boy. *Those weren’t Tony’s eyes-* that sounded so dumb, they were brown, how hard is it to copy brown eyes? They were just wrong, there was no warmth to them, no familiar glint. “Kid are you okay?”

“Why- why are you calling me that?”

“What?”

“Kid. Why are you calling me kid?” The thought came to Peter quickly. “It-it’s Just us Mr. Stark you can call me by my real name.”

‘Tony’ went silent. Too silent. He put down the glass of juice he was holding and just stared at Peter, with cold, *wrong* eyes. For Peter it felt as though time had slowed to a near stop as the imposter looked him up and down, scrutinising him. It was obvious the man was deciding whether or not to attempt keeping up the charade. Ultimately he decided against it.

“Nice try.” The figure stepped behind the fridge door again and Peter could hear the man’s breathing change, ever so slightly. It sounded as though he was panicking but making a concerted effort not to- not unlike Peter was currently doing.
“W-Who are you?”

There was a sigh on the other side of the door which was followed by a calm voice with a familiar accent. It wasn’t American or English, but it was similar with almost a Scandinavian twang to it—old timey was how Peter so elegantly described it. The nordic accent was familiar but the voice itself was not. That wasn’t Thor. “You must be Peter.”

“Uh- I’m-“ Instinct told Peter that he shouldn’t reveal his name to a possible intruder. Then again it was painfully obvious the intruder already knew exactly who he was. “It doesn’t matter who I am, who are you?”

The door slowly closed and revealed a tall, slim man with shoulder length dark hair and an angular face. His expression was a soft smile with just a slight apprehension to it and he spoke warmly. “Now don’t freak out on me-“

“Oh my god- y-you’re-“ Peter stumbled backwards, stepping behind the couch. He felt his legs grow unnaturally warm and heavy and he prayed to whatever deity out there that he hadn’t just pissed himself.

“Child, there’s no need to be concerned-“ The god of mischief held both of his hands up and walked towards the teenager who looked like he was debating whether to attack or run.

“Y-you’re Loki.” Peter kept pacing backwards as Loki stepped towards him.

The god stopped walking and stood still with his hands still held up. He spoke in a very soft, calm voice as though he was attempting not to scare a stray dog. “I am.”

“You’re a b-bad guy.” Peter said accusingly, his voice shaking but he stopped backing away. He knew he sounded like a little kid with the phrase he had used but his brain function had depleted rapidly making way for the waves of emotion that kept hitting him. Whereas a moment before he’d wanted to run, a sudden hot anger coursed through him, fear making way for bravery as he stood his ground.

This man had broken into his father’s home when his dad wasn’t there, knowing he wasn’t welcome then had the audacity to even attempt to emulate Tony Stark. How dare he?!
“Ah see, that’s where you’re wrong, that’s rather subjective-“

“What are you doing here?” Peter said firmly, stepping forward again.

“If you just give me a moment to explain-“

“No- no. Answer one question.”

“What’s that?”

“Does Mr. Stark know you’re here?”

The god chuckled somewhat nervously and gave the boy a sheepish smile. “No he does not but-“

“Okay then- JARVI-“ But Peter felt a hand clap over his mouth as the trickster apparated behind him. He felt that weird lightheaded feeling again like he had felt in the hallway when Thor was talking to ‘the TV’. wait a minute...

“Don’t be foolish boy I don’t wish you any harm I’m merely here seeking asylum- urgh!” Loki was cut off when Peter jabbed an elbow into his gut, winding him and swiftly kicking the gods shin, causing his legs to buckle beneath him. Peter whipped around as Loki attempted to catch himself and grabbed him, screaming at the top of his lungs.

“Don’t you dare touch me! I’m- you’re- you’re not meant to be here- does Thor know you’re here?! Where’s Thor?! What did you do to him?!” Peter grabbed the man by his shirt and pinned him against the wall as fear suddenly ran through him again. If the skinny bastard he was currently choking had dared to hurt his friend he wouldn’t hesitate to kill him- his instincts scared him but he was too riled up to care.

“You know for someone who didn’t want to be touched your initiating a lot of bodily contact-“

Peter slammed Loki into the wall again hard.
“Answer me!”

“He’ll be back momentarily I’m sure!”

“Why should I trust you? You tried to take over earth!”

“That was bloody years ago, were you even born then?” Loki almost laughed just as Peter was about to body slam him into the wall again.

Then Peter heard a booming voice from behind them as the elevator doors opened. A crackling electricity filled the air but only one that someone with Peter’s heightened senses would be able to detect. Backup. “LOKI WHAT DID YOU DO?!”

“What did I do?! I don’t know if you’re having problems with your vision brother, but I’m the one who’s currently being assaulted.” Loki spluttered as Peter’s grip tightened.

“I told you to stay away from the boy, Loki. Don’t you dare use your magic I won’t have him hurt again. Peter come here.” Thor held out his arm gesturing for Peter to duck behind it, which the teen did though there was a short internal debate; Peter Parker wanted to whimper and hide behind Thor like a frightened child (which he was) but Spider-Man wanted to continue to pin Loki against the wall until he got definitive answers. Fortunately for everyone involved Peter went with the former, his trust in Thor winning out- though he was still dazed and confused and petrified. The morning had certainly taken a hard left turn.

“Thor what’s going on?” Peter practically whimpered and Thor wrapped an arm protectively around him.

“Now child don’t be frightened nothing untoward is going on I promise you, no one is in danger-“ Thor spoke gently over his shoulder to the child behind him but started bellowing angrily when he turned his attention back to the dark haired god. “-other than my brother who is going to be reprimanded severely once you leave our presence for scaring you.”

“I’m not scared I just want to know what’s going on.” Peter said defensively and stepped out from behind Thor’s shadow. He wasn’t scared. He was determined and angry and a hero. He might not have his suit on but he was still Spider-Man dammit, and Spider-Man does not hide behind Thor, he stands beside him.
“Scare him?! I didn’t do anything to the boy Thor you know as well as I that I could have had I wanted to but I allowed him to assault me.” The god sighed indignantly as he brushed himself down. Every time Loki moves Peter felt himself flinch embarrassingly. He’d heard stories about what the god could do, how a single hand movement could lead to disaster and the adrenaline pumping through his veins was screaming at him to web the man to the wall or simply knock him the fuck out.

“I’m calling Mr. Stark.” Peter said quickly, swallowing down the bike the threatened to rise in his throat. He needed his dad, he didn’t know what to do, he couldn’t handle this- he needed his dad.

“Peter if you could wait just a moment-” Thor spoke calmly again but his tone set Peter off.

“Why should I?! Are you- oh my god are you on his side?! Thor you’re meant to be a good guy!” None of this made any sense, why was Thor defending him? Yes he was his brother but- that’s why Thor had been acting so weird. It was all starting to click into place- Fuck, Peter couldn’t do this. He couldn’t handle all this- this was- this was way above his pay grade- he needed Tony and he needed him now.

“Peter, please, youngling listen to me. Give me a chance to explain.” Thor said gently in an attempt to calm the boy down before he acted rashly. “Loki is here having sought asylum.”

“Because he did something bad again?” Peter asked accusingly.

“Not exactly. This time he did something good, but-“ The brothers exchanged glances that Peter didn’t understand. “I can’t tell you youngling-“

“So if what he did was good why doesn’t d- Tony know he’s here?” Peter caught himself but it wasn’t exactly smooth.

“Well my track record isn’t exactly sound when your father is concerned, child.” Loki smirked slightly and Peter shot both gods very dirty looks. Thor even backed away slightly, being sure that Peter was about to strike him.

“You told him?!” Peter screamed, getting right up in Thor’s face having no regard for the height difference. “And don’t call me a child!”
“I didn’t exactly need to Peter, your relationship with Tony is obvious even from afar.” Thor shrugged defensively but that didn’t do much to calm the teenager who was mere inches away from his face.

“How long has he been here for it to be obvious? How- how did he get past JARVIS?”

“Peter you understand I’m the god of mischief right? I can cast illusions.” Loki demonstrated just how easy it was for him by shifting his form to the other end of the room before Peter could even blink. “My abilities can extend to technology especially as advanced as JARVIS. His system works much like a human brain, which made it exceedingly easy. I must commend your father on his design.”

That made sense as to why Tony thought Peter was still in his room. And why there had been so many technical difficulties.

The teen’s head was spinning and he felt dangerously close to passing out, much like he had done that day he heard strange noises in the hallway. It occurred to him that due to his heightened senses Loki’s powers were affecting him- the energy the god was using to manipulate his dad’s computer was messing with his own brain waves or something. But he didn’t- he couldn’t think. His head was swimming all he knew was his dad was going to be upset. “I-I need to take my medicine or he’s gonna be mad at me..can you show him that at least? W-with the cameras I mean- c-can you let JARVIS show I t-took it?”

Loki looked...concerned? No, surely not, he was an evil tyrant he didn’t care about other people. Though he did nod and for a moment he looked as though he was going to touch Peter’s arm, but thought better of it. “Certainly..”

“While I- while I figure out what I’m gonna do- c-cause I am gonna tell him!” Peter mumbled as he staggered over to retrieve his medication. As he took it he made sure not to take his eyes off of either god as he had an internal debate.

He knew he should just call his father immediately. That was the sensible option, the most logical one, what he should do. Peter couldn’t handle this on his own. But then the thought about Thor and the possibility of him getting into trouble- even if the god had done something stupid Peter wasn’t sure he could live with himself if anything happened to him.

And maybe he should wait until Tony wasn’t in the middle of travelling. If his dad freaked out while they were meant to be going incognito that wouldn’t end well for anyone involved. The teen just wished he had more time but he didn’t. He couldn’t afford to spend ages making a decision, he
had no idea what Loki had planned and the longer he took to figure something out that gave the god of freaking mischief more time too.

But as much as they liked to joke about it, his father had a heart condition. He really didn’t want to be responsible for his dad having another heart attack, especially if they were on the jet which by now Peter assumes they would be had everything gone to plan. But he knew he had to tell him, if only just to keep his father's trust in him; Peter had learned his lesson and he was never going to lie to Tony again (well..about big stuff, bedwetting and bullies don’t count). Even if Loki hadn’t, well, *done anything (yet)* the potential was there and he was like, the king of tricking people. Maybe he had Thor fooled due to his brothers soft spot for him.

A thousand possibilities were running through his mind and Peter truly thought he was going to vomit so he was forced to sit down for a moment, if only to get his breath back.

“Neither if you move- an inch I mean it. J-just stay still.” Peter said, trying his best to sound authoritative though his voice was trembling. He gestured for both gods to sit down before adhering to the teens request. Peter took a few deep breaths before he set about dealing with the situation. He turned to Thor. “How did he get in here?”

“Remember that bird you found. The injured one you brought to me?”

Peter did remember. He remembered very vividly.

One weekend, not very long after he’d been shot he Ned and MJ had gone to the cinema again (only this time they didn’t watch something terrifying). It had been raining heavily but for some reason the teens decided to walk home instead of catching a ride with Happy. On their walk Peter had spotted something. Something thrashing around in the middle of the busy road. He hadn’t really thought about what he was doing he just ran out into the street while his friends screamed at him.

“Peter! What are you doing?!”

“It’s gonna get hit by a car!” Peter called back over his shoulder, having no regard for his own personal safety as he raced towards the injured animal.

“Who cares?! It’s just a stupid bird!” Ned yelled but Peter didn’t listen, he was too busy checking both sides of the street, dogging in and out of traffic. But Ned was right it was a bird; a black raven,
appearing to have a broken wing. It’s feathers were jet black but under the light of the street lamps had a green hue to them and there was no way Peter was going to leave the poor thing there.

As he approached the flighty animal he started to regret his choices because he really didn’t want to get bitten by the thing he was attempting to save. “Okay little guy, please don’t peck me, I’m not gonna hurt ya.”

But the bird didn’t try to peck him, in fact it stilled completely and looked up at him with big, calm, slow blinking eyes as if it was trying to figure him out. Peter thought it was a little odd but he was more preoccupied with getting them both out of the busy street. “Uh, I don’t really know how to pick you up without hurting you so just, uh, lemme know I guess?”

‘Yeah Peter, because the bird can totally understand you.’ But it seemed the bird did as it lifted its wings slightly, as best as it could with the injured one, as though it was gesturing for Peter to support it’s belly. He did, lifting the bird as gently as he could, though he did hear a pained chirp when he bent the broken wing slightly. “I’m sorry! Easy, easy, I’m sorry little guy.”

He wrapped the injured bird inside his jacket and Peter ran back onto the sidewalk where his friends were just gawking at him like he was a crazy person. “Now what are you gonna do with it?”

“I..I didn't think that far..”

“You never think that far!” Ned snapped.

“Don’t yell you’ll scare him.” Peter hissed holding the bird a little tighter, protectively, and he found himself rocking it slightly. “Don’t listen to him, Uncle Ned is just grumpy because he can’t fit in my jacket away from the rain.”

“Shut up Peter this is serious, you can’t take that thing back to the tower. What if it has diseases? What if it’s a spy camera?!”

“Oh Jesus Ned- look let’s see if we can find an out of hours vet or something.” MJ said pulling out her phone. “I can’t find anywhere close..not a subway ride away anyway and I doubt that agent dude would want you bringing a bird in the car.”
“Yeah.” Even after the whole traumatising event that had Happy warming up to him Peter doubted it would extend to letting him bring a bird into his car.

“Pete maybe you should just leave it—”

“No.” Peter shut that idea down immediately. He was already too invested.

“Peter it’s not like either of us can take it, I have a cat and- well Ned can’t be trusted to take care of himself let alone an animal.” MJ tried to reason.

“Hey I’ve kept myself alive for this long—”

“No your mama has—“

Peter interrupted their argument. “Guys this is serious!”

“It’s just a bird Peter.”

“S—Shut up Ned, you’re gonna hurt his feelings.” Peter hissed again, this time reaching into his coat to pet the bird on the head. To his surprise the little thing nuzzled his hand like it was saying thank you- oh hell no, Peter ain’t leaving this bird behind.

“You’re crazy.” Ned shook his head. “This is that squirrel all over again.”

“Squirrel?” MJ asked and while Ned set about recounting all the stories from his childhood where he’d brought injured animals home, Peter thought to himself.

“Okay. Okay I know what I’m gonna do.” Peter mumbled after a moment. JARVIS had a system to detect life forms, so he knew he couldn’t enter the building without the thing being detected- but he could ask someone for help. Someone who knew how to keep secrets and wouldn’t tell his dad. Someone he knew had experience with caring for birds. Thor would always tell him about caring for his father’s eagles when he was young.
Once he walked MJ and Ned home, Peter somehow managed to hide the bird from Happy in the car. The agent simply thought he was bundled up due to being soaked and cold from the rain and the bird seemed to follow Peter’s lead. It was almost like the bird knew it shouldn’t be seen and it got...smaller..

Now it all made sense.

“So...so you tricked me..” Peter looked up at Loki.

“Well I couldn’t exactly go knocking on the front door.” The dark haired man shrugged.

“You tricked me.” Peter reiterated angrily. He wasn’t sure he’d ever felt so violated in his entire life. “You made me implicit in all this, you made me an accomplice to whatever the fuck this is- were you even really hurt?”

Loki grimaced and nodded, and moved cautiously to roll up his sleeve- only doing so when Peter nodded for him to continue. A gnarly scar ran along the length of the man’s arm and Peter could tell that it was a new one.

“Ouch..” Peter mumbled, for a second losing himself and feeling bad about accusing the man of faking his injury. He felt even worse when he thought about the poor bird he’d accidentally hurt when picking it up but- no that wasn’t a bird. And that wasn’t a man. He was an evil god, an enemy of earth, he was using emotional warfare because he knew Peter was soft. The scar could even be an illusion.

Thor tried to interject and calm the boy down but that wasn’t well received. “Peter-“

“Shut up. ” He growled menacingly. “Just shut up. Both of you, I’m trying to think.”

The two gods allowed Peter to take full control of the situation and sat silently as Peter paced around the room. “The snake. That was you.”

“Yes.” Loki nodded.
“And you’ve been messing with the cameras and my head.” Peter continued, quickly connecting the dots.

“I wouldn’t have had I’d known the effect it has on you. I’m sorry for the pain or discomfort. Most humans usually aren’t so sensitive to-“

“Shut up. I don’t want your apologies. Yes or no answers will suffice.” Peter snapped, impressing himself slightly by just how much he sounded like his dad. He did have another question that he didn’t really want to know the answer to because it was humiliating; but he needed to keep a tally in his head of just what the god had done during his scot free stay at hôtel de Stark. “And the...the bed?”

“Yes.”

Peter couldn’t stop himself. He wanted to remain calm and impartial and in control but he couldn’t. He’d felt hurt and betrayed before- but this? This went over the line. Peter just about resisted the urge to punch the blond in the face but that didn’t stop him screaming at him. “Fuck you, Thor.”

Thor looked about ready to cry but that didn’t quell Peter’s anger at all. “Youngling-“

“Fuck you. You promised not to tell anyone. You promised me.” Despite himself the teen felt angry tears run down his face. He couldn’t help it, he tried not to, he was trying so hard to remain in control. He wanted to handle the situation like an adult but he couldn’t, he wasn’t, he needed his dad there and he wasn’t there. The one person he thought he could trust had betrayed him completely in more ways than one and now he was stuck trying to pick up the pieces all alone. He was scared and angry and- he just wanted Tony. He wanted it all to go away.

“I just wanted to help.” Thor said sadly and cast his eyes towards the floor. It was obvious he couldn’t bare to look at the teen crying knowing he was the root cause.

“Yeah. And look what happened.” Peter sniffed and angrily wiped the tears away from his face. “You put everyone in danger to help him.”

Thor knew better than to answer, as did Loki. Peter wasn’t stupid. He knew it would be so easy for either god to over power him, he was just a stupid kid, but they weren’t doing anything. They were letting him lead the situation. In Peter’s mind there were only two reasons for them to do so; because they knew they’d been caught, what they had done was wrong and were willing to accept
the consequences. Or they were just waiting for a chance to strike, just keeping Peter distracted whilst something else was happening in the background.

Peter was inclined to believe the former because he loved Thor but he couldn’t afford to take chances. And the god knew that, he’d lost any privileges he may have had due to breaking the boy’s trust, hence why he just sat silently and listened.

“Hands in front of you and don’t try anythi- you know what? Fuck it.” Peter pulled out his phone and after two clicks, whistling could be heard coming down the hallway as four of Tony’s gauntlets appeared, soaring through the air. Another two clicks and they turned into handcuffs, slapping themselves into both gods wrists. Gotta love Tony tech. His dad really did think of everything.

“Is this really necessary?” Loki asked exasperatedly. “Don’t you think we would have done something by now if we intended to?”

“Better safe than sorry.” Peter shrugged, feeling his Tony Stark style bravado returning. “Besides, if you’re innocent you won’t mind facing my dad right?”

“Look, if I intended to do any harm to anyone under this roof I would have already. I’ve had ample opportunities-“

“Ohh, so that means you’ve considered it?”

“For goodness- no that’s not what I meant. Stop twisting my words. Odin be blessed- you really are Stark’s son.” Loki grumbled frustratedly and Peter felt a stab of satisfaction for having elicited that reaction.

“Thank you, I take that as a compliment.”

“Peter-“ Thor tried to speak but Peter held his hand up to silence him.

“I’m mad at you, you’ve lost your talking privileges.” Peter growled lowly. “So keep it hush unless you want me to web your mouth shut.”
Loki seemed to take this as an opportunity to start a conversation. “I’ve been meaning to ask, this spider business- do you extrude a silky thread from your abdomen or-“

“And actually no- well, not so far anyway. But coincidentally I designed a portable device that shoots out super strong synthetic silk without the need of a visible storage tank.” Peter resounded boredly as he scrolled through his phone. He was trying to remain calm on the outside but really he was reading the texts he was getting from his dad, asking why Peter was ignoring him and why he was walking around the kitchen talking to himself and why he’d just programmed some of his gauntlets for no apparent reason.

“Sounds like you were bitten by an incredible engineer as opposed to a spider.”

“Well Tony never bit me, you’re the type that enjoys biting little boy’s, not him.” Peter sneered and he could have sworn that Loki’s cheeks darkened in colour ever so briefly. “But he’s a pretty good mentor. Taught me a lot of stuff like how to deal with shady, snakey criminals like yourself.”

“I can see that.” Loki murmured. From where he was sitting, he could see the frantic texts that were appearing on the boy’s phone and he sighed. “I think you ought to call him and get it over with, child.”

“Don’t tell me what to do and don’t call me child. I warned you.” Peter hissed, pointing his wrist at the god warningly. “I’ll call him when I’m ready.”

But Loki didn’t stop. “Why are you scared? You haven’t done anything wrong your father has no business being mad at you-“

“I’m not scared. And I know he won’t be mad at me, it’s your brother I’m worried about.” Peter snapped. It was true, Thor’s welfare was the only reason he hadn’t already called his dad. He didn’t want to resign Thor to a horrible fate because his instincts were telling him that Thor truly hadn’t done anything wrong- well he had, but not from ill intention. Peter hoped- and his Spidey-Senses agreed with him. “Though I’m not sure I should be since he lied to me.”

Thor sighed again. “I’m sorry Peter-“

“I said don’t talk! You can explain to dad, not me. I’m too easily emotionally manipulated.” Peter stood up from where he was perched on the couch and started pacing again. “That’s how Loki got in here in the first place- fuck!”
He was trying to keep his emotions in check, after all it was his kind forgiving nature that had got them into this mess anyway. That had gotten Loki into the tower, god why was he so stupid?! He knew he needed to stay calm, impartial, strong but he couldn’t. The week away from his family, all the pain and the sadness and fear, now mixed with the betrayal from his best friend, he couldn’t handle it. He was starting to break down. “Thor why did you do this? No- nevermind I know why because he’s your brother and- but why did you lie? To me - I get dad and the others but-but I wouldn’t have judged you if you were just honest! If you had told me I might’ve- well I don’t know! But now I don’t know what to think! How am I meant to trust you and- and- god I don’t wanna call dad if he’s gonna wanna kill you or something!”

The teen was crying freely now and Thor didn’t look like he was far off from joining him. “Peter. Do it. I’ll handle the consequences of my actions, this is not down to you to deal with. You’re right, your father needs to know I should have gone to him in the first place-“

“Yes. You should have.” Peter growled and wiped at his face again. God he was crying in front of a god. Two gods. This was not how this day was meant to go. “Okay I’m calling him..but you two keep quiet okay? I-I don’t wanna upset him..god he’s gonna be so upset- what if he has a heart attack? I know that’s what the arcs for but- oh god no I can’t-“

Thor could tell from Peter’s hand movements alone that the boy was starting to dissolve into a pure panic. “Youngling breathe, remember your numbers-“

“Seriously?! You wanna help me get through a panic attack now after you’ve caused all this?!” Peter panted and grabbed at his chest. Now he felt like he was the one having a heart attack.

“JARVIS will pick up on your vital signs and contact your father directly if you don’t get your breathing under control. You want to have the time to calm yourself before that happens, don’t you?” Loki chimed in, trying to get the boy to use the logical side of his brain that he valued so much.

“Can’t you just- magic that part away? Make it so he can’t-can’t check- god-“ Peter choked out. This was bad, this was really bad, he hadn’t had an attack like this in a while and he needed. His fucking. Dad.

“I can’t but I wouldn’t if I could.”

Peter stared blankly at him. “Th-That was confusing- I’m kinda low on oxygen right now so my
“Brains a little fuzzy—yes or no to the magic shit?”

“No. I’m not going to use my magic because you asked me not to and if you need medical attention I’m not going to trick the system—“

“Like you care!”

Loki continued calmly despite the boy’s outburst. “And your father has his systems checking your vital signs constantly, which I can’t corrupt or manipulate. I haven’t even tried because—well I just wouldn’t, but I know that I couldn’t. The coding is too complex. Tony obviously put a lot of thought into their design.”

“Yeah well, I guess making sure your kid is still breathing is kinda important.” Peter hummed, still pacing frantically. He was strongly debating grabbing a paper bag from one of the kitchen draws but he didn’t want to risk passing out from CO2 poisoning. It was a struggle but he managed to get his breath back just enough to speak. “Right first things first, the second I tell dad what’s happened you’re going to fix all the files you corrupted so he can see exactly what you’ve been doing this entire time. G-Got it?”

Loki nodded.

“Phew, okay okay okay, I’m just gonna do it everyone shut up.” Peter panted, holding his chest. No one was actually talking but the two gods figured Peter was just trying to calm his own screaming mind. “God, Bruce I hope you’ve got paddles on board.”

It was too late, he’d already pressed the call button and much to Peter’s relief and horror his dad answered immediately. Peter could tell from the roaring sound alone that his dad was indeed on the jet—fuck.

Having seen his sons odd behaviour he already sounded concerned. “Pete, what are you doing?! I was just about to call you, is everything—“

“Are these lines monitored?” Peter rushed out, cutting the man off.

“Peter what’s—“
“Just answer me.”

“Yes. Why’s happened? Are you okay?”

“I need to talk to you. Privately I don’t- I don’t want anyone else to hear-“

Tony’s heart was pounding in his chest. “Peter you better start answering me before I flip my shit-“

“I just need you!” The boy’s voice broke and he was crying. “Alone. Please dad, call me on a private line please -“

“Okay, okay just hold on give me five seconds-“ Tony was rushing to find a clear, safe channel but that was difficult when his hands were shaking. “Peter answer me one thing, are you safe?”

“I-I don’t know-“ That was not the answer any parent wants to hear. “-I think so- for now but I can’t trust him-“

“Who?!“

“Just wait a damn second!” Peter snapped.

“The lines closed now- now video call me I want to see you-“

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea-“

“Peter Benjamin Parker video call me right now I’m already on my way home.” Tony was already gearing up a suit with the coordinates back to the tower. He didn’t know what was going on but he knew his boy and Peter wouldn’t have been acting so strangely over something mundane.

“Okay but Uhm- Bruce is with you right?”
“Why?”

“Because I don’t want you to be on your own if your heart goes funny-“

“Peter-“

“I’m not joking dad! I’m serious!” Peter sobbed.

“Answer the call now.”

“Okay..okay..” The stammered as he answered the video call. The phone was shaking so much the screen was practically vibrating. “Uhm..”

“Peter. Who is there?”

“Dad I promise- I’m going to show you but please, please don’t fly yet, please- just- just stay on the jet- I-I wasn’t kidding about your heart just- please stay with Bruce-“

Tony turned his phone slightly so Peter could see the concerned entourage that had accumulated behind him. “Bruce is right here. Now show me.”

Peter took a deep breath and turned the camera himself.

“Hello there Anthony.” Loki said in a tight voice, nodding slightly to the camera.

“SON OF A FUCKING BITCH!”
Sorry for the long break! I really rushed this chapter schools been hella busy i'm sorry D:
But hey Spidey's back in the MCU so woop woop! (Even though I haven't seen and likely never will see FFH I am very happy for Tom Holland) That's definitely cause to celebrate.
Y'all know ya boi didn't have time to proofread so I'm sorry if I left in some of my plan in there ;-;

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Mr. Stark we’ve called the-“

“Don’t care.”

“But sir-“

“Don’t care.”

“We need you to-“

The agent was then grabbed by his lapels and pushed up hard against a nearby wall, with far more force than necessary. “I’ll tell you what needs to be done. You need to get my son here so he’s the first fucking thing I see when I get off that jet. Until then I don’t want to hear shit, from anyone about anything because I do. Not. Care. Understand?”

“Y-Yes sir, Mr. Stark sir.”

Steve apologised to the agent on Tony’s behalf and had to jog to keep up with him as the brunette continued storming ahead of him. The man was moving unnaturally fast especially given his wounded leg. “Tony he’s okay you’ve spoken to him-“
“Steve. I love you but if you don’t stop talking I’m going to knock those pretty white teeth out of your mouth.” Tony growled and Steve took the hint. Tony couldn’t think, he could barely breathe, he wasn’t sure how he even felt at that point. Angry, obviously, scared too but he couldn’t actually feel anything. He’d gone completely numb in that way he had the night Peter had been shot, the way he had the night the boy was crushed by that building, the night he got the call that May was on life support and Peter needed him- his boy needed him. And he had to get there as fast as he could. Tony was perfectly content to mortally injure anyone who even tried to slow him down, his face he teammates included. In fact he almost had.

As soon as Tony saw Loki he’d flipped, understandably, but not in the way one would expect. He calmly set all of JARVIS’ high alert protocols into place, instructed Peter to go to Happy and he had Nat stay on the phone with him whilst he made his way to the agent. Then he sent for back up for the remainder of his team after informing Nick of what was currently transpiring- Rhodey and Sam would fill in for Steve and Tony on their mission (after all it was too important not to complete) whilst they headed back to handle things.

Other than the small heart attack that required Steve having to punch him in the chest- that then lead to him almost punching Bruce when the doctor tried to delay his departure- Tony felt he was handling things extremely well.

Now he and Steve were running through the compound having just landed. Well, Steve was running, Tony was sprinting. He was almost sad that no one was timing him because he was sure he’d have beaten all of his records. He kept his eyes straight ahead and he could hear himself muttering under his breath, chanting; “I’m coming Kid, just hold tight, I’m coming.”

After what felt like eons but had really only been a few hours, long enough for him to get there and for Happy to get Peter safely to the compound, Tony locked eyes on his son through the glass window of a door. The kid looked fucking traumatised.

“Move.” Tony literally pushed another agent who tried to stop him onto his ass, leaving Steve to help the guy up, in order to get to the door quicker- and he didn’t give a fuck. Hell he’d have knocked the guy out if it would have saved him an extra second. Tony just through the door and immediately ran over to his son, practically picking him up. “Peter- are you okay?! Are you hurt?! You alright?!"

“I’m fine dad I’m- I’m okay.” Peter mumbled. The boy was trembling, much like he had been the night he told Tony about being abducted, the story Tony had told Clint only the night before. It was all happening again- Tony wasn’t there. He’d left him. He hadn’t protected him like he’d promised. He’d promised his son he’d never let anyone hurt him and it was happening again. In his own fucking home.
“Did he do anything to you? Did he hurt you?” Tony went back to checking the boy all over, turning his head every which way and looking him up and down. He couldn’t see any signs of trauma other than the boy’s red eyes and tear stained cheeks. That was enough. Iron-Dad was sour for blood.

“No- no he didn’t do anything we didn’t- we hardly talked I just called you and- dad..dad I’m sorry.” Peter stammered, feeling his eyes watering against his will. He’d been trying so hard not to cry anymore but he couldn’t help it. The drive up there hadn’t exactly been a smooth one. “I’m so sorry.”

“What on earth are you apologising for?” Tony shook his head aghast.

“N-not noticing sooner- I should’ve- I should’ve known I-“

“No, bubby. You didn’t do anything wrong, you did- you did everything right. You called me straight away and you handled it you did so good and- I’m so sorry.” Tony felt his own voice breaking as he wrapped the boy in a hug again. “I should’ve been there.”

“It’s not your fault, you didn’t know.” Peter whispered into the man’s shoulder.

“Well I should have.” Tony muttered as he ran his hand soothingly through Peter’s hair. The pair just stood there for a moment, both finally being able to breathe after so long. “You did so good, I’m so proud of you.”

“Dad..please don’t get mad at Thor.” Peter sniffled into Tony’s chest.

“That’s not for you to worry about.” The man whispered calmly. He’d expected Peter to try and broach the subject but the boy had been far too involved with the entire thing and now was the time for him to be a kid; a kid who had gone through a hell of a lot and needed some time to recover. A kid who’s dad was gonna take care of things.

“But-“

“Peter. Listen to me.” Tony said gently as he guided the boy to sit down on the couch. “I
understand that you’re worried about what’s going to happen next, but that’s none of your concern. I promise I’m going to do my best to sort this without anything else bad happening, okay? But this is not for you to worry about. You did your part, the rest is up to me. Let me do my job like I should have done weeks ago and take care of you. I’m gonna fix this, do you understand?"

“O-okay.” Peter wanted to argue. To fight. To stick up for Thor. But he couldn’t. He didn’t have the energy- and honestly? He didn’t know what was right anymore. His brain was completely fried, everything had just been turned upside down and all Peter could do was trust his constant. And that constant was Tony.

“Good boy.” Tony hummed as he ran his hand in and down the boy’s back. He was content to not involve Peter any more. “You're shaking.”

“S-s-So are you.”

“Yeah well, I did have a minor heart attack, that’ll do that to you-”

“You WHAT?!”

Ah nice one Tony you’re meant to be helping the kid relax- “Pete I’m fine! I probably shouldn’t have said that-”

“You think?! That’s not something you just casually drop into conversation!” Peter yelled, sitting bolt upright and looking his dad up and down, as though he was checking to make sure the man wasn’t a zombie. “Are you okay?! W-w-What happened?!”

“I’m sorry- I’m okay Bruce checked me over, my arc dealt with it- it was just a bit of a shock, that’s all.” Tony dropped his voice back down to a calmer lilt in an attempt to bring Peter’s energy back down with it.

“Y-Yeah.” Peter nodded. “Today been a bit uh- a bit- Uhm-“

The kid put his face in his hands and started shaking even more violently than he had been and Tony gave up with the half hug he had been giving him, pulling Peter closer until he was practically on his lap. “That’s it. I'm never leaving you home again. Ever.”
“You k-know what? I’m cool with that.” Peter nodded and he managed to keep his face straight for a moment. But only a moment. Then he dissolved into tears again but at least his dad was finally there to wipe them away.

Of course it wasn’t as simple as Peter and Tony heading in the car and going home, though they both desperately wanted that to be the case. Luckily Peter had given his official statement and all the evidence he had on hand before Tony had arrived so there was no reason for the pair to be separated again, not that Tony would have allowed it. Peter was able to stay with Tony while the man gave his own statement and was filled in on what was currently transpiring.

Nick came in just as Tony was about to address what was happening with Thor. “Ah good. You finally showed up.”

“And good evening to you too, T.” Nick sighed and sat down across from the pair. “How’re you doing Pete?”

“I-I’m fine, sir.” Peter mumbled, seemingly shocked that Fury had used his first name, let alone a shortened version.

“I don’t want anyone else talking to him Nick.” Tony continued with his original line of questioning. “I want to see him first.”

“I figured as much.” Nick sighed again, running his hand over his face. It was the first time Peter had ever seen the man show signs of stress. “We’ve got him held back at the tower, they’ve finished gathering evidence now if you’re ready to go back.”

Tony looked down at the boy beside him. “What do you think kiddo?”

“I don’t care.” Peter shrugged, though internally he added; ‘So long as I can stick with you.’

“Alright, thanks Nick.” Tony continued to talk briefly (and surreptitiously) about the mission he’d had to abandon, but Peter didn’t even try to listen. His dad was using terms he didn’t understand and he didn’t have the energy to try and make sense of it. He didn’t care about the mission, he just cared that his dad was home. And Steve-
“Oh god Peter!” The blond ran in and almost tackled the teenager with a hug that could only be likened to Thor’s bear hugs (the internal comparison making Peter feel a stab of guilt as he knew he may not be on the receiving end of one of those hugs for a while). “Are you okay?!”

“I’m fine! I can’t breathe but I’m fine.” Peter laughed weakly as Steve let go of him with a look of horror on his face.

“Oh gosh- sorry I just- god I was so worried!” Steve recovered quickly from strangling the boy and grabbed him in another equally overbearing hug.

“Come on Steve, we were just on our way out.” Tony chuckled when Peter shot him a look, begging to be saved from Steve’s smothering. The only person Peter wanted to be smothered by was Tony- purely because his dad usually lacked the physical capacity to break his ribs.

“Where are you going?” Steve asked confusedly as he followed them out of the door. “Don’t you need to sort-“

“Home. I am going to sort it, they held Thor back at the tower.”

“Do you think that’s a good idea?”

“I don’t want to leave it. Best to get it over with.” Tony shrugged, misinterpreting Steve question.

“No I mean taking kiddo back there after..everything..”

Peter was more than a little freaked out, it hadn’t occurred to Tony that the boy may not feel comfortable returning to the tower so soon. “Pete are you alright with going back tonight? If not you can stay here with Steve while I go and handle things?”

“H-how long would it take..?” Peter mumbled. “To like, t-talk to him?”

“I’m not sure kiddo I won’t know until we get down to business.”
Peter couldn’t bare the thought of being away from his dad for an extended period of time again; so despite his reservations he nodded. “I’ll come with.”

“You sure?”

“Uh huh.”

“If you feel uncomfortable once we get there we can always come back here or find a hotel or something. We don’t have to stay there tonight.”

“I wanna get it over with too. It’s not a big deal, it's not like anything that traumatic happened.” Other than finding out you’d been cohabiting with someone- that someone being a dangerous criminal you’d been told scary stories about- for months and hadn’t even known they were there. That was a little mind fucky. “I don’t wanna be scared to sleep in my own room.”

“Fair enough bubs. Come on.” Tony nodded understandingly and gestured for Peter to duck under his arm. Only then did he noticed the weird outfit Peter was wearing. Clearly the boy was wearing his own pants but he was wearing a grey Stark Industries T-shirt that was at least four sizes too big for him. “Why are you wearing a dress?”

Peter just scowled at him but Tony didn’t feel any scorn, he felt a little amused. It was hard to take the kid seriously when he was dressed like a literal toddler and had the wild hair of one. “Hey it’s 2017 kid, I ain’t judging, just wondering when you decided to-“

Peter wasn’t impressed by Tony’s attempts to joke with him, he wasn’t in the mood. “It’s Happy’s.”

“Why are you playing dress up?”

“I..I made a mess of mine.” Peter mumbled.

“Kid puked in the car.” Happy chimed in bluntly and Tony cringed sympathetically.
“Ah kid-“

But Peter mistook Tony’s sympathy for anger for some reason. “I won’t do it again! I-I just got hett up and I t-think a little carsick and-“

“Pete, you’re not in trouble. It was an accident, you’re fine.” Tony shook his head and pulled the boy closer to him, wrapping an arm protectively around Peter’s shoulders. Clearly Peter had reverted back into his old mindset after the trauma he’d been through that day because present day Peter would have known no one would be mad at him for being sick. “Relax. I’ve got you.”

“I’m sorry..” Peter mumbled. He just wanted to lay down.

“Come on, let’s get you home.” Tony said gently and started to lead the boy out to the car. Before they exited the building Tony stopped and gestured to the restrooms. “You gotta pee before we leave?”

Peter shook his head no and Tony didn’t press the issue, though he found it a little odd; the kid usually peed a lot when he was nervous and his nerves were absolutely shot after the day he had, but Peter hadn’t left his side since the moment he saw him which was almost an hour and a half ago. Still, he shrugged it off, figuring he’d simply have Happy stop the moment he noticed any signs of discomfort. He was more worried about getting his boy home safe than anything else but he did make sure to give him a bottle of water the second they got in the car.

Steve elected to sit in the front seat, allowing the teen and his father to sit un disturbed together in the back (that had thankfully been cleaned by some unfortunate agent). Peter remained clinging to Tony’s side the entire drive home and Tony refused to let go of him either. The car was mostly silent besides Happy filling in Steve on what exactly transpired once Peter called in.

The building had been swarmed with agents as Happy escorted Peter safely out. Loki was immediately contained and brought to a separate secure facility to ensure he and Thor no longer had contact; whilst the blond god had the luxury of remaining at home and waiting for Tony’s arrival. Nick was sent to handle Loki and Tony Thor, then if need be they’d swap over.

When Happy was describing the gods current state Peter started silently crying again and Tony gave the agent a look that shut him up.

The drive felt too long and too short all at the same time. On one hand everyone was desperate to
get home but on the other, they wanted the journey to take longer to try and avoid the inevitable. And the inevitable being Tony having to send Peter to another room whilst he handled Thor, which neither of them were thrilled about.

Luckily for Tony’s heart, Peter didn’t kick up a fuss about the separation. It was obvious the teen understood and was trying to be strong, acting as though he was okay with his dad leaving him again, but it was equally as obvious that he wasn’t fine; Tony couldn’t blame him, the kid had spent a week pretending to be fine, that shit is draining he knew from personal experience. Peter didn’t want to come off as needy but Tony was perfectly content to deal with him being the clingiest kid in the world.

“Steve, can you make sure he gets something to drink at least? And Hap, update May for me.” Tony asked and Steve nodded dutifully. Tony hadn't seen Peter drink anything since they’d reunited so he knew the boy was dehydrated, especially given the fact he’d been sick. He turned his attention back to Peter, brushing his wild hair off the boy’s face. “I won’t be long kiddo, give me a couple hours, okay? I’ll be right down here if you need me.”

“I’ll be ok-kay dad. Don’t worry about me I’ll be fine- just- just don’t-” Peter cut himself off as he was about to jump to Thor’s defence again, but his dad had asked him specifically not to talk about it. “Don’t be long.”

Tony kissed the top of the boy’s head and headed down to the lab where Thor had been quarantined. Tony didn’t fail to notice that the lab was an absolute wreck- but that was nothing to do with Thor. Clearly Peter hadn’t bothered tidying up after himself since he hadn’t expected Tony home so soon. Jesus Christ what the hell had the boy been- you know what? Nevermind. Tony had bigger things to think about than whatever his crackhead of a son had been making.

The god was sat in the far corner of the lab, four agents standing by him (ha, like they’d be able to stop him if he wanted to get away). Thor still had the cuffs on him and Tony shook his head angrily. “Eenie, meanie, miney and mo- out. I don’t need you down here.”

One of them had the audacity to try and talk back. “Sir we’ve been instructed to-“

“Leave. By me. So get the fuck out.” Tony growled ferociously. “Off you go, yep bye bye, show some fucking respect you’re dealing with a god here, he don’t need no babysitter this is his house. I’m sick of twenty year olds thinking they know more than me, god damn, fucking kids..”

After he’d finished chasing the red faced guards out of the room Tony turned his attention back to Thor. “Arms out.”
Thor obliged, even if he did look slightly confused. Tony set about removing the cuffs from his wrists. “You don’t need these. I know you won’t pull any shit with me.”

“Thank you.” Thor said quietly. Thor said quietly - Tony had never known the god to speak below a shouting level. Probably because he was petrified.

“So,” Tony cleared his throat as he leaned against one of his standing desks with his arms crossed. “Care to explain what the fuck has been going on?”

As the interrogation started Steve and Happy tried to make Peter as comfortable as possible, but that wasn’t exactly going to plan. After trying to get Peter to eat and drink something for half an hour they finally left him alone.

The teen tried to stay put and not go downstairs, he really did, but he felt overwhelmingly guilty. Even though he knew he had done the right thing calling his still felt rotten knowing he’d put Thor in the firing line. He just hoped that nothing bad would happen to him even if he technically deserved it. Peter didn’t believe his dad would have Thor severely punished for what he’d done, at least he hoped he wouldn’t, but he knew Tony had been really, really mad - understandably. And even if Tony wanted to go easy on him, they still had to answer to the higher power that was S.H.I.E.L.D. He doubted that Tony would have the power to save Thor from all of the security and protocol breaches he’d be held accountable for, even if he wanted to.

He knew he had done the right thing, but it didn’t feel like it. It felt like he had just sent his best friend off to be executed. The more he thought about it the worse he felt and the guilt was eating at him, he had to know what was going on.

“You alright sport?” Steve had tried to make conversation with Peter several times but the kid hadn’t responded; now the kid had attempted to leave the room his guard was immediately up.

“Uh..I’ll be right back.”

“Pete you can’t go down there-“

“I know I just..I gotta go to the bathroom..”
“Oh, sorry kiddo. Go ahead.” Steve said quickly, feeling guilty having made the shy boy admit to that.

Peter also felt bad for using that excuse but he couldn’t help it- and hey it worked. No one questioned him heading towards his own room, away from the elevator, to use his bathroom. From there it was easy to take the stairs down to the lower levels and grab the elevator from a different floor. He was surprised when the lift actually took him to his desired floor as he figured his father would have had him barred from entering the lab; but then again, his dad had rather a lot on his mind and he had said Peter could go down if he needed him. What Peter needed was to know just what was going on.

Peter hopped out on the floor above the lab, so that the elevator wouldn’t alert anyone to his presence. He didn’t even get out of the footwell of the stairs before he heard his dad’s voice. “You brought him here. You put my son in danger.”

“Tony you know his temperament has changed, you know he’s no longer up to his old tricks. Even you agreed that-“

“You’re right. I did agree. I agreed when I thought that he was dead and was no longer a threat but even that was a trick. He tricked you again and you allowed him to be near my. Son.”

“He was never a threat to the boy! You know I wouldn’t have had anything happen to Peter-“

“I thought so too but look where we are!”

Just as things were getting...heated, JARVIS chimed in. “Master Tony, may I interject?”

“Hold on Jar.” Tony said flippantly, assuming that JARVIS was just trying to inform him about the diagnostics he was currently running. Of course, usually the AI would have continued to interrupt and inform Tony that Peter was currently listening in, but the computer wasn’t working at full capacity.

“Peter was safe. Loki was only here seeking asylum, nothing more-“

“So you said, but if that’s true why didn’t he just come and ask, Hm? Why go through the trouble of sneaking in, tricking people, tampering with JARVIS- you know he put my entire security
system at risk with that? I’m not only worried about what Loki might have done to him but if the tower had been attacked you might have been rendered defenseless.” So that may have been a slight exaggeration. There were back ups in place and JARVIS was relatively undamaged; he never once stopped scanning Peter’s vitals either so he knew Loki had told Thor the truth about that much. He was just trying to prove a point.

“Because of the welcome he would have received! Are you telling me had he come here and asked politely that you would have granted him aid?”

“No, I probably wouldn’t have but you know what? That was my choice to make and you took it away. You did what you thought was okay and I usually wouldn’t care. Even if he is an ex villain of the world and mind fucked one of my best friends- our best friend, I might have been willing to overlook all that. But you put Peter at risk. I trusted you and you- god, you fucking-” Tony cut himself off as he turned around to face away from Thor for a moment. He was fighting the urge to hit the wall. After pacing in a circle for a second he regained a bit more of his composure. “Why didn’t you just think? Why do you have to be such a brainless idiot all the time-”

Peter had heard enough. He couldn’t keep his mouth shut. “Dad-”

“Oh no, Peter not now.” Tony put his head in his hands and Thor looked even less thrilled as the youngest household member bursting into the lab.

“It’s his brother dad-”

“I’m well aware of that.” Tony sighed tiredly. He really didn’t have the capacity to deal with explaining the delicate situation to an emotional teenager; let alone an emotional teenager that felt he was responsible.

“I know but..yeah he was an idiot but his heart was in the right place. Stop yelling at him like he’s a child.”

“He was meant to be taking care of a child- my child -“

“And he did. He took great care of me, he protected me the entire time, he went so far as to lock Loki away all day so I didn’t come into contact with him, he did his best-“
“He wouldn’t have had to if he hadn’t-“

“I know, I know.” Peter said calmly. He was trying to defuse the situation, not add to the stress so he knew he had to remain level headed if he was going to get anywhere. “I’m not disputing that but like you said, here we are.”

“Peter. I appreciate where you’re coming from and you thoughts and feelings are valid- all of that shit. But right now I need you to go upstairs and sit with the others while I talk to Thor. You need to let me sort this out between the two of us and I really, really don’t want to lose my patience with you right now. So can you please leave.” Tony said quietly, pinching the bridge of his nose and refusing to look at his son. He was trying his best not to snap, the days events starting to weigh on him heavily. He wanted this done and sorted as much as anyone, but he couldn’t do that with the boy in the room. He’d already been talking in circles for the past forty minutes- Peter has walked in after Thor had explained everything and it was Tony’s time to vent so he hadn’t exactly seen enough to form an opinion.

“Okay..” Peter relented, knowing his dad wasn’t kidding and the last thing he wanted was to have Tony yell at him. He mouthed a quick apology to Thor before he scampered back off upstairs.

After the short interruption from Peter, the two men were allowed to talk back and forth for another hour or so before they felt that they’d gotten to a decent point of understanding. That was until Thor dropped yet another bombshell. “Anthony there is more I need to tell you.”

“Oh god what? What more could there possibly be-“

“Not about Loki.” Thor said quickly. “About Peter.”

“.what?”

“I’ve witnessed some things and I have deep concerns.” Thor started, sealing thickly. He knew he had to say something but somehow talking about the boy was a thousand times more difficult than everything else. “I promised the boy I wouldn’t tell you but now that you’ll be reviewing the footage with Loki in it you’re bound to overhear our conversations anyway and I..I cannot keep it to myself. It needs to be addressed.”

“You better start talking blondie because I don’t have the patience for your cryptic bullshit today.” Tony growled, feeling the anger from earlier return. “What’s wrong with my kid?”
“The bedwetting hasn’t improved. He’s been lying to you- though I assume you were already slightly aware of that. His sleep is being badly disrupted by it, I witnessed him having to change the sheets twice in one night and he was exhausted the next day.” Thor said bluntly. That part was easier, it was a physical complaint and there was a linear perspective to how the boy’s father could manage it. That wasn’t the thing he was finding difficult to express. “But it’s...it’s the other boy.”

“What other boy? Ned?”

“Flash.”

Tony’s blood ran cold. He hadn’t heard that name in a while and for good reason. Peter said he’d stopped picking on him and Tony had never mentioned that name, so why the fuck did Thor know? “What about him..”

“It’s bad Tony. He hit him.” Thor said simply. He could tell from Tony’s reaction that he didn’t need to explain who he was and he was glad that he didn’t have to; he wasn’t sure he’d be able to hold is temper if he did. “I went to collect him after the first day of the science fair. In the parking lot, the boy pushed Peter to the ground and kicked him in the face.”

Tony was shaking now. “When?”

“Thursday.”

“Why didn’t you-” Tony was about to ask why Thor hadn’t said anything but he knew why; because Peter had obviously begged him not to and Thor wouldn’t tell Tony something that would upset him whilst he was on a mission. But Tony also knew Thor wouldn’t have simply ignored it. “What did you do?”

Thor looked nervous. More nervous than he had when Tony first entered the lab. “Ah well you see- when I said Loki hadn’t hurt anyone that was...a teensy bit of a lie-“

Tony cut him off. He didn’t have time for pleasantries. He just wanted to know what other messes he had to deal with. “How bad?”
“Not very. He transfigured into a small, non venomous snake- well, not particularly venomous- and bit him. The boy is fine. Probably won’t even have a scar.” Thor assured him. “And Happy man said that all is well with the school, youngling isn’t in any kind of trouble.”

“For the record next time you have my permission to cause more permanent damage so long as I can have the kill shot.” Tony muttered almost inaudible, his voice shaking. He turned away from the god, gripping the edge of the table so hard that it hurt his hands. He’d never truly understood the expression ‘seeing red’ before but now he did. He was about ready to murder someone. That someone being a sixteen year old little cu- “I’ll keep that part out of my report.”

“Anthony I have one more favour to ask..”

“Seriously?”

“I know- I know you’ve done more than enough- I appreciate everything you’ve done truly- it’s just- can you not tell Peter you heard from me? He’d..he’d never forgive me. I’ve already lost his trust I can’t..I can’t break that promise.” Thor's eyes were dangerously watery and there was no way that Tony could emotionally handle seeing the fabled god of thunder cry on top of everything else.

“Fine. You’re right he’s been hurt enough in all this.” Though he’d agreed for obvious reasons Tony was now going to have to wait until Peter went back to school to try and tackle the situation. There was nothing he could do without making Peter suspicious. If he brought it up without reason the kid would know- fuck . All he knew was he was not about to let the kid go back to that school so long as Flash fucking Thompson was there. Maybe Happy could take a little drive with him later to pay a midnight visit..

Just as Tony was about to ask for some more details, the blond pointed towards the door, where a mess of brown curly hair was creeping around it. “Can I come back in now?”

“Sure bubs - are you okay?” Tony turned to see Peter’s face was bright red and he looked on the verge of tears again. It caused Tony’s stomach to twist uncomfortably as he could imagine that was exactly how his boy looked after being assaulted by his classmate. ‘Push it down Stark. Not now. Save that anger for later, Peter doesn’t need to see that.’

“Y-yeah, Happy and Steve started yelling and I didn’t wanna be in there anym-more..” Peter sniffled and Tony quickly gestured for him to enter the room. An argument had broken out between the pair upstairs when Happy drew comparison between Steve lying about Bucky to what Thor had done; which Steve had taken incredibly personally. It was getting pretty ugly.
The boy sat on the table beside his dad, leaning his head on the man’s shoulder. He didn’t feel nearly as uncomfortable with Thor as he thought he would, who gave him a comforting reassuring smile the second they made eye contact. “What’s gonna happen now?”

“I contacted some people about Loki. People who can match his magic. They’re gonna make sure he really is here for what he says he is.” Tony yawned somewhat boredly (much to Peter’s surprise, he was sure his dad would just brush him off the second he asked). Tony turned his attention back to Thor. “If he’s not a threat they agreed to keep him safe. I made them promise not to hurt him unless it’s absolutely necessary.”

“Thank you, Tony. Thank you.” Thor said earnestly.

“Don’t mention it.” Tony clapped a hand on the gods shoulder as he stood up, stretching. “No seriously don’t. Clint is pretty fucking riled up right now and if he gets wind that I didn’t remove all Loki’s teeth with a pair of pliers like I said I did he’ll go nuts.”

All Thor muttered in response was; “I’m so sorry.”

“I know you are and that’s the only reason why I didn’t have hulk come with and beat the crap out of you.” Tony sighed and ruffled Peter’s hair- the action being more of a comfort to himself than the teen. “Other than all the other shit about Loki, why didn’t you tell me?”

“It was never an opportune time. You always had other serious business.” Thor said, his voice impossibly tight as though he was fighting the urge to vomit from the anxiety.

“I would have made time. I always have a lot going on but I would have made time for you.”

“You had enough on your mind to deal with besides handling my mess.”

“Shut up.” Tony snapped. “You guys come first. Always. Everything else can wait, today should be a testament to that- if you need something, if you need help- whatever it is, tell me. I didn’t think I had to say it after everything.”

At that point Tony stepped away to make some more phone calls, arranging transport for Thor to
go and have another meeting with Nick and probably some other professionals.

It was just Peter and Thor left in the room. The teen took the opportunity to apologise, to try and alleviate some of the irrational, sickening guilt he was feeling. “I’m sorry Thor..”

“I don’t blame you little one. You did the right thing, this way everyone is safe.” Thor said gently, giving Peter yet another reassuring smile though it looked slightly more broken than the last one. “As much as I care for my brother I won’t allow his being here to jeopardise your safety.”

“But like you said he wasn’t gonna hurt anyone..”

“No but the people who were after him...well, let’s just say he had good reason for seeking refuge in the first place.”

“Why..why was he running? Did he do something bad..?”

“Well my brother has many enemies for the various bad things he’s done..but no. Not this time. This time..he actually did something good.” Thor sighed and ran a hand through his hair.

“What did he do?” Peter asked, again not expecting an answer. But unbeknownst to him Tony had already given Thor permission to explain in more detail.

“He stole something, very old and precious. Something very powerful. Not unlike what he had once used to try and take over the earth.” Thor paused for a moment as though he was trying to find the right words. “And once again, the power had fallen into the wrong hands, but not his this time. Having been there himself he understood what these..bad people were planning to do with it. So he took it. He took it and ran. But after years of burning bridges with everyone he came into contact with he ran to the only place he knew he’d be accepted. Home. He ran home to me.”

A sad silence filled the air for the moment as Thor allowed Peter to process what he’d told him. Peter could practically hear the heartbreak in the god's voice and he could only imagine how horrible the situation was for him. “Where is it now? The thing he took I mean?”

“Safe.” Thor sighed. “That's one thing I did right in all this. Though I didn’t tell your father about Loki I took the stone straight to him, I just didn’t tell him how I came across it. It’s now in safe hands, securely guarded so it shall never befall another tyrant who will try to abuse its power.”
“Well that’s good. And you did do the right thing Thor, I know you don’t see it that way- heck I know dad doesn’t either but I think you did. You tried to keep everyone safe and happy, it’s not your fault that you couldn’t. At least you tried.”

“I tried my hardest..I just didn’t go about it in the right way as I should have-“

“Well you tried. And in my book that still makes you one of the good guys.” Peter smiled and he was happy to note that Thor smiled back. Maybe he hadn’t ruined everything after all.

“Thank you Spiderling. That means more to me than you could ever know.”

“You have to go away for a while, huh?” Peter swallowed as his voice wavered slightly. He’d promised himself that he wasn’t going to cry any more than day but apparently his eyes hadn’t signed the contract.

“Yes whilst this all cools down.” Thor smiled sadly, obviously trying to put on a brave face for the teens benefit. He couldn’t let on how scared he was, that wasn’t fair on the boy, not after he’d be the one to cause the mess they were in. “And I have to go to a disciplinary something or the other for all the breaks in protocol but Tony assured me that I’m still very much a member of this team.”

“Oh thank god- ‘cause if he was gonna try and throw you out I was gonna kick up a storm -“

“No youngling, I’m not going anywhere I promise you.” Thor chuckled slightly at how defensive the boy was being over him. He was just so relieved that Peter wasn’t scared of him. As much as Thor promised that he wouldn’t be leaving (at least not permanently) the time came for Thor to go off and meet with some other S.H.I.E.L.D people. “I’ll see you soon little one.”

‘Don’t cry, don’t cry, don’t cry.-’ “M’gonna miss you.”

“I’ll miss you too but I won’t be gone long, I love you.”

“Love you too.”
Tony stood back and allowed the pair to hug one last time before Thor was escorted out of the building, by two senior agents (who knew better than to treat him with anything less than the utmost respect). As soon as Thor was gone Tony summoned Peter back to his side to try and comfort the kid. God it had been a long fucking day. “Bubs come here.”

And god it was always the worst when the kid was trying to put on a brave face. It was obvious the kid was close to tears. “It’s alright. You're okay I’ve got you.”

“I’m really happy that you weren’t mean to Thor.” Peter sniffled.

“Yeah well, we’ve all done stupid things to protect those we love. Look at what happened last time.”

“What do you mean?”

“Steve. Bucky. The last time I overreacted and took it personally everything went to shit. I learned my lesson. I sat down and talked to him, listened to both sides, made an informed decision instead of just-reacting.” Tony sighed. The last thing he wanted was another divide within their household- he still had to deal with Clint’s reaction to all this. Oh well, he still had a few days before that had to happen. “And you were right. He didn’t do it for any other reason that he loved his brother, I probably would’ve done the same thing.”

“And he really did take good care of me.”

“Other than all the junk food.” Tony smirked.

“Yeah. You know it’s bad when I’m craving vegetables.”

“Steve will be glad to hear that.” Tony chuckled as he started to lead the boy back upstairs. He glanced at his watch, it was almost midnight. Definitely past Spider-baby’s bedtime. “I know it’s been a lot today.”

“Mhm.”
“Let’s get some food in you then we’ll watch something, yeah?”

“M’not hungry.” Peter grimaced at the thought. All he wanted was his bed. “Feel sick.”

“Buddy you probably feel sick because you haven’t eaten anything.” Tony sighed gently as he pet the boy’s hair. He couldn’t blame the kid for feeling nauseous he wasn’t feeling his best either.

“That’s what Happy said and then I puked all over his car.”

“It’s alright Petey you were scared.”

“I s-shouldn’t have been. I was meant to be brave and take care of things while you were gone and I-I couldn’t-“

“Uh uh. Stop it right there.” Tony said firmly, turning the boy’s head to make him look at him. “Peter you were brave, so so brave. I’m so proud of you, you have no idea.”

Peter sniffed and looked up at his dad with big brown eyes. “Why?”

“Because you did exactly what I would have done. You didn’t panic, you stood your ground, you gathered all the relevant information and you asked for help when you needed it. Hell, that’s more than what I would have done.” Tony huffed a laugh. “I would have tried to handle it on my own but you, you were brilliant boyo, I mean it.”

Peter sighed slightly. Though it felt good to be praised by his dad and he was happy to have finally done something right - he still felt ashamed of himself. Like he could have done more. He’d been nothing but pathetic all week. The bedwetting, letting Flash hit him, crying- crying a lot. All because his dad had left him home alone. He was almost sixteen. Sixteen year olds aren’t meant to cry when their dad goes away for the weekend. But in fairness, most sixteen year olds don’t have Iron-Man as their dad, and they don’t have to face off with a millennia old god of mischief single handedly. Maybe he shouldn’t be so tough on himself.

“Come on. Let’s get you fed.” Tony said as he steered the boy towards the kitchen. Thankfully Happy and Steve had departed the living room, both having their own jobs to do, or at the very
least having taken their argument elsewhere.

“Kay.”

“What are you hungry for?”

“Something healthy.”

“Christ are you feeling okay?” Tony feigned shock and pressed his hand against the boy’s forehead as though he was checking for a fever. Peter giggled and shrugged him off so Tony took that as a good sign at the very least - though come to think of it Peter did feel a little warm.

Then again, he always felt a little warm. That was part of his mutation. Tony grabbed one of the healthy untouched meals from the fridge and set it in front of the boy, grabbing coffee for himself. Peter barley picked at it at first, but Tony made sure he ate at least half before he allowed him to leave the table. Responsible dad right there.

After getting changed into comfier clothes, Tony returned to the living room and questioned the boy as to where they were going to carry out their usual nighttime routine. “My room or the living room?”

“Uhm..c-can we go to my room I just..I don’t wanna go out there right now..” Peter had thought he would be okay but once he entered the living room he immediately felt unsafe. Not so much due to what had transpired there merely hours before but because the large open space and big curtainless windows suddenly made him feel very vulnerable. He wanted to be in a small comfortable space right now instead of a large wide open one; in fact he had the sudden urge to crawl inside a vent or a closet and web himself a nest. Huh. Weird.

Anyway, even in his emotional state he knew that was a little overkill so he could settle for spending the night in his own, cosy sized room. He remembered Tony saying he’d specifically given the boy a smaller room than the rest because it was closer to what he was used to at home with May, and Peter had never been more grateful; especially since his dad had a tendency to try and give him the biggest and best of everything, he adored his little room.

“Sure kiddo, you mean you actually trust me in your room? Must be a special occasion.” Tony smirked, earning himself an eye roll from his young charge.
“Don’t touch my shelves and you’ll be fine.”

“Yes sir.” Tony saluted the boy; it was a running joke in the household but he truly never is allowed in there. Of course he had been in there before, plenty of times but never for prolonged periods, only to talk to the kid or say goodnight. He’d always allowed the boy the privacy of his own space and Peter had always been defensive of his things. Not possessive but he cared for them and having other people in his safe space made him uncomfortable. Tony felt rather privileged to be invited to spend the evening in the boys sanctuary. It was nice that the room felt more lived in than it had the last time he was in it though he noticed something very much out of place. His black sabbath t-shirt. He pulled the black fabric off the boys bed and held it up accusingly. “Have you been stealing my clothes again you little thief?”

Of course he had only been joking but Tony turned and saw how the boys face fell, and started steadily turning beet red. “What? What is it?”

“N-Nothing. I just like that one.” Peter mumbled, looking ashamedly towards the floor.

“Come here you big softie.” The elder man held his arms out and pulled the boy in for a hug. Tony quickly connected the dots, it wasn’t difficult. The kid had always had a thing for comfort items, his bear being a case in point, and Tony understood the sensory appeal of having an item that still has the lingering scent of a loved one. Hell he still even had one of Jarvis’ old suits somewhere buried deep in one of his closets- the only part that made him feel sad was how upset the boy must’ve been to feel the need to sleep with it; and that Peter would be embarrassed to admit such a thing. “What am I gonna do with you huh?”

“T-take me with you next time?” Peter asked hopefully.

“Definitely. I ain’t leaving you again.”

“Promise?”

Tony smiled sadly and squeezed the boy a little tighter. If only. “I wish I could bubby.”

“I know. That’s enough.” Peter sighed. As much as they both wanted it, they knew it would never be possible to make that promise. At least not until Peter was a full agent and even then, being separated was just part of the job. “How about just no more overnight missions for a while..?”
“That I can do.”

“I’m sorry you had to come home and missed the mission.”

“Pete that’s not your fault.”

“I know. But I’m still sorry. It seemed real important.” Peter yawned and rubbed his eyes tiredly. Still, despite his obvious exhaustion the boy moved forward to put the DVD in.

“It is but I trust our replacements. Steve might head back out tomorrow if he needs to.” Tony assured him. By this point Peter was struggling to keep his eyes open. He was curled up contentedly by Tony’s side and he wasn’t even looking at the screen; his only eyes fluttering open every now and then. Tony jostled him slightly to get his attention, but it was more like rocking. “You can sleepubby.”

“Mm.” Peter grumbled in protest. He attempted to sit up a bit more to try and wake himself up but Tony forced his shoulders back down against the bed gently.

“Close your eyes, you’re okay.” Tony whispered as he resumed messing with the boy’s hair. Peter eventually stopped fighting to sit up and relaxed against him. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Mm..promise?” Peter murmured into Tony’s side. Peter desperately wanted his dad to stay but he was worried about wetting the bed. But he was too tired not to fall asleep and in fairness he hadn’t drank anything in hours. He hadn’t even been up to use the bathroom in three and when he tried to go just before laying down his bladder was completely empty. With that thought in the back of his mind combined with his father’s comforting presence he found himself relaxing against his will.

“I pinky promise.” Another comforting kiss to the top of his head and the boy was out like a light.
Also..I need y'all to vote on something. I have two chapters after this storyline wraps up to choose from but I don't know which order to post them in- they're both gonna get posted so it doesn't matter too much but help a brother out here-
The options are Clint or Pepper. That's all the clues y'all are getting lol
And I was considering doing omovember this year- maybe as a separate fic so I can make the posts shorter but set within this AU? IDK or would it be worth it to try and weave the prompts into this fic? Will I make it to november without my crippling caffeine addiction killing me? who knows- find out on the next episode of dragon ball z
More Problems

Chapter Summary

This chapter's weird idk what's happening but take some whump i guess h e c k k

Tony spent the night lying awake, watching over his son; feeling nothing but unbridled anger.

He kept thinking about what Thor had told him. What that other boy did to him. How his son hadn’t fought back. Of course he hadn’t, Peter was too sweet, too responsible, he’d never even think to lay a finger on that kid. That kid who’d been ridiculing him for years. How could someone even think to hurt this child? Peter was nothing but kind and generous and helpful- he wouldn’t hurt a fly, so why pick on him? Even from a manipulators point of view Peter would be a great asset, he’d give and give and give- that’s what people with massive egos like Flash fucking Thompson love. They love people they can use- and Peter? Well he was a perfect candidate.

But no, that idiot couldn’t see any of the good parts of Peter, he just saw Tony’s son as this weak pathetic thing that he could abuse as he so wanted. Flash would rather use Peter as an emotional punching bag- and a physical one. He saw his perfect boy as a lesser being as someone beneath him. From a purely egotistical standpoint, how dare anyone think they were above his son? His son who was a fucking angel- and Peter just let him.

Peter just let him. And he hadn’t gone to anyone for help. He hadn’t gone to him for help. And he’d fucking lied to him- for months and months.

Of course Tony didn’t blame him, he was too in tune with his sons thought processes. Was it any wonder the kid though so little of himself if that’s what he had to go through on a daily basis? Tony was glad (at least his mature logical side was) that Thor had been the one to witness the incident not him, because he’d have killed the boy. It was taking a lot of willpower not to go to the kids house and at the very least threaten him. But he knew he couldn’t. He couldn’t do shit because of who he was. He couldn’t even fight the kids dad- he was powerless once again to help his son. Well, he knew that wasn’t entirely true but he also knew that if he acted rashly and out of emotion that Peter would have him for it. He had to tread so lightly but that was hard when all he wanted to do was lash out.

He spent the whole night just laying there, going over everything in his head to the point he gave himself a headache. He only attempted to stop when he felt his heart stutter slightly again as his blood pressure soared, and he was scared the arc zapping would wake Peter up.
But at this point it was going to take some kind of nuclear bomb to wake Peter up. The kid was out like a light, he didn’t even wake up when Tony got up to use the bathroom; and the man had to literally pry the boy off of him he was clinging to him so tight. In fact, the kid hadn’t woken up to use the bathroom himself even though he’d been asleep for hours. Somewhat gingerly, Tony checked to see if the boy had had an accident. He wouldn’t have blamed him if he’d had, even if Thor hadn’t told him about the ongoing issue- it had been a stressful day and the kid was exhausted. Thankfully the boy was dry but then it occurred to Tony that he must be mightily dehydrated.

He considered waking him up to drink but the boy was resting so peacefully he couldn’t bring himself to. He’d wake the boy up for the day in a few hours, until then he’d rest his own eyes for a bit..

Tony woke up to Steve knocking on Peter’s bedroom door at around six that morning. As soon as Tony sat up and called for the blond to come in, it was very apparent that Steve had about as restful a night as he had.

“How is he?” Steve whispered anxiously looking over Peter’s sleeping form.

“I’ve had to double check to make sure he’s not dead.” Tony chuckled and lifted Peter’s arm up to demonstrate his point. He shook his arm slightly before dropping it again and Peter’s eyes didn’t even flutter. “Kids a heavy sleeper.”

Steve looked relieved for all of two seconds before he started nervously shifting again. “Tony I’m just- I cant- I can't wrap my head around all this-are you okay?”

“Steve we’ve established that I don’t talk about my feelings.” Tony groaned and rubbed tiredly at his eyes. It was too early for this, and he’d spent that weeks emotional quota all in one day.

“Well I do and I need someone.” Steve said tightly. How was Tony meant to tell him to fuck off now? He couldn’t exactly put on his stoic Stark mask when he was snuggled up to a teenager could he? He found it difficult enough to put up that wall with Steve anyway. Ugh- he was getting too soft for this shit.

“Fine.” Tony rolled his eyes dramatically. He then proceeded to pat the empty space beside him on the bed. “Do you wanna come snuggle too? There’s plenty of room.”
“You’re such a dick.” Steve shook his head and sat cross legged on the floor, putting his head in his hands.

“Ooh now now Stevie must be real upset to be using such language.” Tony quipped but he didn’t really mean it. He was willing to drop the act for a while in favour of making Steve feel better, after all the soldier had done the same for him so many times. He owed him one. More than one. He sighed softly and laid his head back against Peter’s headboard, looking up at the ceiling (which he had just noticed had an avengers poster on it that he’d never noticed before. Cute.) “My ears are open, blondie, go ahead and vent.”

Steve immediately launched into a rant, going through the same thoughts and feelings Tony had been; he went over all of his fears, all of the ‘what if’ possibilities that had ran through his mind when Peter made the call. How he’d been taken back to the night Peter was shot. It was all too eerily similar to Tony’s own experience, just that Steve had taken the more scared approach as he’d taken the angry one. They talked back and forth sharing their mutual moments of fear and angst, as well as several concerns they shared. Despite himself Tony felt himself open up about just how scared he’d been (‘curse you Steve, making me all emotionally available’) and how jarring the experience had truly been. Just as the pair were discussing parts of their abandoned mission they hoped would be okay, when Tony noticed Peter starting to stir beside him.

At first he thought the boy was simply waking up but that wasn’t the case. He started shifting rhythmically but not in the usual ‘I gotta pee’ way, it was like Peter was trying to run. The movements were very subtle, only slight twitches; but Tony knew from experience both with himself and Peter, that movements in the real world when one was having a dream were only fractional reflections of what one was doing in their dream. So Tony knew the kid was probably running for his life, especially if his expression and the tiny whimpers were anything to go off. Steve had barely noticed when Tony already started to soothe the boy.

“Hey hey, shh. It’s alright, you’re safe Petey, I’m right here.” Tony rubbed the boys back as Peter started to flinch a bit. At first Tony moved to wake him up but his gently shushing helped calm him down before that became necessary. It only took a minute for Tony to lull the boy back into a peaceful sleep. “There we go, there’s a good boy, you’re safe. You’re safe honey, no running.”

Tony noticed Steve smiling sappily in the corner and scowled at him. “What?”

“You’re just so good with him.”

“Meh. I’d be even better if I was actually here when he needed me.” Tony said coldly and Steve watched as the warmth literally left his friends face; he watched as Tony snapped back into his old, stoic, aloof expression, the one he used when he was trying to bury his emotions deep down inside. Just like Howard had taught him.
“Tony, please don’t start. We can’t go through this again.”

“Exactly. Again. I keep fucking up. Every time I’m not here something happens. How am I ever supposed to leave him Steve?! The one time, the one time I leave this happens!” Well, at least Steve snapped him out of bottling it up. Tony letting some of the anger out was better than him pretending everything was fine. The blond let him vent for a while, just as he had. After Tony had started to trail off he admitted he felt better for it, which was all Steve could really ask for.

“See? I told you talking about your feelings helps.”

“Yeah yeah, I know.” Tony grumbled but there was no real upset in his tone. He was mostly just drained but he found himself feeling a bit more at ease now that he’d gotten some of the stuff off of his chest. He hadn’t mentioned the Flash thing though, and he didn’t intend to, not with Steve. Steve would just want to go around it by the book, he’d want to sit Peter down, have meetings with the principal—all that shit. And while Tony didn’t think that was necessarily a bad idea he knew that wasn’t what Peter wanted, and not yet. He couldn’t let Steve jump in before Peter was ready—and if Tony knew his son, he knew he might never be ready. The situation had to be handled with extreme caution as not to cause anymore upset for Peter, that was the only reason Tony hadn’t snapped any necks yet. Having Captain Communication join the party was certainly not ideal.

After an hour or so of chatting and being far too open about their emotions for Tony’s liking, Steve retreated to the living room to make breakfast. Tony took it upon himself to attempt to wake the sleeping boy beside him up but that was easier said than done.

The thing he really wanted to do was get the boy's arm off of his bladder. Having a child sized koala with super strength squeezing your midsection after you’d drank half your body weight in coffee was certainly not ideal. It was no easy task but he eventually managed to wiggle his way out from beneath the boy without disturbing him.

After relieving himself Tony rentered the boys bedroom only to find Peter whining in his sleep and attempting to snuggle the empty space where he had once been. As adorable as the scene was Tony knew it was time to wake the boy anyway. “Hey bubs, time to get up.”

Peter didn’t stir, he simply continued to burrow into the blankets. Tony shook his head fondly and sat on the edge of the boy’s bed, before gently jostling him. “Wakey wakey, Underoos.”

After a few more shakes Peter sat up slowly, with his hair in an absolute mess. He peered up at
Tony, eyes half lidded, barely registering his surroundings as he wiped the drool from his mouth.

“Well good morning.” Tony grinned.

“Mmrf.” Was the sound the boy made as he dramatically flopped back against the pillow and attempted to pull the sheets back from his dad.

“Uh uh, come in kiddo it’s time to get up. We gotta feed you.” Tony watched as Peter pulled fruitlessly at the blanket he was sitting on, and eventually grew frustrated and gave up. Instead of the struggle waking him up the boy just looked more determined to sleep without the comforter.

“No food.” Peter murmured into his pillow.

“Don’t you have to pee?”

“D’n like peas.” Peter had already started drooling again—how was it possible to fall asleep that quickly?

“Peter- Petey no- bubs come on wake up.” Tony sighed and shook the boy again, more vigorously this time but he refused to budge. In fact Tony wasn’t convinced that the kid hadn’t passed out again. “Don’t you need to go potty? It’s been hours.”

Tony was half trying to embarrass him to get a reaction and half trying to get through to sleepy Peter brain with the babyish terminology; but the kid didn’t even react.

“Don’t gotta. Wan’ sleep.” Peter whined angrily and covered his head with another pillow.

Okay, colour Tony concerned. Surely the kid must need to go. Even if he wasn’t, well Peter, everyone has to go when they wake up. But the kids shirt was rucked up around his midsection so the man could see that his bladder was empty. Tony himself had been to the bathroom twice and Peter hadn’t woken up to go once. That was unheard of and that was not good.

“You’ve had plenty of sleep. You gotta get something to drink. Now come on.” Tony said a lot more firmly as he looped an arm around the kids shoulders and dragged him up. He ignored the
boy’s whining as best he could even though it was cutting real deep at his heart after the day they’d had the day before. Tony was never good at waking Peter up even when the kid was usually so good about it; the days when the kid refused he’d either give in and just let him sleep or send Auntie Nat in there. She always got him up and moving- especially after that time with the ice cubes.

Peter was sitting up now his eyes fully open for the first time that morning but he looked so damn sad. “I’m sorry bubby, but you gotta have something to drink, you’re gonna get sick.”

“Mm, what times it?” Peter mumbled and rubbed his eyes sleepily.

“Eight twenty five.”

“How was Tony meant to say no to that? That was physically impossible.

“Fine.” He sighed and laid back down on the bed, bringing the boy in for a hug. He knew how the boy was with time too, he always preferred to do things at specific times; usually in ten or fifteen minute increments. It was just another one of his weird quirks that Tony had become accustomed to. Eight twenty five was clearly not an acceptable time to get out of bed, whereas eight thirty was. Weird kid. “Five more minutes. That’s it, then we have to get you something to eat and drink, okay?”

“Mhm.” Peter didn’t argue, he just relished in the last five minutes of warmth and comfort he’d been bestowed. Once his time was up, he let Tony pull him into the kitchen without protest, which his dad was very grateful for; though he did whine a little when Tony wouldn’t let him drag his blanket with him- he was cold dammit (despite it being the height of summer). Despite having had the best nights sleep he’d had in a long time, and a dry one to boot, he still felt unbelievably tired, like he could fall asleep any minute. He was finding it difficult to wake up that morning and it was a concerted effort just to keep his eyes open.

Of course Tony didn’t fail to notice this. The kid was really pale and groggy- Tony started to worry it was due to severe dehydration and he felt himself slipping into an anxiety attack. Luckily Steve was there to step in and started force feeding Peter copious amounts of apple juice; which the boy was more than happy to partake in. Watching Peter drink and eat a little without complaint was enough to help calm the boys dad; and gradually Peter began to wake up fully too. Eventually the boy joined in with the conversation around the breakfast table, where Happy had appeared or
maybe he’d never left, Tony didn’t really care to ask.

What he did care to ask was what his plans were for that day, and for that he turned to Peter. “What do you wanna do today kiddo?”

The kid hadn’t really thought about it. He’d assumed Tony would have a lot of work to do given the whole Loki thing, and the night before all he’d cared about was going to bed; so plans for the next day hadn’t really crossed his mind. That and..Peter was feeling kinda crappy, groggy, like he hadn’t really woken up and his back was aching. He figured it was due to sleeping curled up in a ball all night- usually he moved around a lot but he woke up in the exact same position he’d fell asleep in. At least that’s what he hoped it was and he was content to ignore the pain until it went away. Because that always works. “I don’t know, what do you wanna do?”

“Take my mind off of things.” Tony yawned. He hadn’t really thought about it either. He had zero interest in work stuff and had made that abundantly clear to Nick, who had essentially signed him off for the next few days. The Loki incident had been far too close to home- in his goddamn home, god the thought made him shiver. So Tony really wasn’t the best one to be dealing with the diplomacy side of things. He’d arranged people to deal with Loki himself and he’d spoken to Thor, he’d done his part.

That being said he couldn’t just sit around doing nothing. Not only was that not in his nature he didn’t want to sit there ruminating; about Thor, about the mission, about Flash- “You wanna show me what you were working on in the lab?”

“No!” Peter yelped and sat bolt upright from his slumped position; almost knocking his glass over, catching it at the last second. The three adults turned to him, all with amused looks on their faces. “I mean- uh n-n-not yet- it’s uh- a secret.”

“I’ve already seen it.” Tony chuckled.

Peter swallowed nervously, his eyes darting around the room. “Do- do you know what it is?”

“No.” Tony seriously couldn’t work it out and he had tried. He put real effort into it too- which was rare for him but he still for the life of him couldn’t figure it out. None of the pieces made sense- god, what he’d give to get one look into that kids head.

“Good.” Peter sighed and sank back in his chair a little bit. Tony decided to let the kid finish his
meal in peace, he could grill him about his little extra curricular project later. After Peter moved to wash his plate Tony addressed him again.

“Wanna work on something for fun?” The man asked and Peter nodded eagerly. “Any ideas?”

“I have-“ Peter was about to say ‘I have an idea for an energy converter but his mind was taken over by a sudden, overwhelming interruption. The boy’s eyes went wide and his legs bowed in slightly. “-to pee.”

The men barely got a chance to react before the kid went sprinting in the direction of the nearest bathroom; whilst Steve and Happy shook their heads fondly, Tony found the sudden exclamation more alarming than amusing. It was obvious that the urge had come on suddenly; and whilst that wasn’t unusual in itself as the kid had a habit of not noticing until things were dire it was clear that it was bad. Peter wouldn’t have usually outright said ‘I have to pee’ in front of two other people unless those people were either Tony, May or Ned; he would’ve said something more vague- ‘I’ll be right back’, ‘I gotta go’, or ‘just one second’.

As much as Tony wanted to push the moment to the back of his mind he was feeling extra vigilant due to recent events. Peter came back out looking uncomfortable and Tony pulled him aside. “It hurt didn’t it?”

“What? No, I just drank a lot of juice.” Peter shook his head adamantly and quickly joined back in with Happy and Steve’s discussion to avoid talking further. In actuality it had hurt, a lot, but he was still in denial; he figured it was just because he hadn’t gone in so long, he didn’t have an infection, he just had to drink some more water and he’d be totally fine. Besides, there was no use worrying his dad over nothing when he already had a hundred things to think about. In fact he didn’t think he could emotionally handle getting physically ill too- so nope. He wasn’t sick. He was fine.

The pair headed down the lap, both electing to stay in their pyjamas because it was just that kinda day. The atmosphere was calm and relaxed, even with Peter scurrying around trying to hide various bits and pieces of his secret project. The boy was steadily chugging water and dashing to as from the restroom periodically too; it was blatantly obvious that he was attempting to flush his system out to avoid any kind of damage fifteen hours without liquid had done.

But Tony decided to leave the boy alone and not push the issue; besides, Peter was drinking water and that’s all Tony could really ask for anyway. The concerns were also pushed to the back of his mind when they started working on Peter’s idea and it was coming along pretty well. Though an hour or so in Tony realised the boy had fallen silent for quite some time. Which wasn’t entirely unusual but again, Tony was feelings extra vigilant; his boy had been through a lot and he wasn’t about to let anything else slip through the cracks with his family. He’d failed to pick up on the
signs that something was wrong with Thor and by god he was not going to let that happy again-and definitely not worth Peter. “You’re a little quiet today.”

“Yeah.”

“What’s on your mind?” Tony said absentmindedly before he glanced up to see Peter giving him a dry look. “Yeah I know, but talk it out. It helps.”

“Coming from you.” Peter scoffed, shaking his head.

“Hey, I’m getting there.” Tony grumbled slightly. “Come on, humour me.”

Peter sighed, knowing full well that Tony wasn’t about to drop it. “I’m just..tired.” Tony gave Peter an equally dry look prompting the kid to elaborate. “Like..Tired of shi- stuff always going wrong..I know things are always crazy for us but the last few months have been..just wild..like we had training, then you got super sick, then I went and got shot- now this. I’m like, I’m ready for things to settle down again you know? I just wanna get back to normal, go to school, go patrolling- I miss our routine.”

“Well hey you’ve only got six weeks before you go back to school.” Tony said, hearing his voice go involuntarily tight on the last word. He cleared his throat to rid himself of it; not wanting Peter to hear the strain in his voice. Oh how he desperately wanted to force a conversation about just what was going on with Peter at school but he couldn’t. It wasn’t the right time. “And your birthdays in five.”

Peter visibly tensed when his birthday was mentioned and turned away from his dad slightly, mumbling; “I don’t want my birthday. It’s cancelled.”

“No it’s not.” Tony rolled his eyes.

“If Thor’s not gonna be here I don’t want it.” Peter deadpanned.

Tony smirked softly. “Thor will be back by then kiddo, I’ll make sure of it.”
“How?”

“I just will.” He had a good inkling that the god would be back in closer to two weeks; Loki had already been processed and Tony was scheduled to interview him the following Monday. Thor’s disciplinary was being held the day after and somehow Fury had managed to keep the matter…rather quiet, considering just how serious the breach was.

“And Clint’s gonna hate him.” Peter muttered bitterly and Tony could fully understand his concern.

“No he won’t. They’ll hash it out- Clint can hold a grudge but not with Thor. Trust me, they’d been through some shit together. There’ll be one massive fight- which you’ll be far away for- then they’ll be fine.” Tony shrugged as he gestured for Peter to hand him a tool.

“Hmm..I hope you’re right. Because I’ll probably take Thor’s side.”

“I know you would.” Tony hummed amusedly. “So can we uncanceled your birthday now?”

“Only if we can stop talking about it.”

“Oh come on-“

“No dad. I don’t wanna.”

“But there’s cake involved.”

“Don’t use my sweet tooth against me- that is so not fair!”

“Why are you so against birthdays?!“

“Why are you so for birthdays?! You didn’t make this big a deal about anyone else’s!” Peter sighed exasperatedly. And he thought May and Ned got over excited about the date; he really hadn’t expected this kind of behaviour from Tony, not at all. Besides, he had his reasons not to like
“No because it wasn’t their sixteenth and it wasn’t their first birthday with us.” Tony pointed out. He didn’t think it was so wrong of him to want to make a big thing out of it- even if he surprised himself by wanting to. He’d never cared much for birthdays at all, he’d always seen them as a waste of time (other than his 40th but he was dying so that didn’t count)- but this was Peter’s birthday. “And it’s your first birthday with me as your dad.”

“Yeah yeah.” Peter rolled his eyes before returning his focus back to the motherboard he was tweaking. Admittedly he hadn’t really considered that as being one of the reasons Tony was being so hyper about the whole affair; and he found the idea rather sweet, even if seeing Tony act so out of character was mildly concerning.

“The first one we actually get to celebrate.”

Peter raised his eyebrows confusedly at that and shook his head. “We celebrated my last one.”

“No we didn’t.”

“Did too. You got me that T-Shirt from NASA remember?”

“I did?”

“Yeah the blue one with the logo on it...it is from NASA right?” Peter looked at Tony innocently- suddenly looking just like his fourteen year old self and it made Tony’s heart stutter. He always thought the kid hadn’t changed much since he’d met him but moments like that reminded him just how quickly the boy had grown up. And he didn’t like it.

“Ohh - that one! Yeah.” Tony said quickly as he remembered. It totally wasn’t from NASA. Tony was pretty certain he’d picked it up from urban outfitters after the kid had had a bad day at school or something. But Peter didn’t need to know that. “I gave your that for your birthday?”

“Well no, it was after but I still count it.”
Tomy remembered the previous year, when he’d been so preoccupied with other things that he’d neglected to even wish the boy a happy birthday. The thought alone now was abhorrent to him; he couldn’t imagine Peter not being the first thing on his mind anymore. He found it hard to relate to himself back then, hard to remember what it felt like not to have his son as his main focus. A year ago he didn’t even have a son…he just had a kid he saw three times a week. Of course Peter had always been more than that, he’d always been one of his main priorities from the day he’d met him, but to Tony forgetting the little things—like the boy’s favourite colours, the kind of music he liked, his birthday—it felt awful. He didn’t want to be that person anymore. That’s why it mattered so much to him. “Man I was a sucky mentor.”

“No you weren’t.” Peter said sincerely, but Tony just gave him that guilty look he hadn’t seen in a while that made him backtrack. “Okay sometimes you were, but only in the beginning. And even if you were a sucky mentor you’re a great dad.”

“Well, thank you.” Tony chuckled. “Now what do you want for your birthday?”

“Ugggh! You to stop asking me!” Peter grumbled and went to fake throw something at Tony’s head but the twisting movement he made sent pain shooting down his back. He quickly sat down to both try and stop the pain and hide his cringing from his dad but he was pretty sure the man noticed.

Yep he definitely noticed. It was hard not to after Peter ran off to the bathroom for what felt like the hundredth time that day. “Don’t look at me like that.”

“You gonna admit it now or what?” Tony sighed, placing the tools he had in his hands down on the bench so he could cross his arms in true dad fashion.

Peter debated denying it, but he knew it was no use. “Okay fine. It hurts.”

“How bad?”

“Bad enough for me to admit it.”

Tony frowned slightly. For the kid to be being so blunt he really must’ve been in pain. Maybe he shouldn’t have underestimated the powers of dehydration. He walked around the desk and put his hand against Peter’s forehead—definitely warmer than usual. “Your bladder or your kidneys?”
“Yes.” Peter said tightly.

“Okay, come on you.” Tony said softly, giving the boy a hand up off of his stool. He wrapped an arm around the kids shoulders and began leading him towards the elevator. “Get some more water then go lay down for a while. I’m gonna try and get aholt of Bruce.”

“Kay.” Peter mumbled weakly.

“Wow you really just not be feeling well if you’re not fighting me.”

“I wouldn’t win anyway and I don’t wanna cause any more problems.” He didn’t have the energy to argue, he’d had enough arguing the past few days; and he felt guilty enough having gotten himself sick in the first place. It just wasn’t fair, not with everything else going on, Tony shouldn’t have to worry about him on top of everything. Stupid kidneys. Stupid water.

“Peter you haven’t caused anything. Don’t start with all that.” Tony shook his head. He wasn’t about to let the kid spiral into his usual cycle of blaming himself for everything. He gently pushed Peter towards his bedroom. “Go on, get some more shut eye.”

Even though Peter began to walk away from him, the teenagers hesitation was obvious. “Want me to lay with you?”

“You’ve got work things, don’t act like you don’t.” Peter mumbled somewhat grouchily. He wasn’t grouchy at Tony, but at the fact he wanted his dad to lay with him but he couldn’t let him. He knew he was bound to pee himself if he fell asleep again. It was inevitable given his self inflicted infection and even though he knew Tony wouldn’t make a big thing out of it he really didn’t want to deal with anymore embarrassment. Like finding out Loki had been the one to magically clean his bed hadn’t been enough (though a part of him did hope that maybe, just maybe Thor might be able to learn a little of that magic off of his brother, you know, for future purposes).

That and he was a teenager, he was ashamed of himself for wanting his dad there- he gave himself a free pass for the night before because, well you know, trauma; but he was not about to let himself make a habit of needing Tony for a good nights rest again. He’d only just gotten over running to the man’s room every night, a habit he intended to keep at bay.

“Pete I don’t mind, really-“
“Go be Iron-Man.” Peter yawned and waved his hand flippantly as he staggered off.

“I’ll wake you up in a couple hours.” Tony said gently, trying to keep the sadness from seeping into his voice.

“Mkay.”

Tony knew Peter was right. Even if he didn’t work on any tech he still had some responsibilities to take care of- namely what the rest of his team were up to. That wasn’t even so much a responsibility as a curiosity; even though he was glad to be home, now that he knew everything was alright (bar Thor being on a temporary suspension and Peter now being sick of course) he found his mind wandering. He needed to know what was going on out there, that the rest of his cohort were coping-

Shit he’d totally forgotten to update them on everything too. He prayed that Steve had- he didn’t have any missed calls or frantic texts from them so he figured that was a good thing- but still. He knew better than to leave his team in the dark. Best to give them a cautionary call anyway. Other than the mission side of things he also needed to call to ask Bruce for some medical advice.

After checking to see if it was an appropriate time to contact them, Tony called Bruce’s phone. “Hey did you guys get to-“

It wasn’t even the doctor that picked up, it was Clint. “Is Peter okay?! What happened?! Steve said Loki-“

“Yes, Peter’s fine-“

“Then why didn’t you call us you shithead?! We told you to call us!” Oh god, Nat too? Tony really should have called sooner. Everyone sounded super worried- understandably- but heightened states of emotion really aren’t conducive with serious missions.

“Oh sweet Jesus can you guys just-“

“Let us talk to him!”
“He’s napping! I need to talk to Bruce.” Tony sighed, growing frustrated with his teams inability to listen. It’s not like they all had hours of free time to talk.

Tony could hear Rhodey’s voice now too, low and anxious. “Oh god what’s wrong?”

“Loki did hurt him didn’t he?! That fucking bastard I’ll kill him-“ Great like Clint needed more reason to be angry.

“Easy bird boy he’s not hurt! Not by Loki at least- can you just loan me Bruce for two minutes?!“ Tony snapped losing his patience entirely. After all he’d called Bruce for a reason- and not just because he was the most level headed member of their team. If he’d wanted to hear ranting and raving he would’ve called one of their resident assassins instead. “Take that time to cool off so you can give me a proper status report- good god I’m meant to have one kid not five! I can’t babysit all of you! You’re the Avengers! Sort yourselves out!”

There was silence and rustling on the other end of the line as Bruce was handed back his phone. “Hiya T, sorry about that. What can I do ya for?”

Tony sighed in relief. God it was nice to hear the calm man’s voice; he got the inkling that Bruce’s presence was the only thing that had stopped the rest of the team from going AWOL and abandoning the mission all together. “Hey, I think kiddo might have a kidney infection, what do I need to do?”

Fortunately, despite the high levels of emotion that seemed to be fluctuating around him, Bruce put on his doctor hat instantly. “Blood and urine samples. Put them through my computer, it’ll calculate the strength of drugs he needs. Send the results through to me and I can direct you on what to do. Has he got a temperature?”

“Haven’t checked yet, I will when I wake him up.” ‘Yet another thing I forgot to do..’

“How long this time?” Bruce sighed gently and Tony didn’t need to ask for clarification on what he meant.

“I think we caught it pretty early, unless he had it before I got here- but I doubt it. He didn’t drink anything last night.”
“Yeah that’ll do it.” Bruce sighed and Tony could hear him tapping on a keyboard. “Right my labs set up for you to do the tests. But Tony a mediscanner isn’t gonna cut it he needs full blood draws for my machines to calibrate the right dose.”

“Right.” Tony swallowed thickly. “I’ll do it.”

“No you won’t. Just ask Steve.” Bruce said firmly in a way that made Tony cringe slightly. He didn’t enjoy being reprimanded in any capacity by Bruce. “I send through the codes to access Peter’s pain meds too, they’re in cabinet cx-12. Blue label, you can’t miss them.”

“Thanks, B.” Tony said gratefully, feeling marginally better for the doctors help. He still knew it was going to be a mammoth task nursing Peter back to health, and he was still anxious about the state of the boy’s kidneys in general; but it was times like that he was so thankful for having a resident physician. He just hoped that they’d caught the infection early enough before any real damage was done. “Can you put the rest of the morons back on the line?”

“Of course.”

“Updates. Make it snappy, I ain’t got much patience today.” After grilling the rest of his team about their current status Tony went up to the lab did as Bruce instructed; setting everything up so he could get Peter sorted straight away. He also sent Happy on his own mission to go buy some cranberry juice before he went to wake Peter up.

As soon as he walked into the boy’s room he noticed that he was wet, as he expected. He sighed because he knew the boy would be upset but there was no use in trying to prolong the moment—there wasn’t time to be particularly delicate about it either. The longer he left it the longer the infection had to take hold and Tony was very conscious that he’d already neglected to tackle the situation for hours. “Kiddo, hey, time to wake up bubs we gotta get you some medicine.”

“Mm?” Peter hummed as he rolled over, immediately recognising what had happened and, just as Tony had predicted, started to freak out. “Oh god- Oh god oh god, no! I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to I-“

“Pete I know you didn’t. It’s okay, I made you drink a lot of water remember? You’re sick, you couldn’t help it.” Tony said quickly, pressing a palm to Peter’s forehead again. “Go shower and don’t have the water too warm.”
After the big scurried off Tony set about cleaning the boy’s bed; as he went to retrieve clean sheets he noticed a distinct lack of them in Peter closet. Thor hadn’t been kidding, the bedwetting really was still a major issue. Tony knew that Steve had done a months worth of laundry before they left for the mission (purely because the man over prepared for everything) so there was no way Peter had run out of sheets that quickly without just cause. Poor kid.

Tony really was gonna have to have a sit down talk with Peter about it, and he was dreading it, knowing full well how he was going to react. But it had been going on for too long and he’d had ample opportunities to be honest with him- hell after the Steve incident Peter knew he could have gone to anyone in the household, but he hadn’t. It was time for Tony to step in and start the dialogue for him and maybe this kidney infection was the perfect time to broach such a subject.

Okay maybe it wasn’t a perfect time. When Peter reappeared he looked about ready to cry, still exhausted and deathly pale, but with a bright red blush on his cheeks. Yeah. Definitely not the right time.

The teen glanced towards the bare bed and cringed, obviously realising his little secrets had at least in part been discovered by his dad. “Not a big deal bud, I’ll grab some more sheets later. Come on.”

Tony was quick to take the boy up to the medi bay, where Steve was ready and waiting to collect his blood sample. “Hey sport.”

“Hi Steve.” Peter mumbled weakly. His condition had certainly deteriorated quickly, the boy looked very visibly ill now; whereas before he’d simply looked tired now it was very clear that he was running some kind of fever. He was shuddering periodically and his expression flickered everytime he twisted due to the pain in his back.

Peter sat down gently as not to jostle his twinging back too much and held his arm out for Steve to take his blood. After swabbing the kids arm he set about inserting the needle and Tony was very quick to turn away and do something else. The last thing they needed was him passing out too.

“Little baby pinch.” Steve mumbled as he jabbed the hollow needle into Peter’s skin. The teenager didn’t even flinch. “There’s a good boy.”

Peter blushed a little at the praise. It wasn’t like he wasn’t used to getting blood draws by now; he had them practically every week, sometimes twice a week.
Tony picked up on it too. “You gonna give him a sticker, Steve?” He smirked.

“Oh hush you.” Steve sighed lightly and rolled his eyes, not really taking the jab on board. “I should give you a sticker for being brave enough to stay in the room.”

“Shut up.” Tony growled through gritted teeth. How Tony thought Peter still didn’t know about his phobia was beyond the teen but hey, what he didn’t know wouldn’t hurt him.

Peter moved to jump down off of the table, thinking nothing of the simple motion; but as soon as he dropped to the floor his vision blurred slightly and he felt himself wobble. Luckily Steve held out his arm to steady him but oh no, that was too much for Tony. The man dropped whatever it was he was holding and rushed over to Peter, and began fussing over him. “You okay? You alright?”

“I’m okay dad, I’m fine.” Peter shook his head quickly and tried to brush him off. “Jus’ a little woozy.”

“You feel sick?” Tony asked anxiously, but Peter shook his head. Still he didn’t want to take any chances. “Okay lets just..sit you down for a minute.”

“Dad I’m fine.” Peter sighed indignantly but he was cut off when Tony stuck a thermometer in his mouth.

“Yeah that 104 fever screams ‘I’m fine’.” Tony shook his head. “You gotta pee yet?”

Peter shook his head and looked angrily between Steve and his dad. He didn’t appreciate him being so forward about the private matter.

“Kid it’s fine he knows.” Tony shrugged as he set about running Peter’s blood work through the machine that Bruce has directed him to.

“Why?!”

“Because-“
“Might as well just add Nat and Clint into the memo while you’re at it!” Peter snapped. Once again his medical history had to be broadcasted to the entire household- and half of them weren’t even in the building!

“Take it easy. I know you’re uncomfortable but don’t take it out on me.” Tony said calmly.

“Sorry.” Peter grumbled. He conceded to argue with the man later because he had something more pressing to take care of. “Uhh..actually, can I have the thingy please?”

“Sure. Put the strip in after you’re done.” Tony handed off the cup and the test dipstick to the boy along with a plastic bag to put said items in when he was done.

“Gross.”

“Gotta get used to it Pete. S.H.I.E.L.D does mandatory drug tests.”

“How are you still an agent then?” Peter quipped though he had to dash out of the room before he heard his dad’s reply.

“I have my ways.” Tony smirked. His smile dropped after he turned to see the steely expression he was receiving from his blond counterpart. “What? I haven’t done it in ages! Don’t look at me like that!”

“And what ways would that be Anthony?”

“Don’t call me that!”

Peter returned from the bathroom after a few minutes, practically limping from the pain in his back. He didn’t even bother trying to hide his discomfort, laying back down on his side as soon as he neared the examination table.

“What colour was it?”
“Uh..I don’t know..I mean it wasn’t red..” Peter mumbled awkwardly.

Tony sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose, trying his very best not to smirk. “I meant the test strip.”

“Oh!” Peter blushed as brightly as his grey tinged skin would allow. “Uh- I don’t know I didn’t look at all the little squares.”

“Well hand it over.”

“Ew! No!” Peter cried with a disgusted look on his face. “Don’t you have some fancy machine to read it for you?”

“Yes, my eyes, that’s what they’re for. Now give me it.” Tony rolled his eyes and snatched the bag away before adorning gloves. “You’re such a prude, Parker, honestly.”

“It’s icky.”

Tony couldn’t help it. He knew he should’ve let it slide, the kid didn’t feel good, but he truly couldn’t help but smirk. “Icky?”

“Shut up.” Peter groaned and attempted to sit up, only being forced to lean forward and put his head in his hands a moment later. The room was starting to spin in that familiar fever induced way and he was starting to feel sick. He had hoped the infection would stay localised but of course he wasn’t so lucky.

“Jesus Pete.” Tony muttered as he scanned the strip, comparing the colours to the chart. From what he could tell, and from what Bruce’s computers were saying, Peter had a pretty advanced infection already. It was scary how quickly the boy’s body metabolised at times, but it was never scarier than when he was sick; while in some ways the bite made it easier, like Peter was more resistant to viruses. But bacterial infections thrived in the boy’s body thanks to his it speeding up the natural processes. His naturally heightened temperature, quicker heart rate, continuous supply of food- his body was basically a bacterial breeding ground.
And Tony knew that. Just how he had known something was wrong that morning. He should’ve said something then, forced the boy to take the tests then- he should’ve gone with his gut. But no. Just how he had done with Thor he’d fucked up; he knew something was wrong but he didn’t do anything about it.

‘We can beat ourselves up about that later over some whiskey, task at hand Tony.’

Shaking off the guilt for the moment Tony cleared his throat and turned to Steve who had been manning the other machine. “Steve is the blood work back?”

“Just came through..” Steve grimaced looking just as distressed as Tony felt. “I think you’re gonna need a little more than cranberry juice, kiddo.”

“Mm stop talking about it and just give me some drugs.” Peter groaned. He’d gone past the point of worrying about being a burden and causing more problems; now all he was concerned with was not throwing up or passing out from the sheer pain he was in. He could swear that it was ten times worse than being shot- he’d had bladder infections before, entry of times, but a kidney infection? That was so much worse. So, so much worse and he was sure from this experience alone that he would never dehydrate himself again. Ever.

“Working on it now buddy, hang tight.” Tony said gently as he read through the instructions Bruce had emailed to him. It was simple enough and it wouldn’t take too long but he was getting increasingly anxious about Peter’s condition deteriorating even more and the stress was starting to show.

“Do you want me to hook up an IV, T?”

“I don’t.” Peter murmured, even though no one was listening to him.

“I don’t know, he can keep fluids down orally so maybe hold off on it. If the comp comes back and says he needs intravenous antibiotics I’ll have you hook one up.” Tony mumbled. “We do need to get his temperature down though.”

Steve nodded curtly and moved over to Bruce’s many cabinets of drugs. “Injection or pills?”

“Injection.” Tony responded with a slight shudder. The whole hospital-like environment was
making him mightily uncomfortable and he was fighting various flashbacks- namely those involving their current youngest patient.

At that point Peter moved to get up and Steve misinterpreted that as the boy having an aversion to the shot. “Peter it won’t hurt-“

“No but my bladder does.” The boy whimpered slightly as he sped out of the room before Steve had the chance to apologise. Both adults cringed sympathetically.

The machine synthesised some oral medication as opposed to a drip which Tony was somewhat grateful for, for the teens sake; it may take slightly longer to have an effect but it also meant he’d be able to get his boy back downstairs and comfortable (well, as comfortable as one can be with a kidney and bladder infection) sooner. After Steve gave Peter a shot to bring his temperature down he was pulled away on more Captain business, and Tony was tasked with corralling Peter back downstairs; which was considerably harder than it had been previously.

Somehow the pair made it back to the living room where Tony poured Peter onto the couch. Yeah, Iron-Man stuff was definitely going to have to wait, Iron-Dad stuff was way more important.

Bubba to you want some pain pills?
Uh uh.
Pete if you’re hurting-

"I’m fine. I don’t wanna start acting crazy on top of everything else."

Tony wouldn’t have minded dealing with the medication induced drunkeness but chose not to force the issue. It was Peter's body after all if he didn't want medicine he couldn't force him to take it; but what he could do was get the kid a hot water bottle to lay on his back.

“Ooo- that’s nice.”

“That helping?”
“Uh huh, thank you.”

“You’re welcome bubs.” Tony hummed as he kissed the top of his head.

After a moment Peter sniffled slightly. “I’m sorry I’m sick.”

Tony sighed. Of course he’d been expecting that, Peter was bound to blame everything on himself; like he could ever be irritated by the boy getting sick? Yes it upset him, but he wasn’t upset with Peter himself and he’d never view it as an inconvenience. But Peter wasn’t in the right frame of mind to have that long drawn out conversation. “Uh uh it’s okay, it’s not your fault.”

“It literally is.” Peter sighed before his voice started to break. “I keep making more problems-“

“Pete, don’t start.” Tony shook his head and pulled the boy closer to him. He used his stern dad voice to try and get the boy to head his words instead of beating himself up. “I’m not having it. It’s just as much my fault I should have had you drink.”

“M’not a little kid I shouldn’t need you remindi-“

Tony automatically put his hand over the teens mouth and Peter started at home with absolute fury in his eyes. “Shh. I said enough. Not today.”

“Don’t do thaaaaat!”

“Oh boy, he’s getting whiny.”

“Mmmm!” Peter just thought Tony was lucky he didn’t bite his damn hand because he so would if he did that again.

“Okay okay.” The man chuckled and moved to stand up, but Peter didn’t move to make that any easier for him. “Star Wars?”

“Mm.” Peter murmured and pulled the blanket he’d appropriated up over his ears.
“Can we use our words?” Tony chuckled. Once again he knew he shouldn’t tease the kid but it was so goddamn easy and the reaction was so goddamn cute.

“Leave me aloooone- I don’t feel good!” Peter whined angrily.

“Okay I’ll leave you alone.” Tony shrugged simply and gently shoved Peter off of him. As he stood up he pretended to walk away but stopped as soon as Peter threatened to burst into tears.

“Noooo!”

“I’m kidding! I’m kidding I’m putting the DVD in.” Tony said quickly holding his hands up and gesturing towards the TV. After he did, he returned back to the sofa where Peter immediately burrowed back into his side again. “See? Like I’d ever leave you when you’re sick. Who else would take care of this human burrito?”

“Not funny.” Peter grumbled.

Tony thought it was adorable. He could definitely get used to Peter being this clingy, he just wished it was under better circumstances. He popped the disc in and sat back down pulling the boy closer to him until he was practically in his lap. “I ain’t going nowhere.”

“Never again.”

“Never again.” Tony agreed.
The next few days went similarly. Peter was extra clingy and Tony was absolutely relishing in it (though of course he would never let that on to anyone else, Peter included). Though the infection had been pretty bad, luckily Peter managed to avoid needing any kind of specialist care bar from oral antibiotics. Gradually Peter fought off the self induced infection; largely due to the fact that Tony kept him in close proximity the entire time and force fed him copious amounts of juice and water- not that Peter complained at all. The only issues that occurred were at night, when Peter refused to let Tony anywhere near him or his bedroom.

Of course the man knew why. He told Peter he knew why and the boy didn’t take the news very well.

“Petey you’re sick, it’s not a big deal it happens-“

“Yeah. I know. I’m well aware of that fact, thank you. I don’t need help.” Peters cheeks were absolutely flaming and he looked about ready to bolt from the lab. Tony knew he had to tread very, very lightly if he wanted to avoid a tantrum. “There’s not much you can do anyway so I don’t know why we’re talking about it.”

“I can help with the clean up, make it easier on you.”

Peter looked almost offended by the suggestion, as though Tony had never had to deal with wet sheets before. “No. Thank you, but no. It’ll stop when the infections gone.”

Tony thought that might be a good time to broach the bedwetting as a whole but Peter immediately
shut him down. “Pete, if it doesn’t that’s—“

“It will. I’m not a baby.” Peter growled through gritted teeth before his voice changed to the more pleading, broken tone he often used when he was about to cry- and Tony couldn’t take it. “I don’t- I don’t wanna talk about it anymore dad, please.”

“Alright sweetie, don’t stress. I won’t bring it up again.” So he didn’t. Even though he desperately wanted to because Peter was clearly exhausted, he didn’t. Not until he had back up at least.

The rest of the team got home a couple days later, just as Peter was fighting off the last of his symptoms, which Peter was very grateful for. They got back in the middle of the night, so he was very shocked to be tackled the next morning when he came down for breakfast.

“Mornin’ Ste- woah!” All he saw was a flash of red hair as he was knocked back into the wall. “Nat?! Hi!”

“Hi.” She said tightly, holding the boy to her chest in what could only be described as the longest hug she’d ever given him.

“When did you guys get- hey are you okay?” Peter asked concernedly. He looked up at the woman and she looked so- worried? Peter had never seen her look so emotional, in any capacity. Nat was such a cut and dry person, it was either smiles or anger- even when he’d been shot she’s never once broken character. But now the woman looked tired and stressed and it was mightily concerning.

“No, I was scared shitless because of you, you little bastard.” She huffed. Okay that sounded more like Nat, but she was still hugging him. She pulled back slightly to look at his face, brushing his hair back and making eye contact. Peter could swear her eyes were tinged pink. “Are you alright, chipmunk?”

“I’m fine! Really I’m okay! I’m already over the whole thing.” Peter said quickly, desperately trying to stop the woman from looking at him like that.

“Your dad said you’re sick.” Nat said accusingly, slipping back into her usual tone as she pulled away from him. She looked the boy up and down skeptically and pressed the palm of her hand to his forehead. “Did he give you some kind of alien infection?”
“No.” Peter giggled slightly at the insinuation. “I did that myself.”

“No but imma smack you upside yours if you ever scare me like that again.” She huffed before letting go of him and running her hands down herself, forcing the wrinkles the hug had caused out of her clothes.

“I didn’t mean to!” Peter cried indignantly, rubbing at his now sore ear. “I didn’t do anything wrong!”

“Jesus Christ- what happened to you guys?” Peter laughed. Clint hugs were less rare than Nat hugs but they were still pretty sparse; Peter wasn’t sure what he’d done to deserve such special treatment. The mission must’ve been even more serious than he’d thought.

Clint looked even worse than Nat had. He had a mad, frantic look in his eyes that made Peter’s stomach twist uncomfortably. “Pete. Tell me, be honest with me, did he get inside your head?”

Peter understood now. Clearly Tony had been sparing with the details so none of his team really knew exactly what had happened with Loki. Whereas he’d had days to think about it, come to terms with everything, relax- his team had had days of wondering and worrying, and none more so than Clint. The archer had spoken of the torment he went through after Loki took hold of his mind and Peter could only imagine how angry he must’ve been imagining that the god had done so again, in his own home. “No. Not really he- he tried to cloak himself around me but I was too sensitive to it, s-so Thor just made him stay away. He didn’t do anything to me, I promise.”
“Alright.” Luckily Peter’s words seemed to calm him down some because he pulled away, sighing deeply in relief. He still looked unbelievably on edge but who could blame him? He just found out someone who had single handedly caused him PTSD had been hiding in his house for months; then that someone had been in dangerously close proximity and could very easily have hurt their youngest team member, who he considered to be family. It really was no wonder the man was a nervous wreck. “Are you alright bud?”

Peter nodded quickly, trying to put everyone at ease. Fortunately Bruce had decided against giving him I violent hug but from where he stood across the room he joined in the conversation. “You did such a good job kiddo, we’re so proud of you.”

Peter chuckled awkwardly, feeling uneasy being in the limelight. “Jeez, you guys are gonna make me have a bigger ego than dad with all this praise-“

“Hey.” Tony grumbled from around the corner. “Oh I see, now everyone’s back you wanna look cool is that it?”

“I was just kidding.” Peter said cheekily and went over to hug his dad but Tony shrugged him off.

“No no, I can’t hug you, wouldn’t want my big ego to rub off on you.” The man smirked as he turned away only for Peter to start fussing.

“Mmm!”

“Ugh, again with the whining. Come here you big baby.” He rolled his eyes like he was highly irritated by the teens behaviour but secretly he loved it. It was hard to imagine the days when he felt awkward hugging the kid because now is day don’t feel complete without being hugged a minimum of four times. Tony managed to wrestle the kid off of him long enough to sit him down so he could eat- not that Peter was particularly interested in his food, he was too busy chattering.

“So how’d the mission go guys?” Peter asked excitedly, failing to notice the nervous glances everyone gave one another.

Clint looked towards Tony before answering, who gave him a warning look as he nodded. “Pretty well. We took down two out of five targets and brought in one more for questioning- all in all better than we had hoped, after..well you know.”
That peaked Peter’s interest. “Who were the targets?”

“Eh, just some assholes who wanted to harness some kinda alien energy to take over the world—
you know, the usual stuff. Your dad had some personal business with ‘em too but we’re getting to
the bottom of that.” Nat chimed in quickly when it was obvious that Clint couldn’t think of a quick
enough answer. “Still not authorised to give you the nitty gritty details munchkin.”

“How’s the leg T?” The archer asked and Tony gave him a wide eyed look shaking his head— but it
was too late.

Peter’s head already whipped around in his dad’s direction. “What’s wrong with your leg?”

“Pulled a hamstring.” Tony said simply, keeping his poker face absolutely perfect. It was so easy
to lie to Peter and Tony had plenty of practice doing so; in fact he had plenty of practise lying in
general and young, trusting, naive Peter was powerless to his levels of fibbery.

“Ouch.” Peter grimaced sympathetically.

“Yeah wasn’t fun.”

“What about the old ticker?” Nat asked, hoping to divert the attention away from the leg situation.

“Still ticking.” Tony shrugged. It wasn’t exactly ticking at optimal capacity but his family didn’t
need to know that. Okay maybe Bruce kind of did need to know that, but he was pretty good at
keeping doctor patient confidentiality...so long as Tony didn’t do anything he wasn’t supposed
to...like drink a shit ton of coffee when his heart was acting up— Yeah, he wasn’t telling Bruce.
“You want me to tell you about thunder pants now or later?”

“Best wait till later.” Clint said tightly, glancing at Peter. He knew he was bound to crack as soon
as they started talking about the gods indiscretion didn’t want to scare the boy, he’d been through
enough.

Tony did however pull Bruce aside to talk to him privately; though it wasn’t about Thor persay,
more about what the god has spoken to him about.
“Ah.” The doctor sighed sadly once Tony explained that Peter’s bedwetting issue hadn’t dissipated as they had hoped. “So he’s been lying to us then.”

“Yeah.”

“I thought so. Well I can run tests on the samples you’ve collected, though that’s what I’ve been doing every week when I’ve been monitoring him; and I haven’t seen anything too alarming there.”

“So you don’t think it’s the kidney damage doing it?”

“Well I think that’s a part of it. His body shuts down at night to try and heal itself, that’s my best guess. His numbers haven’t been fluctuating so it’s not as though they’re deteriorating more.” Bruce explained, much to Tony’s relief. That had been his main concern more so than the emotional toll it was having on the boy- which now was his main priority. “Well other than this infection, but they’re handling it. You caught it in time, so he’ll recover just fine.”

“Hm.” Tony wasn’t exactly convinced that he had caught it in time, but he’d continue to berate himself in private over that; when he had the chance to sneak a drink or two and ruminate about how much he’d failed as head of household recently. “So there’s nothing you can do from a medical standpoint?”

“He’s not a suitable candidate for medication.” Bruce shook his head, having had the conversation with Peter many times when the kid had come to him begging for something to make the problem go away. “Bedwetting medications work on people who fail to produce the hormone that reduces urine production at night- Peter is one of those people, he always has been since I’ve been his doctor. But before he’d wake up and take care of it whereas now he sleeps through.”

“Because he’s exhausted all the time. He’s up half the night dealing with the clean up or worrying about it happening.”

“Exactly. It’s a vicious cycle he’s fallen into, I think sleep deprivation is the root cause. And the nightmares of course.” Bruce sighed. “But if I gave him drugs to compensate, they’d likely damage his kidneys even more. They’re working hard enough as is without adding more drugs to filter to the mix. That and well, they probably wouldn’t work for him in general.”

“Care to elaborate?” There was something in the man’s tone that Tony couldn’t quite read.
“There are other drugs besides hormones- anticholinergics. They all go based off of improving bladder capacity but they only really work if the patient has a normal bladder capacity anyway.”

“So small bladder probably wouldn’t help. That’s what you’re saying.”

“Right.” Bruce cringed slightly, remembering the time Peter had come to him with his own research on the various medications. He’d had to make up something on the spot so Peter wouldn’t question him anymore. “I couldn’t exactly say that to him, you know how self conscious he is and I wouldn’t want to make him feel bad.”

“Understandable.”

“I wouldn’t want to risk more kidney damage for something that probably wouldn’t work. So no. Meds aren’t really an option here. Maybe for the odd one off night, if he was worried about it on a mission or something- but even that I wouldn’t really recommend it. And there would have to be a lot of trial and error with him given his metabolism, and making the right dose-“

“Yeah we went through enough of that with the pain meds.” Tony cut off the man’s rambling. He wasn’t particularly inclined to go through that kind of drug testing with the boy again; and he knew Peter was probably too traumatised from the painkiller experience to want to do that again. Certainly not with such a touchy subject as his nocturnal issues.

“There aren’t really many options here, T. All I could maybe recommend is sleeping pills to help him get a better quality of sleep. Maybe resetting his sleeping patterns would help but-“

“Sleeping pills mean sleeping deeper and that’s kind of the problem here.”

“Right..” Bruce mumbled before taking a deep breath. “The best option would be protection.”

Tony laughed at that suggestion, not because he disagreed but because he knew exactly what kind of welcome such a thing would receive from their patient. “You wanna try and tell him that?”

“No, no I do not.” Bruce grimaced. “I get that it’s a sensitive subject..so just- just try and present it as a choice. Don’t force him, make him think it’s his idea.”
“Can’t you do it?”

“No. You’re his dad it’s your job to handle the awkward stuff.”

“Fine but I’m bringing you down with me when all hell breaks loose.” Tony huffed petulantly. He didn’t want to do it, he really didn’t. He didn’t want Peter to hate him or be hurt or embarrassed anymore than he already had been- but what else could he do?

The night before, he’d been alerted by JARVIS that Peter had attempted to wear his suit to bed to make use of the filtration system; just so he could have one night without being interrupted by having to change the sheets. That was absolutely ludicrous. Tony was sick of pretending that he didn’t know the extent of it. He wasn’t going to pretend anymore just to save some embarrassment and he wasn’t about to let his kid getting ill over it.

And once again it came down to the fact that he didn't want to reinforce the idea that it was something to be ashamed of. The whole affair had gone on too long with too little intervention. Peter had had ample opportunities to admit to the full extent of his issues; his weekly appointments with Bruce, the nights Tony had to wake him from his nightmares, the incident with Steve and the couch- yet the boy continued to hide it. And he would so long as Tony let him get away with it. Peter had been having consistent problems since he was shot and that was over two months ago- too long for Tony not to have stepped in.

Bruce was right, there wasn’t much he could do other than try and find a way to make the boy more comfortable; even though he knew the kid was going to have a complete meltdown once he saw them.

So Tony ordered some protection on Bruce’s recommendation; specifically ordering some that didn’t look like a stereotypical diaper, they were made to resemble normal boxers. Then he placed them in the drawer on Peter’s nightstand wordlessly. He’d wait for the teen to find them himself and he hoped that perhaps Peter wouldn’t say anything, that he’d make his decision in private and not mention anything to his dad. But that’s not quite what happened.

Peter found them the very same night before he went to bed when he was looking for his phone charger. At first he didn’t read the package and was confused as to why someone had put new underwear in his drawer but then he read the label. And then he saw red. “Son of a fucking-“

He couldn’t believe what he was looking at. Surely Tony wasn’t suggesting he wore- Is that really what his dad thought of him? That he needed those- those things? Well he wasn’t exactly wrong, he was a fucking baby- a pathetic baby that couldn’t even control his own bladder. But he didn’t
think Tony agreed with that sentiment. He thought his dad understood but apparently not. Apparently Tony didn’t know him at all if he ever thought he would voluntarily agree to have anything to do with those things.

Peter grabbed his backpack and shoved the package inside so that when he stormed back through the living room no one would see the incriminating white plastic. Of course everyone raised their eyebrows once they saw Peter’s furious expression and his school bag- all except Bruce who knew exactly what was happening and quickly escaped to the sanctity of his own room as Peter passed through on the way to his dad’s.

The teenager almost broke the access panel by Tony’s door as he spammed the code. He didn’t even bother to knock, he didn’t care, his dad hadn’t respected his privacy so why should he extend him that courtesy.

When he entered the room Tony was sitting on the corner of his bed, facing towards the TV; the man didn’t even get a chance to react to Peter busting in before he was hit full force in the face with a white, plastic bundle. It wasn’t heavy but good god at the velocity Peter launched it at his head it hurt. “Ow! Pete-“

“Is this a joke? Do you think this is funny?” Peter said coldly, his eyes boring into Tony like he was doing his best to hold back from punching him; Tony didn’t think that assumption was far from the truth either but he hadn’t expected anything less. The teenager was shaking and his face was impossibly pink.

“No it isn’t and no I don’t think it’s funny.”

“Then why would you do this to me? Why would you even think to- this is humiliating, Tony.” Peter sobbed but his eyes were dry and his face was slowly turning a deeper shade of red, as the anger started to take over full force.

Tony pressed his lips into a thin line, taking a deep breath before answering. The use of his first name instead of dad after so long stung a lot more than he cared to admit, but he knew Peter was just upset. He didn’t mean it, Tony knew that, he had to try not to let it bother him. “I didn’t do this to humiliate you I did it to help you.”

“How’s this gonna help? Is it gonna stop it? No! It’s just gonna encourage it!”
“Peter no.” Tony sighed. “It won’t stop it but it’ll help you get some sleep instead of you having to change the sheets-“

“Shut up.” Peter growled and Tony saw the boy’s hand clench momentarily into a fist before relaxing again. Peter instead crossed his arms over his chest and Tony wasn’t not about to let that slide.

“Don’t talk to me like that.” Tony said sternly. He was fully content for Peter to be angry but he wouldn’t allow the boy to be rude- besides the fact that it pissed him off he knew Peter would only feel guilty about it later. “Sit down.”

“No thanks.”

“Fine. But uncross your arms when you’re talking to me. I’m not dealing with the attitude. You came into my room, you clearly want to talk, so let’s talk like adults.”

With that Peter did listen, visibly relaxing somewhat though his expression didn’t change. He unfolded his arms but continued to stare angrily at his dad. “Like adults? Now you wanna talk to me like an adult when you just bought me fucking diapers-“

“Reign it in Peter, do not cuss at me.” Tony snapped. “I am not going to tolerate it. You’re allowed to be pissed but I will not have you being disrespectful, do you understand?”

Peter once again stepped down, his natural tendency to avoid confrontation and obey his father momentarily taking control; but that dissipated the second he clocked eyes on the bag of diapers again. “Like you’ve shown m-me any respect! You went into my room without my permission and bought those!”

“Sit down.”

“I’m not a dog!” Peter bellowed. God why did people suddenly think it was okay to bark basic commands at him?!

“No you’re not.” Tony said flatly, making a concerted effort to keep his tone neutral. He had to keep his cool, one of them had to. And he had to remember that Peter was still sick, the boy was tired and embarrassed- he had to be somewhat lenient to the aggression. “I’m sorry. Please sit
Tony’s tactic of remaining calm to the boy’s defence mechanisms worked; the boy sat down on the opposite end of the bed, as far away at Tony as possible. Whilst the boy refused to even look at him, Tony counted it as a win. “Thank you. You’re a growing kid. You have a very mentally and emotionally taxing job- in the lab and as an agent. You’re going back to school soon. You need your sleep. While you’re dealing with the clean up you’re losing hours, and you’re also losing even more hours because you’re worrying about making a mess, right?”

Peter didn’t respond to the question in any way but Tony continued. He already knew the answer. He’d witnessed it first hand. “Wearing them will help alleviate those last two symptoms. You’re right, it won’t stop it from happening but it won’t encourage you to keep wetting the bed. That’s not how this works.”

Peter flinched at hearing his father say what the issue was out loud, it made him want to literally curl in a ball and die. “Yes it is. It’s basically saying ‘here now you can piss yourself without any consequences- go buckwild!’” Peter spat bitterly.

“No. It’s not. That’s not how it works.” Tony said calmly, struggling to keep his emotions in check but he knew he had to. It was just the way Peter was talking, like someone had said those things to him before; like someone had suggested Peter’s problems were a result of a fault in his character as opposed to a physiological and psychological issue- and the idea made Tony’s blood boil. He knew May would never have suggested such a thing, then who? Who had told Peter that this was his fault or that trying to find ways of being more comfortable would only make it worse? Tony didn’t have any idea but whoever it was he hated them. “You’re not doing it on purpose. It’s not because you’re lazy, or because you’re drinking too much, or for any other reason other than your body isn’t working the way it should- at the moment. You’re a smart boy, you know that. You know this isn’t your fault, you’re just blaming yourself. It’s not fair Peter, you shouldn’t be so hard on yourself for something you can’t control.”

Peter just shrugged off the comment, but Tony could see from the look in his eyes alone that his words were resonating.

Tony decided to change tactics slightly, in a way he knew would force the boy to think differently. “What if it was me?”

“Huh?” Peter huffed a small joyless laugh at the ridiculous idea but Tony didn’t waver.

“If you found out I was wetting the bed and I refused to do anything about it. So you had to watch
while I made myself more and more exhausted—“

“You do do that.” Peter grumbled before his brain caught up to what he’d just agreed to. “Not the- I mean when you fixate and- you know what I mean!”

“Exactly. And it’s not fun to watch is it?” Tony hummed pointedly, watching Peter’s expression change. “It’s hard when I go through one of those phases, so now do you see my point? I don’t like seeing you like this. You’re running yourself into the ground over something that can be helped. It doesn’t have to be this hard, you don’t have to survive on a few hours of broken sleep.” Peter stayed silent for a long moment as Tony waited for some kind of response that never came, so he continued. “Just because it isn’t getting better right now it doesn’t mean it never will, but wearing something until then isn’t going to make a difference other than help you to be more comfortable.”

“What if it doesn’t stop?” Peter asked quietly, the anger seeping out of his tone; his voice breaking slightly as sadness crept into it. That humiliation Tony knew was the route cause of why his son had been so secretive about so many things started shining through the angry bravado Peter had been putting on.

“It will Pete.”

“How do you know?” Peter sniffled.

“Because I do.” Tony didn’t have an exact answer for that, other than statistically it was improbable that Peter would continue to wet the bed for the rest of his life. As an adult he understood that it was just a phase, a growing pain, but he could also see how an emotional fifteen year old didn’t have the mental capacity or emotional maturity to foresee that far into the future. Of course to Peter it felt like it would never go away, that his body was broken and he’d continue to suffer with this burden forever- because that’s how children’s minds work. They’re stuck in the here and now, in whatever state they’re in and it hard for them to move past that. That’s why it was so important to Tony to sit down and talk with the boy about it, so that he’d understand that everything was going to be okay. “This is just another bump in the road, just a blip. Something we have to get over, but you don’t have to do it by yourself anymore.”

“Wearing diapers isn’t doing something though, is it? It’s t’s just sticking a bandaid on it and hoping it’ll go away.” Peter snapped. He knew Tony was just trying to empathise but he hated the way he was talking, like this was something they were both going through- of course they weren’t. Peter was alone with this, completely alone. He was the one having to lose sleep because his stupid body wasn’t working, he was the one who had been hiding it for months on end- Tony had no idea how nerve wracking that was. “Which is what I’ve been doing- just hoping it’ll go away and it doesn’t.”
Tony didn’t exactly have a response to that, because technically Peter was right. That analogy was sound, it was essentially like a bandaid- but once again they were back down to just trying to manage the symptoms of something to give Peter a better quality of life. That’s all they could do. “Okay, so by that logic what you’re doing is no better than wearing diapers is it? There’s no difference, like you said you’re still gonna wet the bed either way- *for the time being*. The only difference would be clean up would be more efficient.”

It seemed that Peter didn’t have a counter argument for that either, or if he did, he wasn’t sharing it. So Tony took the boys silence as an opportunity to ask a question of his own. “Why did you lie to us, P? We might’ve been able to help.”

“Well apparently ‘help’ means giving me diapers like I’m a fu-“ Peter caught himself when Tony shot him a warning look, but just barely. “Like I’m a baby. Bruce said he can’t make me any medicine.”

“No but there’s other ways we could-“

“I’ve tried setting alarms to wake up and go, limiting my fluid intake, mattress protectors, those annoying little alarms that go off if you start going- it doesn’t work. None of it does. What else could you do?” Peter laughed coldly and Tony sighed at him, which only served as adding fuel to the fire. “No come on- what other options are there? You’re the genius, you figure something out- or are diapers the best you can come up with?! Obviously I’m too stupid to deal with it myself! Clearly this is the only option! I’m surprised you didn’t get the ones with Iron-Man on them just to rub some salt in the wound! It’s none of your business! If I wanted your help I would’ve asked!”

“Finished?” Tony said calmly, raising his eyebrows slightly. He was more than prepared for the outburst so it didn’t phase him in the slightest. “You don’t have to wear them-“

“I’m not going to.”

Tony continued despite the interruption. “But the option is there if you want. We don’t have to talk anymore about it.”

“Good.” Peter huffed, looking somewhat triumphant as though he thought he’d won the argument.

“But from now on, when it happens I’m gonna get up with you and help take care of the bed.”
Peter’s eyes went wide, making him look like a deer in headlights. “What?! No-“

“Yes and that’s final. You’re losing too much sleep.”

“I’m gonna lose more sleep if-if-if I’m worried about you having to wake up and deal with- ugh just no- no dad you’re not- no.”

“I’m not letting you do this alone anymore. I’ve ignored it for too long, hoping you’d come to me for help but you never did. I’m not turning a blind eye to something you’re making yourself sick over, Peter, it’s not happening. Not anymore.” Tony said with finality, leaving no room for argument.

Peter looked at his dad with wide anxious eyes. “How long..”

Tony swallowed nervously but remained calm on the surface. He hadn’t meant to let on to just how long he had known about the problem. “A while.”

“How. Long.” The boy’s expression changed again, to a steely one as he spoke through his teeth.

“I know it never stopped after you were shot. I know got better for a while so I assumed it was tapering off. I just didn’t know it was every night again. When I reviewed the footage with Loki that’s when I realised.” Tony lied. Despite everything he wasn’t about to break his promise to Thor, Peter didn’t need to know his sources.

Luckily Peter bought it without argument. The teenager remained silent for a moment as he replayed the conversation in his head. “You threatening to get up with me is basically forcing me to wear them.”

“No it isn’t. You have a choice-“

“No I don’t. You know I’m gonna end up doing it because I don’t want you losing anymore sleep because of me- it’s not fair!” Despite himself Peter felt his voice crack and his eyes grew hot and wet. “None of this is fair! I don’t want it to happen anymore I want it to just go away!”
“Peter, honey, I know-“

“No you don’t! You don’t know what it’s like dad!” Peter spat angrily, but he didn’t shrug Tony off when the man put an arm around him. “And don’t come out with any bullshit about the couple of times it might’ve happened to you because you were drunk- because this is different! This is so different! Nothing I do works! I’ve tried so hard and it’s not fair- I’m meant to be a superhero and I can’t even-”

“You’re right. I don’t understand.” Tony said quietly, causing Peter to look up at him tearily. “I can sympathise, but I can’t empathise. I don’t know how hard all this has been on you, because you haven’t told me. And I’m not blaming you for that. I understand you were embarrassed and you didn’t want me to worry about you, it’s okay. I just want to help you Pete. That’s all I ever wanna do.”

“Then make it go away.” Peter sniffled, wiping his eyes on his sleeve.

“I wish I could bubs.” Tony sighed, both in sadness and relief. He’d expected Peter to be angry for a lot longer, in fact he’d prepared himself for two days of forced conversation and dirty looks. But it seemed the boy was finally giving in and allowing himself to receive some comfort. “You just gotta cut yourself a little slack, okay? Your body had been through a lot in the last couple years, and don’t even get me started on how much you’ve been through mentally. You gotta be patient with yourself. I’m gonna use the analogy again- what if it was me? Or Steve, or Ned, or anybody else- would you blame them?”

“No.”

“Would you call them the same names you call yourself when it happens?” Tony continued, slowly starting to run his hand up and down the boy’s arm comfortably.

“N-no.” Peter couldn’t even imagine repeating those things to another person- that would be horrible. The idea made him feel slightly sick, he’d never be so mean to another person so long as he lived.

“Exactly. You know what?”

“What?”
"If I heard anyone else say what you say about my son I’d have killed them by now.” The cold way Tony suddenly spoke jarred Peter into giving the man his full attention. “If I heard someone else call you a baby, or pathetic or belittle you in anyway for something you can’t control- they’d be dead. I wouldn’t have it. So I don’t wanna hear it from you anymore.”

“O-okay..”

“I mean it. No one talks about my son that way.” Tony muttered under his breath. He hadn’t intended to but got caught up in the point he was making, remembering the whole Flash thing they had yet to tackle. Maybe now that the bedwetting was out in the open, Peter would be more forthcoming about other aspects of his life that he was failing to control.

“Okay dad, okay.” Peter said quickly, feeling awful once he thought about Tony’s perspective on the whole thing. “I’m-I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright bubs.”

“And I’m..I’m sorry for yelling. I know you’re just tryna help…”

Tony smiled slightly thinking about how that altercation would have ended just a few months before. Back when he would have yelled back at Peter when he started shouting- and they’d end up both mad and upset and at square one. Now he was able to stay calm, talk his son down and have Peter understand that everything he did came from a good place. He was proud of himself, proud of both of them.

“It’s alright, I knew you’d be upset. I don’t blame you for being upset. Just remember that none of this is about punishing you in any way.” Tony said gently, brushing a hand through the boy’s hair, making Peter yawn and lean against him. “I just wanna make sure my baby gets his sleep.”

“Daaad- less of the baby talk.” Peter whined through gritted teeth. Really wasn’t the appropriate time to compare him to an infant when there was still an offending package of ‘nighttime incontinence protection’ sitting on the bed.

“Yeah yeah, Sorry.” Tony shrugged noncommittally. “We don’t have to talk about it anymore.”
“Good.” Peter nodded. Even though he was still majorly humiliated he’d be lying if he said he didn’t feel any better. “I’m still not wearing them.”

“That’s up to you but what I said about helping you still stands.”

“Hmph. We’ll see about that.”

And Peter did see. Tony kept to his word; every time Peter got up in the night Tony was there having already been alerted by JARVIS, waiting to help tackle the bed whilst the boy showered. The routine wasn’t comfortable or pleasant but it did cut the time Peter was losing in half. The teen knew that it wasn’t sustainable, but after a few days he allowed his father to help without argument.

One good thing did come from Loki’s infiltration- from Peter’s perspective anyway (Tony certainly felt more than a few good things came out of it); he got to meet someone really cool! Well, meet was a strong word. He got to see him for like thirty seconds without knowing exactly who he was, only to be told who he was after the fact- but still!

Tony had been gone for most of the morning as he was off interviewing Loki and the teen hadn’t been permitted to go. So Peter did what he would logically do and he took the spare time to work. He was busy building his little secret project when he heard Tony enter the lab. In his excitement to ask his dad a question relevant to what he was doing, he failed to notice another set of footsteps. “Hey dad!”

“I’m glad you guys found a way to keep him contained. I had tried making a similar energy field before but it wasn’t stable enough.” Tony didn’t answer him immediately as he was busy talking to their unknown company. Apparently Peter was interrupting as the man was giving a tour of sorts to their guest.

“That’s still pretty impressive I must say.”

“Yeah it’s been a while since I’ve worked on it but that’s- oh god.”

“What’s my blood type again?” Peter called still having not noticed anyone else (thanks to his ear phones blasting the soundtrack to The Nightmare Before Christmas), just before there was a resounding bang and a plume of smoke emanating from behind the wall where the boy was situated. Peter quickly crawled around the wall, perched on some of the pipes that jutted out from
the ceiling, covered head to toe in soot giving the thumbs up to his dad. “I’m okay!”

“And that is my pet goblin.” Tony sighed.

“Oh! Sorry! I didn’t realise that you-“ Peter immediately jumped down from his perch upon realising they had company; hopefully the unknown stranger wouldn’t question him being stuck halfway up a wall. He held out his hand to greet the other man, after wiping the dirt off of it of course. “Hi! I’m Peterrrr-or maybe I’m not?” Looked at Tony who rolled his eyes before nodding with approval. “Nevermind, yes I am. Peter Parker.”

The tall man chuckled slightly as he shook Peter’s hand, paying no mind to how filthy it was. “Nice to meet you Peter Parker, I’m Dr. Steven Strange.”

“Is..is that like your real name or was I meant to- ‘cause I’m Spider-man-“ Peter said unsuredly as he looked between his dad and the mystery doctor man wondering if he’d just messed up yet again. “Am I Spider-Man?”

“You’re a headache.” Tony just pinched the bridge of his nose exasperatedly. “Peter can you go grab the green file over on my desk please.”

“Sure thing uh- Mr. Stark.”

“You already said dad kid, our cover is kind of blown.” Had it not been for the dirt covering his face Peter would have turned a lovely shade of pink. “And go get a shower!”
**Chapter Summary**

Warning for all my sex repulsed peeps out there- minor sexy talk warning for this chapter and the next one. Nothing graphic of course but things are implied. (Which I guess is appropriate since this is Chapter 69 ehehehehe- okay I'll stop).

“Pete, how do you take your steak?”

“Uhm, I have no idea I’ve never eaten steak before.” Peter shrugged as he entered the kitchen and took his usual seat on a spinny chair at the breakfast bar.

“Seriously?” Clint asked and Peter shook his head.

“Of course he hasn’t, he still orders the chicken tenders off the kids menu.” Nat commented as she strode past, deliberately messing up the boy’s hair.

“That was one time and I wasn’t that hungry!” He usually got his chicken fix from the adult menus, thank you very much. He was a growing boy after all.

“I’ll just go for medium then, huh?” Steve laughed.

Peter grimaced slightly. He had never been the biggest meat eater and honestly the idea of eating a slab of beef for dinner didn’t sound particularly appetising. “Can’t I just have the pizza rolls I hid in the back of the freezer?”

“Don’t tell me you’re trying to start on the vegan crap again?” Clint rolled his eyes.

“He better not be.” Steve said seriously; though Peter had a feeling he was still frowning at the idea of him hoarding unhealthy food in his pristine kitchen, more than anything else.

“So what if I am?” Peter asked haughtily, adorning is best Tony impression.
“Because it’s not good for you.”

“How would you know?”

The blond gave Peter an amused look. “I know a lot about nutrition thank you very much.”

“Yeah you probably read like two articles on boomer.com.” Peter grumbled.

“I’m sorry?” Steve turned around putting the hand he wasn’t holding a utensil with on his hip to show his displeasure.

“Steve, I find it very difficult to be intimidated by you when you’re wearing an apron.”

The blond squinted at him and pointed the utensil in the boy’s direction ‘menacingly’. “No pizza rolls. You need the iron.”

“But Bruce said I’m fine now! I don’t even have to take the vitamins anymore!”

“True but now that we’re stocking up on blood, the red meat wouldn’t hurt.” Bruce shrugged. The doctor had recently started taking a pint or so of blood every fortnight, so should Peter need a transfusion again he wouldn’t be left with nothing like last time. The usual time between donations for adult males is every sixteen weeks but Peter numbers showed that he was back to healing and producing blood cells at his usual rate; Bruce had been right, the shooting had just shocked his system and that’s why it had taken so long last time.

“Don’t waste steak on this degenerate, Steve.” Nat hissed as though the idea was blasphemous.

“He’s not the degenerate you are, eating it rare.” Steve grimaced.

“Oh honey, I don’t take it rare I take it blue .”
“Let me guess; Back in mother Russia we don’t cook steak, we take bite of cow while it still moo.” Peter decided to fire back with one of the worst Russian accents the room had ever heard and the men immediately started cracking up.

“Мудак.” Nat smirked not expecting Peter to react with anything other than confusion.

But the teenagers mouth fell open and he cried indignantly at her. “Hey! That's not very nice!”

“You don’t even know what that-“

“It means moron. Or asshole, I can’t remember, I know it’s something derogatory.” Peter scowled.

“You can speak Russian?” Bruce asked with genuine shock. Even he hadn’t bothered to learn anything above ‘where’s the bathroom’ and how to order food at a restaurant- and he’d actually spent time undercover in Russia. Oh and had a Russian girlfriend. Yeah that.

“I’ve been brushing up on it in case the commie spies try and take over again, considering we have one in house-“ This time Peter went with an old timey newscaster voice from the sixties but Nat cut him off by launching herself out of her seat intent on chasing the boy around the room.

“Come here you little shit-“

“Oh! Help! Baba Yaga is after me!” Peter cried as Nat rounded the corner of the island and almost got him. His cries were only half in jest because he wasn’t sure what she’d do to him once she caught him. Oh god what if she braided his hair again? He couldn’t live through that a third time...What?! He’s tenderheaded- that shit hurts okay?!

“That’s what you get for talking politics around the dinner table- Hey! Hey hey hey! Knock it off you two, not while I’m cooking! Take it outside before someone gets hurt!” Steve raised his voice when the pair came rushing past him and he narrowly avoided knocking the pan off the stove.

“What are you two doing?” Tony asked eyeing the pair dangerously as he entered the room. “I told you to behave for your mom.”
“Sorry mom.” Peter and Nat both grinned when Steve blushed bright red. They ceased chasing each other and sat back in their respective seats— but Nat didn’t miss the opportunity to rough up Peter’s hair in her way past.

“Tony I told you to stop that!” Steve hissed angrily.

Peter wrinkled his nose and eyed Tony across the table, sniffing the air between them. “You smell funny.”

“Wow, thanks kid.” Tony deadpanned as everyone else chuckled at the kids tactlessness. He rolled his eyes and set about straightening his tie for the third time in as many minutes. He was dressed in one of his best suits and had put on one of his most expensive colognes to match, one he knew that she liked. So he wasn’t too fussed it Peter didn’t like it...okay maybe he was a little fussed, but he wasn’t about to let that show on his face.

“Not bad just-” Sniff sniff. It wasn’t bad, it was just different to the usual mixture of cologne, coffee and lab chemicals—a scent that Peter had become all to familiar with and now the man just smelt; “-weird.”

“You wearing some fancy cologne for your meeting Stark?” Clint smirked.

“And so what if I am? Shouldn’t you be home by now Barton?” Tony said snappily as he slipped past the man blocking his path to get to the coffee maker.

“Laura and the kids have gone to my moms for the weekend.” Clint said with a shudder.

“Didn’t fancy visiting Lydia?” Tony smirked.

Clint grimaced slightly and bowed his head to take a sip of his drink. “Okay okay, I get it I’ll stop.”

“Stop what?” Peter asked. The whole conversation was going completely over his head.

“Nothing kiddo.” Tony cleared his throat and ruffled the boy’s hair— fixing it from where Nat had
previously messed it up. “You need a haircut.”

Steve also neglected to join in with the teasing, but only because Peter was present. Had their youngest not been in the room Steve totally would have joined in- payback for all the countless Bucky based jokes. “You eating with us T, or can I give the extra meat to Baba Yaga over there?”

“Nat can have it, she’s got the blood lust.” Tony shrugged.

“What time are you gonna be home?” Peter asked, trying his best to keep the anxiety out of his tone. He wasn’t unused to Tony leaving for meetings, especially when the people he was meeting with were in different time zones, but he couldn’t help but feel a little clingy. It was the first time Tony had left in the evening without him for a long time (bar from missions, obviously, and we all know how the last one turned out) but Peter figured it was important. Every time he’d tried to ask what the meeting was about Tony always shut the conversation down. Must’ve been some real top secret trading stuff.

“Before ten bud, so I’ll see you before bedtime don’t worry.” Tony flashed Peter a cool smile. Admittedly he was feeling a little anxious about leaving, for more reasons than one but he knew he had to. He had to get out of the house, like Peter had said he just wanted things to settle and get back to normal. The evening he had planned was a part of that normality he was trying to achieve.

Tony didn’t stay for much longer as he was due to go to his ‘meeting’; but before he left he assured Peter that he’d be home early and that the boy could call him should he need anything.

Peter didn’t feel too stressed at the beginning of the evening. Dinner was peaceful, even when he was barred from eating his deliciously unhealthy pizza based snacks- and he even found that the steak wasn’t too unpalatable to him. The part he took umbrage to was the green stuff in his mashed potatoes. “Oh god ew is that the devils lettuce?”

Steve dropped his fork onto his plate with an audible clang and the rest of the table fell silent. Bruce almost choked on his food, whilst Clint and Nat started laughing their asses off and Thor- well Thor just looked confused. Yeah the god had only rejoined the group recently, so he was trying his very best to keep as low a profile as possible.

Steve’s look of shock quickly made way to one of anger. “What did you just say young man?!”

“What? I hate cilantro it tastes like frickin’ soap.” Peter shrugged as he swished water in his mouth
trying to rid it of the taste.

Steve held a hand over his heart looking relieved as the rest of the table started laughing again. “Oh my god- Peter do you- do you know what that means?”

“What?”

“That phrase.”

Peter was genuinely confused but the reactions he was receiving were making him uneasy. “Uhm..I’m starting to think that maybe no I don’t..”

“It’s a slang term for marajuana, kid.” Clint laughed.

“Oh.” Peter said, his face turning red. “I uh...I didn’t know that..”

“Clearly.”

“Steve serving us pot potatoes.” Nat snickered into her drink but Steve looked very unamused.

“Guys that’s not funny.”

“Yes it is.” Everyone else said in tandem and continued chuckling at Peter’s innocence. Even Bruce was giggling like a teenager.

“Peter how did you not know that? You’re in high school.” Clint asked incredulously.

“Just because I’m in high school I’m meant to do drugs? Isn’t that a college stereotype?”

“I more so meant from other kids, have you never heard that term before?”
“Well, yeah a bunch of times but I didn’t know what it meant. It sounded funny so I just started saying it.” He shrugged not seeing the big deal. He’d said it in front of May before and she never said anything. Oh god what if she thought he- no, she definitely would have confronted him. And by confront he means grounded him and probably tanned his hide if she ever even thought he was using illicit substances.

Okay..now that he thought about it MJ would always smirk when he said that. Ah shit- why didn’t she say anything?! Probably because she knew he’d end up saying it in front of his family- ugh.

“Be careful doing that.” Bruce chuckled though he was slightly concerned. The naive boy could be going around saying anything. “Don’t they have drug talks with you at school?”

“Uh uh, at least not when I’ve been there’s but you know I’ve had to have a lot of time off recently so-“

“I’m calling your principal on Monday.” Steve said abruptly cutting him off.

Peter’s eyes grew wide. That sounded like the worst thing in the world. “Oh god Steve no please-“

“Non negotiable.”

“I’m sorry I said it!”

“That’s not the point Peter the point is you’re a young impressionable kid and you’re hearing words about drugs in such a casual sense that you don’t even realise they’re inappropriate and no one has intervened by giving you guys a proper education.”

“If you come and do a talk at my school I will literally die.”

“Better start planning your funeral then son. You like sunflowers right? Better get on to the florists now, I don’t think they’re in season- OW!” Clint stopped teasing when Nat stabbed him with a fork to shut him up.
“Cilantro the other devils lettuce.”

The boy was quietly sulking for the rest of the evening at the idea of Steve coming to his school-for any reason. He just hoped that the soldier would forget, and school didn’t start for another few weeks so maybe Peter had time to persuade him not to. He wished his dad was there, he could’ve got Steve to back down; then again Tony might’ve found it just as funny as anyone else, or just as abhorrent as Steve did. But Peter didn’t know because his dad wasn’t there and that just furthered his bad mood.

He waited up for Tony to come home because he didn’t want to go to bed without saying goodnight, he hated doing that. It was part of their routine; it didn’t matter if it was on the phone, over Skype or in person Peter always had to say goodnight before he went to sleep. He wouldn’t be able to relax otherwise- routine was very important to him. It was getting pretty late and he hadn’t heard anything from Tony, which usually wouldn’t have bothered him but he’d expected his dad to be a little more communicative considering their recent circumstances. But he’d texted his dad and the man hadn’t answered; well he had, just not straight away- which actually pissed Peter off, more than worried him. Had the man not answered at all he would have panicked that something was wrong or assumed the man was still busy with his clients; but the fact that he waited three minutes-three whole minutes! What an outrage!- to text him back must’ve meant he looked at his phone, saw it was just Peter and ignored it.

Peter: where are you?

Mr. Stark: Still in the meeting. Be home soon.

That was at nine fifteen. It was eleven forty eight by the time Tony finally swanned in and Peter was less than happy to see him.

Tony was surprised to say the least when he walked into the living room and saw Peter sitting cross legged on the couch in the dark like some kind of Bond villain. He half expected the boy to have a cat on his lap or an eyepatch (come to think of it Nick resembled a Bond villain quite well). “Hey bubs.”

“Hi.” Peter said shortly.

“What’re you doing up?” Tony said, trying to keep his tone light as he undid his top button and sat next to the boy on the couch. Instead of cuddling into him like he usually would when he was tired Peter stayed sitting up straight and giving Tony a blank stare. Uh oh.
“What are you doing home so late?”

“I got caught up.”

“Uh huh.” Peter said sarcastically and clicked his tongue.

“Hey, don’t be like that, I’m sorry. I should have called.” Tony said gently. If anyone else had been acting this way he would’ve gotten irritated back at them but not with Peter. He felt bad for worrying the boy and he knew that Peter was only being snappy because he’d probably spent the entire evening anxious because Tony hadn’t had the forethought to tell him he’d be late. He’d just gotten so caught up in uh..what he was doing. Or who he was doing- ahem- anyway-

“Yes, you should have.” Peter snapped. He knew he was overreacting but he couldn’t help it.

“Come here. Hey, I’m sorry.” Tony pulled the boy in for a hug feeling guilty about letting time get away from him like that. He felt extra guilty knowing he’d been having a good time whilst Peter had been sat up waiting for him- He knew he shouldn’t have gone back to Pepper’s apartment after their date, he knew full well what was going to happen. Whilst he certainly didn’t regret that part, he regretted leaving Peter sitting at home suffering while he was out having a good time; all because the boy had slipped his mind. That wasn’t fair on his part.

“Hmph. Should be.” Peter muttered, but he allowed himself to be pulled in for a hug. It was difficult to stay mad when he was so tired and anxious, he just wanted comfort. “M’tired.”

“I bet. Wanna camp out here tonight?” Tony said gently as he pet the boys hair. He felt Peter shrug against him. “Okay, lemme get changed and I’ll come back up, then we can watch a movie until we fall asleep, yeah?”

Their late night routine had started up again recently and Tony wasn’t quite sure what the route cause was; after the whole..diaper argument, Peter had been distant for a while, opting to stay up late and avoid sleep all together. He also made it his mission to avoid any and all questions about his nighttime issues- from Tony anyway. Peter had finally given in and opened up to Bruce about how bad it was and as far as Tony knew the doctor was working with the kid to help him.

But for the past week Peter had been more forthcoming. He’d gone back to letting Tony comfort him about it and he’d been more open about the dreams that he thought were contributing to his
problems. Peter’s nightmares had started coming back with a vengeance and he was having full force night terrors at least once a week. Peter also admitted just what had caused them.

“Dad..I-I don’t want you to be mad when I tell you..”

“Why would I be mad?” Was this it? Was Peter finally going to tell him what had happened at the school with Flash?

“Because I know you didn’t want me to f-find out..”

Ah. Not Flash then. Dammit. Then what the hell was this about- oh god ‘please don’t tell me this is about Pep.’ “Peter it’s okay. Just tell me.”

“Promise you won’t get-“

“I promise I won’t get mad.” Tony cut him off, trying to speed up the conversation because the suspense was killing him.

“T-the dreams I’m having.. they’re…” Dreams? What was- why would he get upset about the boy’s dreams? That didn’t make any sense. Tony was even more confused and he was starting to panic. “They got worse because I..I know who you were after- the mission I mean..I found out.”

“What?” Tony’s voice dropped into a low angry growl and Peter cringed slightly. “How?”

“The s-s-s-“ Peter got caught in the word, his stutter kicking in due to his nerves. “The st-state-sta-Ugh for fu-”

“Statement?” Tony supplied helpfully.

Peter nodded. “The one Mr. Fury had me sign for the L-Loki thing it..it mentioned it. It s-s-said members of the..the..”

Tony swallowed thickly, preparing himself to have to explain the whys and wherefores as to why
he’d lied to his son. “Peter-“

“I get why you didn’t tell me dad. I’m not mad I swear.” Peter shook his head. “You didn’t wanna scare me I-i get it. But..but I gotta know..are- are there more of them out there?”

Tony was silent for a long moment, debating whether or not to be honest; lying had got him so far only for Peter to find out anyway. Should he lie again and the boy find out even later down the line they’d just end up with more problems; and it wasn’t fair of him to do that to his boy. “I think so. We have intel from a few sources about the chemicals needed to make being in circulation.”

“R-right.” Peter swallowed and nodded. It was obvious he was trying his best to appear calm. “And they’re still after me.”

“Not directly. We haven’t been alerted to any threats related to you but there’s a possibility that they still want to recover you; and I’m not going to rest until every last one of them has been taken care of.”

“Right.” Peter nodded again, his voice breaking this time as he cast his head down towards the floor.

“That’s what you’ve been dreaming about?”

“I..I think so..you know the memories how they’re- fuzzy.” It took Peter a moment to find the appropriate word to describe the shallow memories that would appear in occasional flashes. “After I wake up they go away again but I know they’re not just dreams. They’re different now..before it was the same couple things over and over but- but they’re more like, fleshed out now. They’re real, I know it, I keep...seeing stuff. Stuff I..I couldn’t make up. That’s why I wanted to tell you I didn’t know if..if it would help the investigation.”

“Peter I don’t want you involved-“

“I get that, I don’t wanna be either I just wanna help if the information is relevant you should know, you know? I was thinking maybe I could show you in B.A.R.F.-“

“No, Peter, no. I can’t let you do that- that’s too much. It’s one thing reliving that stuff when you’re asleep and bound to forget it- I’m not having you do that when you’re awake.” The teen had
figured his dad would say that, hence why he thought ahead.

“I tried writing them down..” Peter mumbled, pulling out a few folded pieces of paper from his back pocket and holding them out to the man. “Well like I recorded myself right after I woke up then I transcribed it so you wouldn’t have to..hear me freaking out.”

“Pete..you didn’t have to do that.” Tony whispered almost inaudibly. He wanted to give a more articulate response but his brain was failing him; reading over the scribbled notes was..intense.

“I know...I just figured I should tell you..” Peter shrugged.

Tony was immensely happy that his son did and he made sure to express to the boy just how proud he was. Once Peter admitted to him just how bad the dreams had become Tony made sure to have JARVIS alert when the boy’s breathing rate changed in his sleep; like he used to, before Peter demanded that the man leave him to his own devices. Now whenever the boy started to show signs of a nightmare Tony was there.

This time around though, Peter didn’t argue; he accepted the help, in fact he encouraged it, knowing he’d be able to convey to his dad what he’d witnessed in his night terrors far more eloquently than he could the next morning. The fragments were so fleeting that Tony often failed to make sense of them; but there were a few times, just a few times, that Peter uttered something in his terrified sleep induced haze that made everything click into place..

That wasn’t the only change in sleeping arrangements that Tony to think about either. Now things had started back up steadily with Pepper, it came time for him to invite the woman to spend the night- and frankly he was absolutely terrified. For multiple reasons.

“Well it’s been a while since I’ve seen this room.” She smiled as they crossed the threshold; if you count Tony practically dragging her through the commonfloor to avoid anyone seeing her ‘crossing’. 

“Don’t start or I’m happy to sleep in the car-“ 

“Chill out I’m just teasing. Come here.” Pepper smirked and held out her arms to embrace the anxious man. “Relax baby, it’s gonna be fine. It’s just a few hours.”
“You know I’m antsy.” He huffed but accepted the touch and allowed the woman to pull him
towards the bed.

“I know. And you know I understand if you’re not ready. I can leave if you want me to.”

“I don’t want you to.” Tony said all too quickly.

Pepper grinned at his eagerness. “Then shut up and come lay down, I’m tired.”

Tony followed orders after changing out of his work clothes. “I’m just worried about Peter finding
out.”

“I can hide in the closet if he needs to come in.” Pepper chuckled. She had already had this
conversation with Tony countless times about why he didn’t want to break the news to Peter quite
yet; and whilst she disagreed with his reasoning she also wasn’t about to argue. It was Tony’s
decision at the end of the day and she respected it. Tony knew what was best for Peter and that’s
all she wanted, and seeing the man be so overprotective over the boy warmed her heart.

She just couldn’t wait to finally be able to walk around the tower without having to be guided by
JARVIS to avoid Peter seeing her.

“Superhearing. That won’t work.” Tony struggled to fall asleep at first. He kept panicking at the
idea of Peter needing him in the night or even the boy just walking in- which he was quite within
his rights to but he couldn’t bare the idea of that being how his son found out.

But it didn’t take long for the feeling of sleeping next to another person overtook and he fell into a
deep sleep; much to his pleasure nothing bad happened. After that first night Pepper’s overnight
visits gradually became more frequent; to the point Tony wasn’t quite so anxious every time the
lady entered the common floor. So far the pair had somehow managed to pull it off without
incident, no one knowing that she was there as she left before breakfast. Tony felt bad for the way
he had her sneaking around but he knew by then that Pepper didn’t mind; she was more
understanding and patient than anyone he’d ever met so wasn’t worried about offending her. All he
was worried about was the time where she’d eventually have to be more out in the open, or when
she’d bare witness to one of Peter’s nightmares- he’d been lucky avoiding the subject until now.

Of course he’d mentioned his sons nocturnal issues, namely because all he ever talked about was
Peter but also because he felt it was only fair to warn the woman that at some point he may have to
suddenly have to dash off should his son need him; and she was more than understanding and willing to make herself scarce at the drop of a hat should she need to.

Still it did become a little more tricky one night when their evening alone was interrupted by a more than familiar chime from JARVIS. “Master Tony, Master Peter is in need of your assistance.”

Tony sat bolt upright in bed and was already swinging his legs over the edge before JARVIS had finished. He turned to Pepper as he was putting some pants on. “I’ll be right back.”

“She asked worriedly, not being upset by the interruption at all.

Yeah he’s just- I’ll be right back.” Tony grabbed his phone and a t-shirt to pull on as he dashed out of the room without so much as giving Pepper an explanation. He’d never gone into detail about Peter’s sleep issues, bar from the fact that the boy had some pretty gruelling nightmares sometimes, but he knew she’d understand. He planned to fill her in later.

He could hear Peter yelling before he even got past the kitchen so he sprinted the rest of the way, sending his housemates back into their respective rooms as they’d popped their heads out to see if they were needed, and went into the boys room. Peter wasn’t hitting out in his sleep for once, which Tony was grateful for because he really didn’t feel like getting any more bruises- those were always hard to explain to his girlfriend when he hadn’t been on a mission.

But even though the boy wasn’t fighting some invisible force, he was flinching and cowering in the corner of his bed in a way that let Tony know it wasn’t a regular nightmare.

The night terrors about the time he spent kidnapped by the MV had started to become more and more frequent; but more worryingly they were about the time after the bite as opposed to when they were kidnapped. It sounded hard to believe as Tony almost getting shot was the single most traumatising experience of the young boy’s life, but these nightmares were worse. Far worse if the things Peter would talk about were anything to go off of.

They were just lucky that Peter still tended to forget about the contents of the dreams by the next morning, but Tony didn’t. He remembered every gruesome detail the boy would describe to him after he first woke up and it just made him all the more determined to track down the last of the fuckers that hurt his boy.
“Shh, Shh, Shh, Petey it’s okay.” Tony shushed him as he gently moved to sit the boy up, having found that the quickest way of waking him up. But as he sat on the edge of the bed Peter flinched so violently that he almost banged his head into the wall, only avoiding doing so because Tony was quick enough to place his hand in the way.

“No don’t!” Peter cried out and attempted to crawl away, clearly thinking Tony was out to hurt him, confusing him for whoever he was trying to escape from in his dream. “Please stop I’m sorry! I won’t do it again- please!”

“Pete open your eyes, listen to me- follow my voice bud, it’s just a dream you need to wake up-“ But talking wasn’t working this time. Usually Tony could coax the boy awake but Peter continued to jump away from him; shaking violently anytime Tony so much as inched towards him. It was horrible.

“No, no baby- Peter it’s okay. It’s okay, it’s me, I’m not gonna hurt you-“ Tony managed to grab him and pull him back onto the bed before he rolled off and it woke the boy up in the process. “Pete? You awake?”

Tony couldn’t quite tell at first because the boy was still sobbing but instead of cuddling into him like he usually would; he was gripping the sheets and hiding his face in his pillow. “Y-Yeah.”

“Are you-“ Tony reached out to put a hand on his back but Peter jumped away from him, like the man was trying to touch him with a red hot poker.

“Don’t touch me!” Peter screamed so gutteraly Tony was taken aback. He hadn’t heard Peter yell like that in...well a long time. The boy seemed shocked by his outburst but he was still trembling. “I’m sorry jus-just please don’t touch me, I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay, it’s okay you don’t have to apologise. I won’t touch you.” Tony soothed. Of course it hurt to hear but he’d rather than Peter feel obligated to be touched when he didn’t want to be. “I won’t do anything you don’t want me to- but I’m right here. You’re safe bubby, it’s alright.”

“I-i-it still hu-hurts.” Peter managed to stammer out between sobs and he was shaking so violently that Tony started to panic that something was physically wrong.

“What hurts? Peter what hurts?” Tony tried to remain calm but that was difficult, especially when Peter was crying too hard to he coherent.
“M-my back, I can still feel the- the needles they- they wouldn’t stop and they made me- god!” Peter was cut off when another sob wracked through him and he buried his face back into the pillow, practically screaming. Tony was struggling not to start crying himself, feeling suddenly overwhelmed. It had been so long since Peter had been this bad and it felt like he’d forgotten what to do- but of course he hadn’t. His instincts started to kick in. “They wouldn’t stop dad, they wouldn’t stop I-I-“

He reached out to touch Peter again, knowing physical comfort would help more than words but he didn’t go to touch his back as he had done before. He moved to stroke the boy’s hair. As much as he wants stop know just what the MV were making him do Tony couldn’t bare to hear it, not while the boy was still in the midst of it. It had to snap Peter out of it. “It’s alright, you’re safe now, it’s okay. No ones gonna hurt you anymore. I’ve got you. I won’t let anyone hurt you ever again.”

Eventually Peter started to calm down, managing to shake off the remnants of his dream but even once he was fully conscious and aware of his surroundings he still couldn’t stop crying. He was desperately trying to talk at the same time, to explain the images that were flashing through his head because he knew they were important; but half the time he ended up just saying random words- all of which were unpleasant and gave Tony a brief picture of some of the awful things that Peter was seeing. The boys breathing remained erratic and Tony was beginning to think this night was gonna end with Peter passing out from hyperventilating; it was definitely one of the worst ones to date.

But Peter allowed himself to be touched after awhile, after the phantom pain started to subside and that had helped; Tony was able to hug him and manually coax him through breathing. He then had to calm Peter down once the boy realised he’d wet the bed again and started to freak out over that; clearly he hadn’t taken his father’s recent advice on how to curb the problem. All and all it took nearly two hours just to get the boy to the point where he could breathe without almost throwing up and in that time Tony had neglected to update Pepper on just what the hell was going on.

When Peter was in the shower and Tony was changing the sheets he looked down at his phone to see he had a bunch of missed texts. Ah shit.

“Pete I’m just gonna run and grab something okay bud? I’ll be right back.”

Peter knocked twice on the wall to let him know that he’d heard him; and Tony almost changed his mind. He didn’t want to leave the boy in such a state even for a moment but he figured he’d wanna spend a while in the shower anyway. Peter usually did after such an episode because the act of physically washing away his sins was therapeutic; that would give Tony enough time to run down, talk to Pepper and be back up before Peter got out. Hopefully.
“I’ll be just a second bubby, I promise.” Tony said as he dipped out, wasting no more time and running back to his own room. When he got there Pepper was sitting on the edge of the bed and her own face looked tear streaked. What the- “Babe what’s wrong!!”

“Gosh, Tony Sorry.” She sniffed and smiled slightly even as she was wiping her own face. Tony sat down beside her and pulled her into a hug. “I didn’t mean for you to see me-“

“What’s wrong? Why are you crying- did something happen?” Tony was freaked out to say the least. He’d only seen Pepper cry a handful of times and only two of those had been over something serious (and his fault but we won’t get into that now).

“Don't get mad at me okay?"

“I’m not gonna get mad when you’re crying you silly woman.” Tony shook his head but laughed when she did. He gently brushed the tears away from her face, not dissimilar to how he had been with Peter not moments before. God when did he get so good at this? A year ago he would have literally ran in the other direction if he saw someone showing this much emotion.

“I got worried when you didn’t answer me so I went to come find you and I heard him crying.” Pepper admitted, trying to take deep breaths and calm herself but it was difficult.

“Ah.” Tony whispered under his breath cringing slightly. That wasn’t exactly how he wanted to reintroduce his partner to his son; nor was it how he wanted to broach the subject of Peter’s night terrors with her. He wasn’t upset with her for being curious either, of course he wasn’t but he really wished she had just stayed out. Then again, the way Peter was screaming he probably woke up half the neighbourhood. “Yeah..I told you he had nightmares.”

“That was all from a nightmare? Tony that wasn’t a nightmare that was- Jesus Christ that poor little boy.” Pepper covered her mouth shaking her head. She could only imagine the kinds of things Peter must’ve seen to be shouting like that. She stood by the belief that S.H.I.E.L.D was no place for a child, no place at all; overhearing Peter crying only reinforced that.

“He’s okay I promise, he’s tougher than he looks.” Tony smiled sadly but his words didn’t seem to be of much comfort because Pepper let out another broken sob. “Oh you big softie, come here.”

“Shut up- I heard you talking to him. You have no place to call me soft ever again.” Pepper laughed slightly and slapped the man’s chest. After a moment she stood up, wiping her eyes and
taking a deep breath. “You should get back up there.”

“I really should...I’m sorry honey-“

“Don’t be. Go be a good daddy.” Pepper said seriously, using her ‘Tony do what I say’ voice, as she went about gathering her things.

“I’m not allowed to call myself daddy.” Tony chuckled slightly but he didn’t let go of Pepper’s waist, preventing her from leaving.

“Well I can since Peter’s not here.”

“Kinky.”

“Oh don’t be gross-“ Pepper rolled her eyes and slapped him playfully again. “Go on, I’ll see you on Friday.”

“You don’t have to leave. You can sleep here.” Tony frowned a little. He knew he’d likely be otherwise engaged for the rest of the night taking care of Peter but he’d been hoping to see Pepper again before she had to leave for work.

“It’s 5 now anyway, I’m better off staying up and I don’t want Peter to see me. He’s had enough to deal with tonight.” Pepper smiled, before giving Tony a quick kiss. She’d learned by then that the man had a tendency to prolong goodbyes; so she knew it would be easier on him to make it short and sweet. “I really don’t mind, just- just give him an extra big hug from me okay?”

“Sure babe, though I might not tell him it’s from you because he’d probably die.” Tony smiled back. He was more than a little disheartened to be saying goodbye to his lover so prematurely but Pepper was right. He had more important things to tend to that night- and said important thing was currently being left unattended in a highly emotional state. He couldn’t exactly afford to spend anymore time away from the boy lest Peter end up injuring himself.

“I love you.” Pepper kissed his cheek as she walked towards the elevator, Tony continuing on back towards the boy’s room.
“I know it.” He smirked when the woman gave him the middle finger just as the lift doors were closing. ‘That’s my girl.’

But Tony didn’t take the time to appreciate the moment, he’d already left Peter alone for two long and the boy had the tendency to be a little..unstable, after such an episode. The last thing they needed was the kid injuring himself by attempting to go on patrol in the middle of the night again-to ‘clear his head,’ yes Peter that sounds like a great idea when you’re not wearing your suit or even shoes for that matter.

Luckily when he got to the boy’s room he wasn’t trying to slip out of the window; he was sat in a ball on the floor next to his bed, his hair still dripping wet. He wasn’t crying at least, just resting his head on his knees looking glumly at the floor.

“Hey bubby.” Tony smiled gently and moved to sit beside the boy- but not too close. He didn’t know what temperament the boy was currently in so he aired on the side of caution, not wanting to scare Peter off; even though it broke his heart to do so. All he wanted to do was cuddle him. “You okay?”

Peter looked at him but didn’t respond. “Can’t talk?”

Peter gave a tiny shake of his head that time.

“That’s okay.” Tony wrapped an arm around the kid and pulled him a little closer; much to his relief Peter leaned into the touch as opposed to tensing up or flinching away. Peter dropped his head into Tony’s shoulder, soaking it instantly.

“Can we dry this hair?” Tony chuckled slightly and Peter just shrugged. As the boy made zero attempt to move, Tony reached over and grabbed the discarded towel off the floor and moved to start drying the boy’s hair for him; being as gentle as possible knowing the kid was likely feeling a little adverse to touch at that moment. “Jeez kid, you didn’t even get all the soap out.”

Peter made a little noise of discontentment, one Tony found all too familiar. The boy’s mouth was frozen and he was growing frustrated that he couldn’t explain what he was thinking. Maybe Tony should suggest they both learn sign language; Peter picked up languages at the drop of a hat and sign seemed like a useful one to add to their repertoire for work and personal reasons.

“Hey, it’s alright P, don’t try and talk. What is it, can you show me?” Tony asked gently and Peter
responded by generally gesticulating to the side of his head. “Your ears? The shower too loud right now?”

Peter nodded and Tony almost went in for a high five. Should the time come they would be an unstoppable team if they ever played charades together. “It’s alright, I won’t make you rinse it again. I got most of it out, you’re good.”

Peter relaxed again having been promised he wouldn’t be forced back into the overstimulating spray of the shower.

“Movie or straight to bed?” Peter looked down and up at Tony a few times, then back at the door; and once again he was able to communicate with the man without uttering a single syllable.

“Don’t worry about me bud, I’m not tired if you wanna stay up we can.” Another sheepish look. “Couch it is.”

Tony pulled the boy up off the floor and guided him towards the living room before depositing him on the couch. Peter was really out of it this time, but not out of it enough to spare Tony any filthy looks apparently.

“Is Coco okay?” The man asked browsing over the DVD’s.

Indignant stare.

Tony sighed; he didn’t want to pick any of Peter’s usual movies as they were a little too bloody and action packed. The aim of the game was to relax the boy and help calm him down, didn’t want to set him off again or get him riled up. “Come on it’s not babyish- I’m not babying you- don’t give me that look. You like animated movies, you begged me to watch this with you last week..”

Peter continued to state bluntly at the man as Tony carried the argument singlehandedly. “I like it too.” Raised eyebrows. It was funny how a mute teenager could look so unimpressed. “I do! I like it when they all turn against that Delacruz guy at the end. And the music is catchy. I do like it.”

The teenager crossed his arms over his chest. “Well do you wanna pick?” Tony asked pointedly. With that Peter dropped his arms back to his sides and let out a small sigh of his own, making his dad smirk triumphantly. “No I didn't think so. Coco it is.”
A little ways into the movie and Peter managed to warm up enough to speak. “S-sorry I woke you up.”

“Don’t say sorry.” Tony whispered back, kissing the boy atop his head before smoothing out the curls. “I was up anyway.”

“Are you okay?” Peter looked at his up dad with concern which made Tony feel a slight stab of guilt.

“I’m fine bubs, I was just working. You know, the usual stuff.” He lied coolly.

Okay Tony was starting to think Pepper was right...they couldn’t go on lying like this. It wasn’t fair on anyone. He had to talk to Peter about it sooner or later; he hated lying to his son, about anything, but especially about this. It was one thing to keep the bad stuff hidden, the things that would worry the kid, but this wasn’t a bad thing. It was a good thing, a very good thing and Tony was sure his son would agree-

Well. He was pretty sure anyway.

That was the problem. This was new territory and he wasn’t sure how Peter would react. Their relationship was complex in and of itself without trying to add another possibly even more convoluted dynamic into the mix; and whilst Tony knew his boy wasn’t an innately jealous person, Peter had never had to share his dad’s affections before. And well..to be honest, Tony wasn’t sure he was ready to share Peter either.

He knew Pepper would respect boundaries, that wasn’t the issue; but the kid was extremely close to him and extremely likeable so he knew the pair would get attached to one another quickly. Tony knew he was being selfish in wanting to keep the pair separate, but it was just for a little while longer. Just until things settled.

However, once again things didn’t exactly go to plan in that department. Not even a week later Peter and Tony were down in the lab working when the man realised he’d forgotten some of the important blueprints he’d drawn up the night before upstairs. “Ah I think I left them in the drawer in my nightstand.”

“I’ll go grab them.” Peter said quickly, jumping up and speeding up the stairs. He was feeling a
little rambunctious that morning (as he may or may not have neglected to take his adderall), so any opportunity to get out of the lab and run around a little was welcomed; and any excuse to help Tony out he was bound to jump on so up the stairs he went!

While he was having fun doing gymnastics in the stairwell and humming to himself, he failed to notice JARVIS trying to stop him from entering the room. “Master Peter, If you could slow down for one moment-“

“Oh come on Mr. J, it’s fine. A little running in the halls never hurt no one.” Peter laughed, before considering the fact that people probably had been hurt from running down hallways- that’s probably why the rule was there in the first place.

“Master Peter, now is not an opportune time for you to be entering your father’s quarters-“

The teenager cut the AI off again. “I’m not gonna play dress up with his arc’s again I promise. I won’t touch anything, in and out I’m just grabbing the prints.” The kid said as the door to Tony’s room whooshed open.

Then Peter immediately noticed why JARVIS had been trying to delay him. If it wasn’t the smell of floral soap or the women’s clothes on the chair it was the voice that accompanied those objects; “Hey, I thought you were working with cutie downstairs- oh. Well, hi there.”

Peter turned his head to see the woman standing in the doorway to the bathroom smiling at him. If her wet hair was anything to go by she’d just gotten out of the shower and the teenager literally felt his heart stop.

“Oh gosh I’m sorry you’re-“ Peter covered his eyes despite the woman being fully covered by a towelled bathrobe. “I’m so sorry! I-I didn’t realise anyone was in here! I should’ve knocked- I am so sorry Miss Potts!”

“Don’t worry about it sweetpea no harm done. If you’re looking for his sketches they’re not in the cabinet. I put them back in the case in his closet. Left side, third shelf down.” She smiled, biting back a laugh as Peter attempted to navigate the room with his eyes still covered and tripped over the bed. “Honey you can open your eyes, I’m decent.”

“Oh, uh, th-thank you ma’am.” Peter stammered. He opened his eyes, but cupped his hands around the sides of his face like blinders on a horse, blocking his periphery so he didn’t so much as glance
at the lady again. He quickly retrieved what he was looking for and sped out of the room as fast as he could. “Sorry again- so sorry!”

Peter couldn’t believe it. He could actually believe it- he’d just seen Pepper Potts practically naked. Okay well she wasn’t, but she almost was she only had a single layer covering her. Okay, by that logic everyone’s almost naked- but oh my god Pepper Potts was just almost naked in Tony’s room.

‘Go dad!’ Was his first reaction. Finally after so long of Peter pushing him he’d gotten back with her- that was great! But what wasn’t great was the fact that his dad hadn’t told him about it, that hurt a little. Especially after he’d been so open with him recently.

But Peter understood Tony being a little private and cautious with what could only be assumed to be a newly restarted relationship- who wouldn’t be? And it wasn’t exactly a straightforward situation; nothing in their life was. Tony had a lot of things to consider when announcing stuff.

Still, a warning may have been nice so Peter didn’t have to emotionally scar himself or the lady. He couldn’t exactly pretend he didn’t know now, JARVIS would tell Tony if Pepper didn’t. Best to bite the bullet. “Soooooo~” Peter called as he bounded back into the lab. “-why didn’t you tell me you’re dating Pepper again?”

Tony’s heart sank. He’d realised his mistake as soon as he’d let Peter go up and grab the prints; he had hoped that maybe he’d be lucky enough for Pepper to have left by then but of course he wasn’t. Of course he wasn’t that lucky- he knew he shouldn’t have had that late morning rendezvous with her, he knew it was too risky. Well that was half the fun- but not when his son was involved. Good god why had he been so stupid?

Tony slapped himself on the forehead and dragged his hand down the length of his face; groaning deeply and pushing whatever was in the desk far away from him so he could lean his head on it for a moment. As he was gathering his bearings and trying to think of what to say Peter very calmly sat opposite him; spinning on his chair, patiently waiting for his dad to answer. The man took a deep breath and sat up. “I wanted to keep you separate. We’re still adjusting to being father and son I didn’t want-“

“To add a step-mom into the mix?”

“Peter this isn’t a joke.” Tony said sternly. God he’d made such a mess out of this. This wasn’t how it was supposed to go- he’d been planning this conversation. He was meant to take Peter out for the day, sit him down, talk to him properly. He wanted to slowly introduce the kid to the idea,
then if Peter was happy with it he’d have him and Pepper meet in a comfortable controlled environment. He was going to let Peter know he was still important, that he was still his dad’s first priority- but he didn’t get to do any of that. He’d messed it up- fuck why hadn’t he said something sooner?! “I don’t want you to even think like that- my relationship with her does not define her relationship with you, it doesn’t have to be like that.”

“Good because I’m not calling her mom. Steve would be hurt.” Peter chuckled but he ceased his laughter when he saw his dad’s serious expression. “I know why you didn’t say dad, I get it, really I do. But you can’t be such a control freak with everything. I get you wanna compartmentalise because it’s easier and less messy but look what happened when you tried to separate work Peter and son Peter. Or when you tried to hide me from the rest of the guys.”

The boy had a point, Tony knew that. Of course he knew that but that didn’t make him feel any better.

“And I like Pepper! She calls me honey.” Peter added sweetly, making Tony groan again.

“See you’re the problem. You’re too fucking cute and everyone likes you.” Tony muttered bitterly, slamming his head down on the desk again. “If you were a brat this would be easier.”

“And I shall take that as a compliment.” Peter smiled and moved to put his hand on Tony’s shoulder. “She’s really nice dad I’m happy for you. And I won’t impose or rush you, you take this at your own pace. If you aren’t ready for us to interact yet that’s fine, I’ll let you two alone... but can you just let me know when she’s sleeping over next time? I kinda almost walked in on her getting dressed and I don’t think either of us would have recovered from that-”

“Oh dear god.” Tony wiped a hand over his face. JARVIS has neglected to mention that part.

“Yeah I mean unless that was your plan all along? Make things so awkward that we can’t stand to be in the same room together-”

“Boy stop talking you’re giving me palpitations.” Tony said seriously, he could feel his heart fluttering and he didn’t want to add a heart attack onto the long list of things to go wrong that day. “I do want you to get along of course, I do. I’m just...not ready yet. You’re so important to me Pete, and so is Pepper I just don’t want to screw anything up with either of you. Not again.”

“Take your time. I ain’t going nowhere.” Peter said levelly with a shrug of his shoulders and Tony
was starting to wonder what had happened to his son; how did this kid always manage to surprise him? This was one of those situations where Tony expected Peter to overreact and get angry about Tony hiding secrets from him- but the boy was being more mature and calm than he was. “And if you’re worried about me getting jealous I won’t. It’s more likely you’ll get jealous of us cause we’ll team up against you when you’re being mean.”

“That’s exactly what I’m worried about.”

“So do I actually get to meet her now? Not yet I mean ‘cause you know, taking it slow but- Like properly meet her? ‘Cause so far every time we’ve been in the same room it’s always been slightly traumatic-“

“Yes I suppose you have to now.” Tony sighed and stood up, slinkling sulkily over to the coffee maker. Irrational heartbeat be damned he needed some fucking coffee. “I’ll talk to her, we’ll make plans.”

“Yay!”
Chapter Summary

Again- minor sexytime warning towards the end there (and Tony generally making comments to make Peter cringe because he's an asshole)
Sorry this took so long! Schools been kickin' ma butt.

Plans were indeed made and the two P’s couldn’t be happier. It took a lot of convincing for them to persuade Tony into joining them- he only agreed to do so, so he could mediate and essentially control the conversation; the idea that the two most important people in his life would possibly talk about him behind his back was totally unacceptable so he reluctantly agreed.

They’d also agreed not to make a big deal out of it; they were gonna meet up in neutral territory, just has Tony had planned previously, in a coffee shop downtown. It was going to be a casual, no pressure affair- so explain why Tony had spent the entire morning on the brink of throwing a fit and cancelling the whole thing. Oh yeah, because he was a control freak, that’s why.

Tony elected to drive to their meet up and Peter was chattering away, clearly excited; but it didn’t take long for the boy to tune in to the fact that he Dad was a lot more apprehensive than he was. Which part of him found slightly funny, just from the sheer polarity to their usual dynamic. “Hey, what’s up with you? You’re not yourself this morning.”

“Well, it’s a little nerve wracking.” Tony said tightly, not taking his eyes off of the road. He was totally content not to have one of Peter’s pep talks and spend the short drive in silence, but that wasn’t likely to happen now that the kid had picked up on his mood.

“What? Why?” Peter asked confusedly. He’d figured the worst part was over for his dad. Now that Peter and Pepper were both aware of each other, it should be easier now right? “You meet big scary business people on a daily basis but your nervous about meeting up with your girlfriend-“

“Yes Peter, it’s called anxiety, it’s not always logical. I thought you of all people would understand that.” Tony said shortly. He didn’t mean to snap but he already knew he was being stupid, but that didn’t mean he could do anything about it; and it was unbelievably frustrating. He knew he should be happy, his two worlds were about to collide, but all he could think about was what would he do if it somehow went wrong? It wasn’t like he’d be able to spend the rest of his life living this double life, trying to divide his time between the two of them. This had to go well, there was so much riding on this, so much more than the young teen could even comprehend.
“Hey..Hey dad I’m sorry I didn’t mean to- I didn’t mean to like- ahh what’s the word- undermine how you’re feeling or anything like that.” Peter said apologetically. “Look what is it that’s worrying you?”

“I don’t know.”

“Is it like the talking part, are you worried it’s gonna be awkward-“

“I said I don’t know.” Tony said a little more fiercely.

“Okay.” Peter conceded. He didn’t want to make things worse and Tony wasn’t the most talkative when he was upset. “Okay I’m sorry.”

The boy put his hand on his dad’s shoulder momentarily, and admittedly kind of awkwardly; but everything the boy did was awkward in some capacity and Tony knew it was coming from a good place. “It’s gonna be okay dad. I promise. No pressure.”

The closer they got the more nervous Peter got, just not for the same reasons as Tony. He was more worried about embarrassing himself somehow or the woman not liking him; he knew he had a tendency to ramble when he got nervous- good god that’s why Happy hated him for so long, he never shut up- he didn’t want to be annoying. And what was he meant to say? Like he was he meant to greet her- introduce himself? He’d feel kinda silly giving his usual ‘hi, I’m Peter, Peter Parker,’ well rehearsed line; it wasn’t like they had never met before, they had just always under the worst circumstances-

Like when he was seconds away from peeing himself, or when he’d just had one of the worst panic attacks of his life and thrown up- or when he walked in on her after she’d just gotten out of the shower. Yeah he hadn’t exactly had the chance to make a good second or third impression. Oh god why did Peter to remember those instances now? He really didn’t need those playing in his head when he was meant to be meeting someone.

Now it was Tony’s turn to provide some comfort as he noticed the teen’s breath hitch slightly. “Okay I know why I’m anxious, now why are you freaking out?”

“Because you’re yelling at me!” Peter snapped defensively, even though that wasn’t exactly true he wanted his dad to leave him alone; just as Tony had wanted him to leave him alone minutes before.
“No I’m not.” Tony frowned. He hadn’t exactly spoken in a nice tone of voice but he certainly didn’t yell. Luckily dad brain took over before Howard brain could and he understood it was just a defence mechanism. “Breathe kiddo, talk to me.”

“What if she doesn’t like me?” Peter practically whispered in a meek voice that made Tony incredibly sad.

Tony shook his head slightly, as if anyone wouldn’t like his son (except Flash but Tony could not afford to think about that little fucker right now, lest he turn the car around and drive to the boy’s house- anyway, focus). “She already likes you.”

“No she likes what you’ve told her about me.” Peter swallowed thickly, trying to keep his breathing at a reasonable level.

Ah. Of course it was weird for the boy, Tony had to be appreciative of that. Pepper already knew so much about Peter but the teen barely spoken to her himself. Ironically where Tony had been worried about the pair discussing him in his absence, he’d told Pepper all about his son.

Ever since they’d started dating again, whenever Tony and Peter argued or ran into a bump that Tony wasn’t sure how to deal with, he’d always turned to Pepper for advice. But he also told her about all the funny, goofy, sweet and thoughtful things his kid did on a daily basis; as well as he academic and work related achievements, along with all of his little quirks- Okay, he’d gushed about his son a lot, but he couldn’t help it alright? And Pepper was always more than eager to listen to his rambling. The woman had heard (literally heard in the case of the boys night terrors) about a lot, but Peter only really knew her name and that she was nice to him. Anyone would be uncomfortable in that situation.

“Well she’s gonna like you, she’s gonna love you. You’re very loveable.” Tony said earnestly, frowning slightly when Peter huffed a small laugh in response. “Pete, don’t worry, you’re a good people person. You’re great at making conversation.”

“I talk too much.” Peter mumbled looking out the window. “I’m annoying.”

“Sometimes.” Tony said lightly, only to be rewarded with a stab of guilt when he saw the boy’s face crumple in his reflection. Okay, shouldn’t have said that. Not the time to joke. “Only to me though and you’re supposed to annoy me. I’m your dad that’s your job.”
But Peter wasn’t really listening to him anymore. He was too busy listening to all the horrible ‘what if’s running around his mind. God he hadn’t been this nervous before- why did Tony have to go and remind him that this was a big deal? “W-what do I say to her?”

“Don’t overthink it, just be yourself. We’re here so you two can get to know each other that’s the whole point.” Tony replied calmly, trying his best to keep his tone upbeat. He hadn’t meant to cause the teen any second hand anxiety and the situation was quickly dissolving. He didn’t want Peter to have a full on panic attack- then they’d have to cancel the whole thing and it would only be harder the next time. “Just don’t call her Miss Potts, call her by her first name. She did mention that, it makes her feel old when you say it.”

“I’m not very g-good at that..” Peter mumbled, twiddling his thumbs nervously.

“Trust me I know.” Tony rolled his eyes. Not long ago were the days when Peter was calling him Mr. Stark- and oh boy, he didn’t miss them. Yeah it was cute at first but it was so impersonal. Almost eight months of ‘its Tony, not Mr. Stark,’ before the kid gave it up- he’d been living with him! Tony could only imagine how long it would take Peter to get used to saying Pepper.

“I-it just feels rude!” Peter cried defensively. “Like when a teacher tells you to call them Larry- it doesn’t feel right.”

“Well she’s not your teacher. And don’t call her Larry. Pepper will suffice.”

They pulled up to the coffee shop and the pair had worked themselves above and beyond a panic; both trying their best to comfort one another but ultimately making it worse. Though Tony considered this to be a normal anxiety; something he didn’t need to worry too much about. Any normal family would have been nervous about their partner and children meeting, so he wasn’t going to beat himself up over that; same for Peter, for once they seemed to be worrying about everyday things- and in a weird way that was kind of nice. Instead of worrying about saving the world they were worried about meeting someone for coffee. Ah, it’s the little things when you’re a superhero.

As they exited the car Tony was continuously messing with Peter’s hair- both to calm his own nerves (when did Peter become some kind of emotional support dog?) and because the boy had made a complete mess of it by sticking his head out of the car window (yep, definitely a dog).

“What time is she getting here?” Peter asked after slapping Tony’s hand away for the fourth time.
“She’s already inside.”

That was not a part of the plan. They were meant to get there first so Peter had time to get comfortable and mentally prepare (and maybe use the bathroom if he needed to). “What?! B-but you said we were gonna be here first!”

“We were going to until *someone* had to change his shirt.”

“You rushed me!” It wasn’t his fault he spilled his cereal, if Tony hadn’t been fussing at him to hurry up it wouldn’t have happened. Now the teen was regretting eating breakfast at all because his stomach was churning uncomfortably and he was certain he was going to be sick.

Luckily Tony seemed to sense this and he nipped the argument before it could bud. Instead of snapping back at the kid like he innately wanted to, he brought his level of emotion down to match; man he was getting good at this whole mindfulness thing. He might even get himself a cookie along with his coffee for that one. “You’re right, I did, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have gotten so nervous about all this, it’s no big deal, like you said.”

“Now it feels like it is..I wasn’t so worried this morning but now it’s like- a really big deal..m-maybe I should go home-“

“Look.” Tony put his hands on the boy’s shoulders, forcing Peter to face him. “It will be fine, I promise. Pepper isn’t scary, you know that. She’s nice and calls you honey remember? She’s nothing like the scary business people.”

“Well the business people weren’t around before me..well they were but it doesn’t matter if they don’t like me-“

“Hey, hey, hey- no. Don’t even go there.” Tony said quickly. He was horrified that that’s where the boy’s mind was going but of course it made sense. Of course the boy would feel threatened by the situation; not by Pepper herself, she was the least threatening human on the planet (except when she wanted to be- or when Tony was being an ass), but by the fact that Tony had a long history with her. Long before Peter ever came into the picture. The boy had never had much stability in his life, no wonder he felt nervous about all this. Tony kicked himself for having not considered that, if he had he would’ve said something to calm Peter much sooner and now he didn’t know how. “Whatever happens here isn’t going to change our relationship.”
“Of course it is!” Peter snapped, crossing his arms over his chest. If Pepper didn’t like him it was obvious who Tony would choose, and he didn’t expect him not to. May had always told him that you only fall in love once, that’s why she hadn’t remarried after Ben, and he imagined that only one person would be able to put up with Tony as a partner; if Pepper was that person, it wouldn’t be fair for Peter to stick around if she didn’t like him. Besides, they could make their own babies, Tony didn’t need him. He was replaceable.

Tony could see the cogs turning in the boy’s head and what he wouldn’t give to make them stop. “Pete, I don’t know how to prove it to you, but it won’t. If you two hate each other? Fine, I’m not gonna stop loving you-“

“I wouldn’t make you pick dad, like I said she was here first.” Where was this suddenly coming from? Even Peter didn’t know he hadn’t been worried about anything like that before- it had suddenly just bubbled up. He hadn’t even considered the possibility before getting into the car..now he just wanted to go home.

“It wouldn’t be a choice.” Tony knew Peter was somewhat right, he couldn’t go back to splitting his time in half now that everything was out in the open. He couldn’t go back to pretending he was going to business meetings until late at night- but if that’s what he had to do, he would do it. And if something went drastically wrong and Pepper and Peter despised each other- and he had to pick, he realised he’d pick Peter everytime. Of course he would. Either way it didn’t matter, he knew it would never come to that. Like he’d said Pepper already loved him and he knew Peter was going to get attached to the woman very quickly. Once he got past his initial reservations they were going to get on like a house on fire.

But Peter certainly didn't look convinced. “Pete. Like you said, no pressure. It’s just coffee. And if you’re good I might even let you get one too-“

“Well what are you waiting for? Let’s go!” Peter said quickly, pulling his dad by the wrist towards the shop. He made a concerted effort to appear a lot more upbeat than he felt, both because he wanted Tony to feel better and he knew he had to get the moment over with. And oh boy was it nerve wracking. But hey- coffee! He hadn’t tasted that in months!

“Just one Peter, I mean it.” Tony rolled his eyes, though he smirked a little, especially when Peter stopped dragging him and ducked behind him as they entered the coffee shop. It didn’t take long for them to spot Peppe at the back of the shop, and Tony waved to her as his son had a minor mental breakdown.

‘Oh god there she is- oh god, oh god, oh god-’
She stood up from where she was seated, in a quiet corner on a comfortable looking sofa and waved at them. Peter made Tony walk ahead of him (something the man usually wouldn’t allow as he didn’t trust Peter to be out of his line of sight) as they weaved in between tables, so that he could fully hide behind his dad; one of the perks of being short.

What was he meant to do when they got over there? Why was his brain suddenly going blank? Tony was right, Peter was a good people person- he was usually too good, the man yelled at him for introducing himself to everyone they met- so why did he suddenly not even know how to say hello?

Luckily for him Pepper seemed to sense his hesitation and made the transition easier for him. She started by kissing her boyfriend on the cheek. “Hey there.”

“Hey babe.” Tony sighed gently. Despite himself he felt slightly better being in the woman’s presence, though he was still definitely nervous; just not nearly as nervous as the boy literally hiding behind him. But Tony didn’t let him do so for much longer, looping his arm around Peter and pulling him forward, practically shoving him towards Pepper. “And here’s the rugrat.”

Pepper fully ignored Tony’s abrasiveness and pulled Peter in for a friendly hug. “Hi! Nice to finally meet you- properly anyway.”

“You too miss- Pepper.” Peter corrected himself remembering Tony told him specifically not to call her miss Potts.

Tony and Pepper chatted back and forth for a while about mundane things; such as the traffic on the drive over or what some business guy Peter had never heard of put in his last report. They kept trying to involve the usually chatty boy in conversation but he could barely get a word out- which was greatly concerning to Tony. He had expected Peter to warm up a lot quicker and join in, but after half an hour he had yet to do so and it was worrying him.

But he also knew he couldn’t force Peter into the spotlight either, that would only make the boy clamp up more. But Pepper seemed to have no such qualms talking to him- which in a way was good, as Peter was much more likely to respond to her pushing him than Tony. “Peter, honey, did you want something to drink?”

Tony realised he’d neglected to get himself or the boy anything yet so he looked expectantly towards the kid for an answer too.
“U-uh no, I’m alright.”

“Are you really turning down coffee?” Tony chuckled, though internally he was getting more freaked out as the boy shook his head again.

“I’m fine, really.” Peter really didn’t want to end up needing to use the bathroom and having to excuse himself; that would be too awkward and it would be even worse if Tony had to come up with an excuse for him. He was adamant against using the restroom so he was content with having a dry mouth for the remainder of their meetup.

Tony took the opportunity to force Peter into conversation, as he stood up and walked towards the counter. “Well, I’m gonna go grab something, be right back.”

He felt a stab of guilt when he was Peter’s face; it was practically screaming ‘please don’t leave me, please don’t leave me,’ but Tony knew it was for his own good. He’d be fine, he was only five steps away, nothing bad was going to happen.

Pepper could also read Peter’s face like an open book; from the little she’d seen of him, as well as everything Tony had told her, she knew the young boy had a very anxious disposition. So she was determined to make him feel more comfortable. “You are allowed to talk to me, sweetie, I don’t bite.”

“Sorry.” Peter said quietly, hoping his quietness didn’t translate as rudeness. He really didn’t want the lady to think he was being rude, that would literally be the worst thing in the world.

“It’s okay, I understand you’re a little nervous, I was too.” She smiled kindly at him, noticing how he sat up a little straighter when she admitted her own apprehension.

“Really?”

“Oh sure, Tony’s so protective over you I’m surprised he let me meet you at all. I’ve been wanting to for ages.”

“Yeah he is a little over the top.” Peter chuckled. He could only imagine the hoops the lady had to
jump through for Tony to allow her access to him. Hell, he only met the rest of the team through chance or because he had to live with them.

The woman had mentioned he was meant to be talking to her, so Peter quickly racked his brain for an appropriate conversation starter. “So~”

The two adults (one of which was overhearing from just across the room skeptically) expected Peter to ask about their relationship- but he didn’t. “-What is it you do for work now?”

“Oh, we’re getting right down to the hard stuff huh?” Pepper laughed; though she did understand the logical question. The last time Peter had seen her in a professional setting she’d been working at the compound in Ohio so it was probably confusing for him that she was back working in New York. “I’m downstairs in PR, cleaning up your dad’s messes when he has a mantrums~”

And that’s when Tony chimed in, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Don’t start. I stepped away for less than two minutes and you’re already badmouthing me?”

“You do that for yourself that’s why I have so much work to do.” Pepper smirked moving to take a sip of her coffee to hide her smile.

“Bleh bleh bleh.” Tony made childish faces at the woman, which made Peter grin. Oh yeah, his dad had definitely found his match. That was when Peter noticed Tony pushing a glass towards him. “Here, it’s some fruit juice thingy.”

“I said I’m good.” Peter said dryly. Not only had Tony ignored him but he hadn’t even paid attention to what exactly he’d bought him.

“Well I know better than to listen to you when you say you don’t need something.” Tony shrugged lightly, essentially cutting off any room for argument, as he sat back in his chair and resumed talking. Having learned first hand about the importance of hydration, Tony wasn’t about to let Peter avoid drinking for the entire afternoon. Though he did hope the teen wouldn’t guzzle down the virgin cocktail too quickly.

Peter gradually started joining in the conversation after that, though he was withdrawn enough to notice a few things; like when Pepper moved to touch his dad’s leg, Tony looked slightly panicked, like he wasn’t sure what to do or how much would be appropriate it would be for them to show signs of affection in front of his teenage son. And Peter thought that was adorable.
“You know you guys can like, hold hands and stuff. I’ll give you a free pass for PDA just this one.” Peter giggled when Tony scowled at him. He thought he was being pretty generous, since the teen often still made gagging noises whenever Nat and Bruce so much as brushed past one another.

Tony relaxed a little then, allowing Pepper to hold his hand, though he looked ticked off by his son pointing it out; especially since Peter audibly awed everytime the pair look at each other. Though he supposed it was strange for the boy to see his father close with- well anyone, besides him.

He had never been an overly affectionate person unless they were in completely and utter private. As in only alone in their room would be even consider snuggling Pepper. Peter had recently kind of broken down that wall of self defence, now being touchy feely came rather naturally to him- which was odd and kind of scary for everyone involved. Even though Pepper loved the new cuddly Tony, for him it felt very vulnerable; so it was as though they’d just begun dating for the first time all over again. Pepper was the same but he had different boundaries and things he liked and disliked. Navigating it had been difficult, he felt like and awkward bumbling teenager- and Pepper found it absolutely endearing.

There was a comfortable general chatter for a while before both adults noticed Peter falling silent again; though luckily it wasn’t for any serious reason. He was just trying to hold his tongue but it eventually came around to the real deep questions, and once again Pepper was the one to open that dialogue. “Honey you can ask questions about all of this you know.”

“I don’t wanna overstep any lines..” Peter mumbled, nervously fiddling with a napkin he’d been folding into a swan. Tony looked at him giving a nod to say it was okay. The man just wanted to get everything out of the way now so they didn’t have to have more conversations later. “S-so how long have you guys been dating again?”

“Couple of weeks. Technically.” Pepper smiled at Tony, remembering the very awkward conversation where the man had asked her again. “But we’ve been talking since we saw each other at the compound that day.”

“Well, after you made me apologise.” Tony smirked slightly, remembering that night; how he’d had to go and make amends for yelling at her- which he still felt justified in doing by the way. Okay maybe not to the extent that he went, and admittedly he’d taken things a little too personally- but his kid had to go. Excuse him for getting a little heated.

“You’re welcome.” Peter smirked, though his cheeks were tinted pink from remembering just why Tony had yelled at Pepper in the first place. “But that was months ago?”
“Your point?” Tony raised his eyebrows and Peter took the hint.

“Taking it slow, I respect that.” Peter nodded quickly. “It’s probably my fault- I’ve kept him kinda busy with the whole getting shot thing.”

“Yeah about that, you better not go out in a broken suit ever again young man.” Pepper said sternly making Peter sit up a little straighter in his chair and nod militantly.

“No ma’am, I learned my lesson.”

“Good boy.”

Tony smiled at the natural exchange, at just how quickly the pair seemed to settle into a dynamic. Maybe it would be nice to have Pepper on his side for the whole parenting thing; Peter always has a tendency to pay more attention to female authority figures. Then again Tony didn’t blame him, had he been raised by May Parker he had a feeling he would’ve been whipped into shape at a much younger age. Between May and Nat and- hell even MJ, what Tony had seen of her- Peter had a lot of strong women to answer to whenever he stepped a toe out of line. Which was pretty often.

Yeah, Tony decided, a little extra back up would be nice every once and a while.

After that conversation starter Peter really came out of his shell, slipping into his usual chatty, goofy self; but soon it came time for them to leave, and all of a sudden that was the last thing the teen wanted- mostly because he and Pepper (just as Tony had predicted) were ganging up on the billionaire.

“Oh come oooooon-“

“No way.”

“But it’s perfect!”
“I’m not even doing anything on Halloween.”

“Me and Ned always dress up even if we aren’t going anywhere.” Peter shrugged as though that was just cause for Tony to be roped into their plans.

“So I’m automatically invited to your nerd fest?” Tony deadpanned, looking less than impressed.

“As part of my costume yes. You’re technically an accessory but you may consider yourself a guest if you wish.” Peter grinned when Pepper laughed, clearly ramping up his cheekiness for the woman’s entertainment; and Tony both hated and loved it.

“Well I don’t know if you remember but I’m currently a recovering alcoholic. I don’t particularly want to dress up as Rick unless I’m allowed to drink.”

“Fine okay, Rick and Morty is out, even though it’s perfect-“

“No it’s not. Morty is dumb, that’s his whole shtick, you’re not-“

“So you’re saying I don’t get myself into stupid situations that you have to get me out of?” Peter said smugly before realising he was actually speaking to his detriment; but before he could take it back Tony was already running with it.

“Okay you have a point, maybe you are an idiot-“

“What about Batman and Robin?” Pepper chimed in, cutting things off before they got too ugly.

Tony’s eyes snapped towards his girlfriend with a look of angry betrayal as Peter went wide eyed and slack jawed at the woman’s genius. “Oh my god- that’s perfect!”

“No it’s not !”

“It so is! Lonely, sad, rich genius adopts orphan kid, who’s, like, hella good at gymnastics and turns him into his protégé-“
“Will you keep your voice down?” Tony hissed but Peter was too busy drawing up more comparisons in his head.

“How is that not perfect?!”

“Because I’m not dressing up.”

“Awww Mr. Stark come oooon !”

“Yeah T, come on. I can be Catwoman.” Pepper grinned.

“I wouldn’t mind seeing you in leather.” Tony smirked slyly watching Peter grimace uncomfortably.

“Oh my god, gross, moving on from that- Nat can be Poison Ivy, she’s got the red hair- Bruce could be Two Face ‘cause of the whole, you know, dual personality thing-”

“I’m sure he’d appreciate that.” Tony mumbled sarcastically knowing full well that Peter wasn’t listening, having gone into full tangent mode. Though he did take the opportunity to down the rest of his coffee after glancing at his watch.

Peter clapped his hands together excitedly. “And Steve can be Dr. Freeze!”

“Okay that one I like.” Tony smirked smugly. Any excuse to mock Steve in anyway and he was on board- though he most certainly wasn’t dressing up.

“I’m so sending this to the groupchat.” Peter giggled pulling out his phone to do just that.

“Groupchat Huh?” Pepper smirked at Tony. She was referencing how he’d always insisted on distancing himself from his housemates; how he always said that they were merely work associates not friends- and now come to find out that Tony Stark was in an Avengers groupchat.
Peter, oblivious to his dad’s old persona mistook the woman’s curiosity as feeling left out, and he wasn’t about to allow that. “Yeah I can add you if you wanna-“

“No, no Pepper doesn’t need to see that- kiddo we gotta get you home soon anyway.” Tony’s said quickly standing up. He wasn’t only looking for an excuse to end that particular conversation (he did not need Pepper seeing all the incriminating images of him doing uncool family oriented things, that resided in that groupchat) but they really did need to leave soon. Peter had to eat and Tony knew he wouldn't do so in front of Pepper; the kid had a weird thing about eating in front of people he wasn’t fully comfortable with yet- just another one of his anxiety symptoms they had yet to work on. But Tony wasn’t about to push his luck with that now and the one juice Peter had allowed himself to consume was not going to be enough to sustain him for long.

“Aww- But we were just getting to the fun stuff!” Peter protested, though he was secretly glad his dad had chosen now to make their exit as he was feeling a little..wiggly.

“You two can bully me into participating in another ridiculous Hallmark holiday another day.” Tony rolled his eyes, leaning over to kiss his girlfriend goodbye before he began to usher the teen towards the exit. “See you Friday, hon.”

“See you later- oh it was lovely finally getting to talk to you cutie!” Pepper said as she hugged Peter tightly. “And don’t be a stranger- I’m on floor twelve if you ever need anything.”

“It was nice talking to you too ma’am.” Peter smiled shyly, though he couldn’t lie and say he didn’t enjoy the hug.

The two men quickly made their way back to the car feeling considerably happier and calmer than they had when they left it; all their nerves quite literally having melted away. “So that didn’t go so bad did it?”

“No it was great! She’s so awesome dad!” Peter said happily as he hopped in the passenger seat. It hadn’t been nearly as awkward as he had expected- and he was pretty sure he hadn’t come across as too annoying. Well not to pepper anyway, and that was all he really cared about. “But hey dad? Can we stop somewhere? I really gotta go.”

Tony rolled his eyes, as though he didn’t already know that. “Why didn’t you go before we left?” He smirked slightly since he obviously knew the answer.
“You know whyyyy!” Peter whined petulantly, using the tone he knew grated Tony’s nerves because the man was being deliberately naive to his already desperate situation.

“Hm, I do but that’s not an excuse. Maybe you can wait until we get home-“ Tony joked.

“Dad please! It’s not my fault you made me drink that juice!”

“Hey, you’re the one who turned down your one and only chance to drink coffee.”

“Well I’m glad I did or my bladder would have exploded by now.” Peter hissed slightly, leaning forward in his seat. This conversation certainly wasn’t helping things.

“Or you could’ve just pissed at the shop.” Tony bit back another smirk just as Peter shot daggers at him.

“ You know I couldn’t have, so just drive old man.”

It went so well, really well, and Tony felt like he could finally breathe again. He still wanted to take things slowly; he and Pepper had both agreed that it wouldn’t be appropriate for either of them if the woman moved back in with him. She’d been pretty open about expressing that she enjoyed having her own space and Tony respected that..even if it made him pout a little.

Still she regularly starting spending time with Peter whenever Tony was in a meeting or was otherwise engaged; which the genius cautiously encouraged. There was still the anxiety of whether or not they’d be discussing his shortcomings but Tony understood that was his issue; he had to get over it eventually and he figured that it was a normal concern. Besides he wanted Peter to be comfortable around her.

As confident as his son was when he was there, Tony knew Peter was more likely to be a shy, anxious mess when the pair were left alone; and he couldn’t bare the thought of that, for both Peter and Pepper’s sakes. It was important that they got along without him being there; come to think of it Tony liked the idea of the woman being around the next time he had to leave town without his boy in tow- which wouldn’t be any time soon. He may have just gotten himself a built in babysitter- nice.
So, every day for the next week, Peter went downstairs and spent some time with Pepper whilst Tony carried out some work. It was good for all parties - it helped Peter to get more comfortable around the woman as he got to know her, it allowed Pepper to have some of the quality time she’d been craving with her boyfriend’s son? That seemed a little impersonal but - Hey it was too early to try and define their weird relationship yet.

And it also let Tony wean himself off of the separation anxiety juuuuuust a little bit. Not by much, he still constantly texted his partner to check on his boy, but it was something; he had to get used to working alone again considering Peter would be going back to school soon anyway.

And Pepper was immediately made aware of just how shy Peter could be through firsthand experience. Of course Tony seized the first opportunity to show off how smart his son was and had Peter set about transferring a bunch of encrypted files to Pepper computer; which was a time consuming task but not a difficult one, more tedious than strenuous. It led to the boy spending an entire afternoon in the woman’s office whilst his dad attended some boring city planning meeting; and Peter was more than enthusiastic about helping her out. So much so he ended up completely updating all of her software as well as adding a few...extras that he technically wasn’t allowed to. But hey, what Nick Fury didn’t know wouldn’t get Peter in trouble for leaking software...heh heh.

“You know you’re a real sweetheart offering to help me out like this. God knows it would’ve taken weeks to get a technician down here.” Pepper commented, feeling mildly guilty how the boy was sitting on the floor but he seemed more than comfortable.

“It’s not bother at all ma’am, I’m happy to help.” Peter replied earnestly.

“Peter, we’ve talked about this. It’s just Pepper.” She said with a small laugh; her tone wasn’t exasperated or chastising, as she had been warned that it was a difficult task for the boy. She was just happy that half the time he said ma’am as opposed to Miss Potts.

Once again the pair were able to converse freely and comfortably, talking about all manner of things; ranging from work commitments, to their mutual love for animals and Pepper adored how easily the boy was giving up personal information. She had been warned about how guarded and cautious the boy’s temperament was but she had found it exceptionally easy to learn details about him; though she supposed having Tony as an ice breaker had helped tremendously.

Both having a deeper understanding and love for one of the world’s most secretive people was definitely cause for some commonality; despite being in vastly different dynamics, it was nice for the other to be able to talk about Tony without fear of the other misunderstanding some of his behaviours.
The only topic she noticed Peter was a little..distant about was school. Anytime she asked or referenced his education he’d always quickly steer the conversation to that of his school friends or his future academic aspirations as opposed to what he was currently undertaking. Tony had shared some concerns with her regarding the boy’s popularity at school and she was starting to understand why. The way Peter avoided the subject certainly gave her a deep feeling of unease in her stomach but for now she elected to keep that feeling to herself; vowing silently to keep a close eye on Peter the days he got home from school and Tony wasn’t there. Still, the boy never once seemed as shy and uncomfortable as he had when she first met him (well, the fourth time anyway) which she counted as a win.

Though as the afternoon went on she did notice Peter becoming increasingly quiet. At first she assumed he’d just been sucked into what he was currently working on, just as his father would, but it seemed to be more than that. Every now and then as she moved about her desk she noticed Peter glancing nervously between her and the door. Was this due to some of the separation anxiety Tony had mentioned or had she said something to make the child uneasy?

Try as she might to bite her tongue in fear of scaring the boy off, she couldn’t. “Everything alright, honey?”

“Hm?” Peter hummed distractedly, jolting slightly as the woman interrupted his thoughts. It was then obvious that he made a concerted effort to conceal any signs of discomfort as he nodded vigorously in answer to her question. “Oh uh- y-yes miss- Sorry, Pepper. Sorry.”

Hmm..excessive apologizing too. Okay something was definitely up, Pepper didn’t need an IQ on par with the Stark boy’s to come to that conclusion. She pretended to continue being focused on her own work but secretly she was paying full attention to the teen in her company; a teen whose cheeks were slowly turning a vibrant shade of pink.

By now it had been several hours since Peter had headed down to Peppers office and he was bursting. He’d tried to ignore it in favour of installing just one more daemon mod but by the time he had realised his need again he was beyond the point of being uncomfortable. The pressure in his abdomen was constant and aching and it was taking everything in him not to move around frantically.

He knew he should just excuse himself, it wouldn’t take two seconds; the lady looked busy and he was there on a volunteer basis- she probably wouldn’t even notice him leave and if she did, he was pretty certain she wouldn’t stop him. But just the mere thought of her questioning where he was going and having to admit it out loud...he couldn’t. He just couldn’t. Every time he attempted to stand up his body froze and everything in him just said no.

No, Tony would be finishing up his meeting soon, surely. Then he’d send down for him, or better
yet come and meet him then he could take the bathroom break he so desperately needed. Oh god *why* did he say yes when Pepper offered him something to drink? He was just trying to be polite (that and he knew his dad had probably told instructed the woman to give him a snack of some sort)- and look where that got him! He had to wait.

Oh but he couldn’t- and sitting cramped up on the floor wasn’t helping; so he stood up. But that drew Peppers attention and she asked if he was alright again- *crap.* Okay time to sit back down, at least that way he could cross his legs. Kinda. Shit, shit, shit- this was not how the whole bonding experience was meant to go-

Of course by that point Pepper was more than clued in on the situation. After all, the first time she ever set eyes on the kid he was mid pee dance, and it was pretty clear that he lacked the social confidence to excuse himself; now it was just down to her to decide the best course of action to avoid both disaster and potentially scarring embarrassment. “Peter honey, if you’re getting bored you don’t have to stay.”

She was- oh my god she was giving him an out! That was perfect! “Oh uh-“ wait no. That wasn’t perfect. He couldn’t admit to being bored- that was rude! Even if he had an ADHD diagnosis to fall back on, he was *not* about to be rude. Ever. He’d die before he let that happen- and honestly he felt like he was about to die because his bladder was about to *literally explode*- ‘I’m fine ma’am, sorry I’m j-jus’ a little restless.’

‘Oh Peter, honey just go.’ Pepper smiled sadly but didn’t press the issue anymore. She couldn’t, she couldn’t force the boy into admitting something. Tony was the one who would call people out for things, push them into talking, that just wasn’t her style and she could already tell Peter wouldn’t take kindly to that. She also could’ve just texted her partner to come and save the kid before he embarrassed himself but no, she wanted to be the one to solve this. They weren’t always going to have Tony around to fix things, that was the whole idea behind the quality time. ‘Okay change of game plan.’

“Sweetpea, will you be alright alone for a minute while I run up and hand over these press statements to Ms. Phillips?” She asked, collecting a random pile of non corresponding papers to act as faux documents.

“I-uh Uhm, s-sure.” Peter stammered automatically before he stopped to actually consider his current predicament. ‘Dammit Peter- stupid mouth! You should have offered to take them for her so you could’ve gone to the bathroom on your way past. Why do you always get into these situations- why are you *so stupid-*’

Secretly Pepper had been hoping Peter would offer the same thing, but no matter. She could still make this work. “I’ll be right back.”
As soon as Pepper exited the room she walked a ways down the hall and around the corner; the opposite way to the closest bathroom. And she planned to stay there until Peter worked up the courage to dip out of her office, relieve himself and sneak back- with a few minutes to calm himself back down from the ordeal to boot. If the teenager hadn’t built up enough of a repore with her to excuse himself just yet she’d have to present him with an opportunity to do so without having to say a word.

But it wasn’t quite that simple. At least not for Peter anyway- because when were things ever simple with this kid?

He should have just ran out the second he heard he footsteps leave the hallway, but still his mind was screaming at him that he was gonna get caught. And she was gonna see what a baby he was. And she was gonna tell Tony that his kid couldn’t even be trusted to take a bathroom break on time. ‘But I’ll be quick, I’ll be so quick- and if she gets back before I do I’ll just make something up! But you suck at making things up! Yeah true- but surely she won’t be mad if I leave then come back- no of course she won’t just go - but what if- what if you pee yourself in her office?! How is that gonna look you’re almost sixteen! GROW UP!’

“Okay okay, I’m going, you don’t have to be so mean.” Peter whispered to himself as he scampered up and sprinted to the bathroom- and oh god was it close. Like, having to pull his jumper down slightly to hide the wet patch close. But hey, at least he made it- and it occurred to him that that wasn’t an achievement a nearly sixteen year old should be proud of, especially when he had no reason getting that desperate in the first place. He wasn’t on patrol or engaged in combat or stuck in a car- he was in his own home. With his dad’s girlfriend. Thirty feet away from a toilet. God he was pathetic- welp. Yet another shame to add to the list of embarrassing memories to remember as he was falling asleep. Good job Parker.

He returned to the woman’s office, happy to note that he’d arrived before Pepper had, and quickly dived back into what he was doing; feeling considerably more downtrodden and uneasy about this Tony free time than he had half an hour ago. He liked Pepper, he really did, she was so nice and easy to talk to- nothing like Tony had been when they first met, and look at their relationship now. But if he couldn’t get over this- this stupid bathroom thing, he was never gonna be able to spend more than an hour or so alone with her. He couldn’t bare the thought of his stupid anxious hang ups causing yet another block in the road for him, and that block extending by proxy to his dad too. It just wasn’t fair.

Pepper came back in a few minutes later, once Peter had adequate time to make himself look calm. “Sorry about that, honey, Ms. Philips is quite the chatterbox. You get into any mischief while I was gone?”
“N-no ma’am.” Peter muttered quietly, trying his best by ultimately failing at sounding okay.

The woman didn’t know what to say, she had an inkling as to what was bothering the boy based on all the things Tony had mentioned in passing to her; but she also knew, once again, she couldn’t say anything directly without the possibility of making things worse. So she settled for following her instincts and gently touselling the boy’s hair as she stepped past him, sitting cross legged on the floor next to him. “So what is it you’re doing there?”

“U-Uhm I’m just reinstalling S.H.I.E.L.D’s VPN software in correspondence with the new BCP set up.” Peter said in as simple terms as he could muster, as he didn’t know the extent of the woman’s technological knowledge. He found that despite being in a long term relationship with Tony Stark, her knowledge was rather limited but he was more than happy to show her around her new set up.

In reality Pepper knew a lot more than she was letting on but she had found through years of trial and error with the boy’s aforementioned father, that getting boys to talk about their toys was the best way to cheer them up; it never failed to get Tony out of a funk when she feigned interest in his latest project and it seemed that inclination had been inherited by his recently adopted child. Somehow neither of them had any idea just as to what the woman was doing either and she hoped it stayed that way for the foreseeable future.

After Peter had finished showing her how to access encrypted files, she suddenly remembered something she’s neglected to tell him. “Oh my goodness- I forgot to show you!”

The sudden exclamation made Peter jump slightly, though he laughed as the woman half crawled her way behind her desk. She was rummaging around beneath it when Peter asked; “Show me what?”

“Yeah babe, show him what?” Tony smirked from the doorway, surveying the scene in front of him. “What exactly am I walking in on here, huh?”

“Don’t be a creep Tony.” Peter sighed exasperately.

“Hey, I’m not the one on all fours, blame her-“

“Stop it!”
“Yes Tony stop it, and step out for a minute.” Pepper said quickly, holding a box behind her back; she wasn’t the least bit flustered by his comments either as she knew they were only being made to pick at Peter.

“Hey I just got here, give me my son back.” Tony chuckled not taking her seriously at first.

“I said out, Sparky, you can come back in in a minute.”

“Sparky?” Peter grinned at the look of pink faced betrayal that plastered across his father’s face and he quickly backed out of the doorway. He didn’t have time to continue picking on the nickname as Pepper quickly crossed the room to show him the contents of the amazon package she was brandishing. “Oh. My. God.”

“I had to guess your size but worst case scenario it’ll be comfy.” She giggled slightly when she saw the boy’s eyes light up mischievously. Oh she could get used to that look- she’d take that look over the sad one from half an hour previously, any day

“You are so awesome.” Peter said seriously, making Pepper grin ear to ear. If that’s all it would’ve taken to cheer the boy up she would’ve shown him to items of clothing hours ago. “Seriously, how dad managed to convince you to date him is beyond me- he’s definitely punching above his weight-“

“Alright you little shit that’s enough.” Tony grumbled ‘angrily’ as he reentered the room to jab his son in his ribs, tickling him so he squealed girlishly. “What gives Pep? I loan you my kid for two hours and you turn him against me?”

“I told you you make it too easy for me- hence why I’m still in a job.” She grinned pointing to the sign above her door reading ‘Public Relations Manager.’

Tony just blew a raspberry at her as he began to steer his child out of the woman’s office. “Say buhbye Pete, we’ve got work to do.”

“By M- Pepper! See you tomorrow!”

“See you later honey.” She called cheerily down the hallway, not bothering to say farewell to Tony as she knew she’d likely be seeing him that night anyway. Though she did overhear the pairs
conversation as they made their way to the elevator.

“What was in the box?”

“I’ll die before I tell!” Peter cried dramatically as he ran through the doors to the stairs as opposed to getting in the lift with his dad.

“Peter for fu-” Tony’s obscenities were cut off by the elevator doors shutting and Pepper was left giggling to herself wondering just how she got so lucky.

That night as the two lovebirds got ready to sleep Tony brought up how proud he was of his son for warming up to the new dynamic so quickly. “He’s really taking a shine to you huh?”

“That he is.” Pepper smiled proudly.

“I expected him to be way more shy.” Tony commented as he set about switching his arcs out.

“Yeah..I did have to step in to avoid a little incident earlier though.” Pepper said as levelly as she could, knowing the importance of mentioning what happened to the boy’s dad. It wouldn’t be fair of her not to tell Tony about any issues.

Despite his girlfriends nonchalant tone Tony still froze and turned slowly to face her; a look of mild panic crossing his face. “What kind of incident?”

“Well you mentioned how shy he is when he needs to excuse himself-“

And then a look of realisation, mixed with a bit of a grimace, washed over him. “Oh god, what happened? He didn’t mention-“

“No because he doesn’t know that I know.” Pepper interjected. She went on to explain exactly what happened and exactly what she did to avoid said incident escalating to a disaster; though initially Tony didn’t seem to agree with her methods.
“Why didn’t you call me?! That could have ended so badly Pep- you don’t know him, you don’t know how lucky you are that he actually left your office! I’m surprised he didn’t think that he wasn’t allowed to or something-“

“But he did. He handled it himself-“ Admittedly with some mild intervention but still, Pepper and Tony both were proud of him; Tony more so as he knew Peter six months before would have probably wet himself before he dared to leave without expressed permission. “-and you’re the one who said he has to start working through these things himself. Besides, I think we both handled it quite well.”

Tony sighed and nodded as he flopped down dramatically on the bed. “Yeah I guess you did.”

Pepper smiled knowing that was the best she was going to get. She moved closer so she could pet Tony’s hair as he continued to stare distantly at the ceiling- a common state to find the man in. “See? We can handle ourselves, we don’t need Iron-Dad all the time-“

“Peter is always gonna need Iron-Dad. Always.” Tony pouted defensively. He didn’t care how childish or possessive he sounded either.

Pepper just smiled wider; she couldn’t get over how smitten the man was with his newfound fatherhood. “It really suits you, you know.” She said gently

“What does?”

“Being his dad.” She kissed his forehead quickly before standing up to get herself changed for bed. “I love him.”

“Already?” Tony chuckled, making zero attempt to situate himself into a more comfortable position. He was content to lie diagonally, half hanging off of the bed thank you very much. “Damn I know he’s cute but just wait until he starts answering back-“

“Oh hush, I’m good at dealing with backchat, I handle you don’t I?” Pepper smirked before sighing somewhat dreamily. “I can’t wait for him to be that comfortable around me.”
“Be careful what you wish for babe.” Tony smirked, knowing full well how Peter could go from being this curly haired angelic kid to the literal spawn of Satan (“it’s actually pronounced Stark”) in approximately twenty three seconds. All it took was a few words and mistimed looks and they’d have a full blown Peter meltdown on their hands- but hey, a few tantrums were worth it if it meant he got to see his happy kid the rest of the time. God he was getting so soft- fuck this parenting shit he was meant to be cool. “He’s getting there.”

“I hope he really does like me and he’s not just pretending to keep you happy-“

Tony gave the woman a blank stare. “That’s literally what he said to me this morning about you. I wouldn’t worry about that, he’s more than warming up to you.”

“He still calls me Miss Potts 90% of the time.” She pouted slightly, making Tony smile.

“And he called me Mr. Stark for a year, Tony for like a month and a half and now it’s dad.” Tony shrugged.

“God it suits you so much and I never thought I’d see the day.” Pepper hummed thoughtfully as she began running her hands soothingly through Tony’s hair, coaxing him to shift positions so he was laying partially against her. She could tell that there was something more on his mind, something more he wanted to say, she just needed to prompt him into saying it. “You’re a great dad.”

The man’s tone changed completely. He now sounded cold and distant and melancholy. “I’m ruining the kid.”

“That’s not true, he’s wonderful.” Pepper shook her head, but continued to listen and caringingly caress the man’s head. It was so refreshing how the new reformed Tony actually allowed himself to be comforted; and how he’d sometimes actually talk about his feelings instead of bottling them up- only to then down a couple bottles to compensate. Definitely a quick and long awaited turn around and she couldn’t be prouder of him.

“He is but that’s nothing to do with me. He came to me all prepackaged and perfect, but I’m slowly poisoning him, I know it.”

“How so?” The woman smirked not believing him in the slightest; but she let him rant.
“I don’t know- I don’t have an example I just know alright?” Tony snapped a little, though Pepper didn’t react. She was more than used to Tony’s knowitall self making an appearance, and she knew it was merely a self defence mechanism to cope with his inner demons. “God can you imagine how fucked up he’d be if I had him from the start?”

“Yeah I can’t really see you changing diapers just yet.” She chuckled.

“You’d be surprised at the amount of bodily fluids I’ve had to deal with.” Tony said dryly, shooting her an exhausted look; the look of a parent that had been through some shit.

“As many as I’ve had to deal with from you?”

“Touché.”

“Maybe it’s the other way around.” Tony glanced up at her with a questioning look. “Maybe he’s the one changing you for the better.”

“Hmm.” Tony hummed, not willing to dignify that observation with a response. It was obviously true, in more ways than one, more ways than Tony himself could identify and certainly more ways than Pepper could see; but he didn’t feel like verbally acknowledging that. Both because it was incriminating of his past self and nodded towards how he’d let his well established image of being a stoic, aloof character; and because it didn’t really need to be said.

“You’re so..” Pepper trailed off with a slight, muffled giggle that rubbed Tony up the wrong way; so much so that he turned to give her a signature filthy look.

“What?”

“Cuddly.”

“Oh shut up-“ Tony huffed as he went to sit up and pull away from her, but the woman pulled him back down in a half hug-half chokehold.

“I’m serious! It’s cute!”
“Shut uuuup!” He whined. Tony Stark *whined*. Who was this man and what had he done with her ex-fiancé? Pepper didn’t care, because whoever he was she adored him.

Their new routine was comfortable and natural, all parties feeling settled and secure. Tony had finally got out from under the shadow of torment his housemates had been holding over his head about his secret relationship; now that Peter knew they had all run out of teasing material (except Nat but that woman had the power to turn something as simple as ‘the sky is blue’ into an insult) and the boy wouldn’t let Pepper be used in such a manner- oh yeah. The kid was already *fiercely* defensive of the woman’s honour, and quite honestly it made everyone’s heart melt, but none more than Tony’s. Finally his little family felt whole and he’d never felt more comfortable in his life.

That lead to Tony getting a little lazy when it came to..uh..hiding certain things. He no longer needed to dispose of any and all evidence of him having a girlfriend, so he didn’t need to be as cautious anymore. So what if Peter noticed lipstick stains on his shirt, or the smell of perfume in his room? It didn’t matter anymore and frankly it made his life a lot easier. After one late night of debauchery he apparently neglected to a thorough enough sweep because as Peter sat down on the edge of his bed, waiting for his dad to get dressed so they could head to the meeting they had scheduled that morning; the kid started screaming his head off.

“What’s thi- AH! WHAT THE HELL- EW!” Peter ran out of the room, rubbing his hands on his shirt like they were tainted; leaving behind the offending pair of handcuffs on the floor as he went. Oops.

Tony entered the lab, having cancelled their meeting to retrieve his son- who had already removed the button up shirt he was supposed to be wearing in favour of one of Thor's sweatshirts; and looked positively livid.

“Peter I’m sorry I didn’t-“

“Don’t talk to me you deviant.” The boy snapped looking at his dad at his dad with a disgusted look on his face.

“Don’t be so dramatic. We’re consenting adults there’s nothing wrong with it.” Tony said levelly. He wasn’t particularly phased by the boy’s discovery as it took *a lot* to embarrass him; but the notion was clearly too much for the boy to handle.

“Nothing wrong with it? Have you seen Gerald’s game?!”
The bearded man quirked an eyebrow. “Have you?”

“Yes.” Tony gave Peter a skeptical look. “Okay no. But I read the book.” Tony just crossed his arms and waited for Peter to finish out the lie. “Okay I didn’t read the book- MJ told me about it.”

“Right. Thought so.” The man rolled his eyes. “You’re not allowed to watch it by the way. Or read the book-“

“I don’t want to!” Peter yelled. “Why would you wanna do that? That’s so weird.”

For a kid so sex repulsed Peter really was asking a lot of questions, and though he was slightly uncomfortable Tony couldn’t help but give in to the hilarity of the situation. “What’s weird about it? It’s an exercise in trust and if you love and trust the person you’re with it can make sex very enjoyable-“

“Stop I’m gonna be sick I don’t want to think about- herghck-“ The teenager started gagging dramatically and only half jokingly. “But why do you need to tie her up to show trust? Just, like, I don’t know have a fulfilling conversation or give her your bank account details or something.”

“...Who said she was the one tied up?” Tony smirked when Peter stared at him with a look of pure horror.

“Oh my god- WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?!”

“Oh grow up, Peter. It’s not a big deal.” Tony rolled his eyes again exasperatedly. He sat down at his desk accepting the fact that they weren’t about to get any work done; and watched as Peter started pacing around the room like he was looking for a receptacle to vomit in.

“You’ve put images in my head! Oh god I need some brain bleach- where do you keep your vodka? I’ve decided to take up drinking after all-“

“Enough! Sit your ass down and if you don’t like it, stop talking about it. In fact, I would really prefer if you stopped talking about it. Just pretend you never saw them.”
“Saw what?” Peter jumped and Tony just sighed, looking tiredly towards his girlfriend. Great timing for the woman to walk in, just great.

“Oh- hi miss- Nope, Sorry not miss, I mean Pepper- uh nothing!” Peter blabbered.

“The handcuffs.” Tony said flatly, much to his son’s horror.

“TONY!”

“Ah.” She smiled, looking only slightly embarrassed but ultimately more amused. “In that case I’ll come back after you have ‘the talk’”

“I don’t need the talk!” Peter squeaked, his voice breaking embarrassingly.

“Oh you don’t?” Tony smirked.

“No I don’t ! May gave me that when I was, like, eight after I walked in on her watching Bridget Jones’s diary!”

There was an awkward silence as Peter realised he didn’t need to share the details of that embarrassing memory. Tony failed not to laugh as did Pepper- though the woman at least attempted to hide her amusement.

The man continued trying his best to speak maturely to the kid who was only a few years past thinking girls had cooties. In fact Tony wasn’t fully convinced that Peter didn’t still think that. “Well did she tell you that when two people love each other very much they-“

“Use handcuffs and traumatise their adopted children by leaving them around?!”

“Well if she did say that she was oddly specific-“
“You’re disgusting!”

“Yeah, I’m gonna go. I’ll see you later boys!” Pepper called as she hightailed it out of the lab; but Tony and Peter were too busy arguing to notice.

“You make it sound like I had them on display or something-“

“WELL YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE DONE!”
Birthday Shenanigans

Chapter Summary

Sorry for another long break between updates- School and health stuff have been killer but updates are probably gonna be like this for a while :( I have half term coming up soon though and i'm going to *try* and do omovember
But yeah so here we are, this chapter isn't quite as good as i wanted it to be but hey, i wasn't about to leave it for another few days it was getting ridonkulous
Sooo anyway- Peter's finally sixteen!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“PETER! PETER WAKE UP!” Tony came running into Peter’s room at midnight screaming, pulling the boy’s blankets off of him and making the kid jump a foot in the air.

“What?! What’s happening?!” Peter screamed back frantically looking side to side for some kind of danger.

Tony just grinned at him. “Happy birthday!”

Peter frowned and flopped back onto his bed. “Ugh! Are you serious?! What time is it?!”

“12:03! You’ve been sixteen for three whole minutes!” Tony laughed and sat on the edge of the teenagers bed. “So how do you feel?”

“Tired.” Peter grumbled into his pillow, trying to ignore his dad as the man started annoyingly bouncing his bed. He’d literally almost forgotten it was his birthday- at least he’d tried to, but that was hard when Tony mentioned it every day like a countdown. “I’d like to spend the next six hours of my seventeenth year asleep.”

“Woah, woah, woah- hold your horses I don’t wanna hear about being seventeen for another 11 months at least.” Tony said seriously, though he knew what the boy meant he was just getting used to the idea that he didn’t have a fifteen year old anymore. Christ he’d known the boy since he was fourteen - where was the time going? Okay, he can save being depressed about the boy’s fading childhood later- for now it was the kids birthday and oh boy did Tony have some embarrassing fun things planned.
“Lemme sleeeeeep.” Peter grumbled into his pillow, snatching back his comforter and pulling it over his head; but Tony didn’t leave; instead he continued sitting there, shaking the entire mattress, jolting the boy awake. “What do you want?”

“Payback.” Tony grinned in the darkness.

“For what?”

“You annoying me.”

Peter sat up and pouted slightly at that. In recent memory he couldn’t remember doing anything that deserved such a rude awakening. “It’s my birthday!”

“Aha! So now you remember!” Tony sprang up and pointed accusingly at the teenager, who just rolled over again, burrowing deeply into the covers.

“Dad please can I go to sleep for just a couple more hours?” Peter begged.

“Fine, gives me a chance to finish decorating the living room.” Tony chuckled mischievously as he began creeping towards the door like a total weirdo - what had gotten into him today? The ghost of sweet sixteens apparently.

“You better be joking.” Peter called grrouchilly. He’d spent the past three weeks begging and demanding and bargaining with his family not to make a big deal.

“But what if I’m nooooot~” Tony taunted in a sing song voice as he slipped out of the teens room, laughing to himself.

It turned out Tony wasn’t in fact joking. Once Peter got out of bed (after being woken up again - this time by JARVIS wishing him a happy birthday and Nat throwing a plethora of birthday cards at him as though they were ninja stars- Ow! ) he got himself dressed- oh wait, no he didn’t because Tony insisted it was tradition that he opened his birthday presents in his pyjamas. Anyway, once he made his way into the living room he saw how his dad and the rest of his family had elected to celebrate his birthday. All of the embarrassing baby pictures May had bestowed onto Tony we’re
now printed larger and stuck to every available piece of wall space that they could reach. Which was a lot considering Steve and Thor were super tall and Clint was pretty good at climbing up the walls.

“They’re bad- oh my god were they bad. Every home haircut, every Halloween costume and school play- it was all there. In the best quality cameras circa 2001-2011 could buy- hand on a second..they looked pretty sharp for- goddammit! Tony had them retouched so now they were all in HD- ugh! The only saving grace, Peter thought, was at least no one else had to see them. Oh but he didn’t realise how wrong he was.

He also didn’t have time to think too hard about it because Steve ran up behind him and practically picked him up as he hugged him. “Happy birthday, Sport!”

Peter tried but it was hard to be an indignant teenager when Captain America was cuddling you. He ended up giggling despite himself. “Thanks Steve.”

“PRESENTS!” Thor yelled excitedly, and for once no one tried to quell his enthusiasm.

“Can we let the kid eat first?” Steve chuckled, realising he had yet to put said kid down.

“Dad I thought we agreed no gifts?” Peter muttered out of the side of his mouth; obviously he didn’t want to sound rude or ungrateful but he had expressed very clearly to everyone in the room many times that he wasn’t comfortable being the centre of attention. And oh boy, kid, you’re gonna have a whale of a time today.

“Nope, I agreed no expensive gifts. And I’ll think you find that everyone else adhered to the handmade rule.” Tony smiled. It had killed him not to buy anything extravagant for the kid- but if that’s what Peter wanted. “But I agree with Snowjob, you should eat first.”

“What do you mean everyone else?” Peter said suspiciously but Tony blatantly ignored him in favour of steering the boy to the living from floor.
“Presents first! Please!” Thor begged dramatically making Peter laugh. He was surprised the god hadn’t been the one to wake him up at midnight.

“Okay Thor, Okay- kid sit down before he explodes.” Tony laughed as everyone congregated with equal enthusiasm.

“We’ve been waiting all morning.”

“It’s 7:30!” Peter laughed. Seriously how long had these crazy people been awake?

“Awww our little curly fry has been sixteen for seven and a half hours!” Nat cooked annoyingly pinching at Peters cheeks before he could get away from her.

“Don’t start you’re worse than dad.” He groaned and Tony grinned, relishing in his current title of the most annoying member of the household. Thought to be fair, Thor was surely going to steal that title back soon so he had to enjoy it while he had it. “Besides I wasn’t born until like, dinner time, so you’ve got a while yet.”

“In that case we have to wait to open presents until after dinner-” Bruce started jokingly but Thor looked about ready to commit murder.

“NO!”

Though Peter was mildly uncomfortable with being seated in front of everyone whilst opening the packages, that feeling was overshadowed by the overwhelming love he felt when he saw each of them. He truly wasn’t used to being the centre of attention in such a way but it wasn’t nearly as awkward as he’d built it up to be in his mind. Again Tony had limited everyone to one thing per Peter’s request, which certainly made things easier, but everything was just- perfect. And it took a lot of effort not to cry to be honest. He was already over emotional considering it was the first birthday he’d had without May being there (at least first thing anyway- Tony had promised to pick the lady up later); But his spirits were very quickly lifted once he started opening everything.

Steve had put his artistic talents to the test and drew Peter a poster of his alter ego; stylised to look like one of the old comic books he adored so much. Not only was the picture itself fantastic, Steve was usually very particular about who got to even look at his artwork, so the fact that the man had taken the time to make something for Peter specifically was heartwarming. But the man had made him look so damn cool- ‘The Amazing Spider-Man.’ Huh. He liked that. Even when Tony
commented on how it made him sound like a sideshow act at a circus- he still thought it was cool.

“Mine next!” Thor yelled, jittering excitedly.

“I don’t know, aren’t you meant to open cards first?” Nat chimed in. Everyone figured she was just trying to tease Thor but really she felt shy about her own gift after seeing Steve's and was trying to prolong the inevitable.

“Actually yeah, I mean I always used to.” Peter shrugged he wasn’t phased by the change in routine because- well let’s be honest, everything was a little different this year.

May wasn’t there for one thing, Ned said he wasn’t gonna be able to come over; which was fine, Peter didn’t blame him. And MJ well, she just hadn't said anything so Peter figured it was the same with her or that she’d forgotten. It took a lot of planning and stuff to get the security passes to visit so though he was disappointed he wasn’t upset with his friends directly. He’d just had to get used to a lot of changes over the past year, and whilst most of them were positive it still made Peter appreciate the little traditions he’d upheld over the years.

If there was one word he could use to describe the morning so far it would definitely be overwhelming. He’d never had a stack of cards so big; in fact he was pretty sure if he counted up all the cards he’d gotten over his entire life that would equal only a fraction of what he currently held in his hands. He revived a card from so many people, including many of Tony’s staff that he’d taken the time to get to know over the year he’d lived there and it was just..just overwhelming. But out of all of them, he had to say Fury’s was the best.

“Nick sent you one? Wow you must’ve made a good impression kid.” Clint commented as Peter opened it, all the adults recognising the bold handwriting.

“It has a pirate on it. Brilliant.” Nat grins remembering how Peter called him that scary pirate dude for the longest time

“Oh man I was hoping he’d forgotten about that! I said sorry- Oh my god.” Peter cut himself off his eyes goes momentarily wide.

“What?” Worried fury wrote something bad but Peter held up another smaller card that had fallen out of the other. It had a picture of a cat on the front.
“I got one from Goose!” Peter squealed excitedly showing how the cat had signed this name with its paw; and the knowing adults in the room weren’t entirely sure the alien creature hadn’t managed to do so itself—though the novel idea of big bad Nick Fury signing a birthday card from a cat was definitely more fun to imagine. Either way none of them had ever seen a teenager so excited over a piece of paper, though Tony hoped that later that evening that would change...

“Okay now can you please open mine?!” Thor begged bouncing a little like an excited child.

“Sure Thor.” Peter giggled slightly as the god thrust the package into his hand.

“Nope mine first!” Clint pushed Thor out of the way after jumping over the couch.

“Then me.” Bruce grinned, also stepping in front of the blond god who let out a small scream of frustration.

“It’s okay big guy, best for last huh?” Tony consoled him as Peter was forced to open both Clint and Bruce’s respectively.

Clint’s gift was equally as emasculate in its craftsmanship, the man showcasing his whittling skills by producing highly detailed ‘figurines— not dolls Tony’ of all of the team. Bruce broke the trend of handmade items but only because he insisted that he wasn’t a crafts type person; however Peter was just as appreciative of the medical journals that Bruce had found for him, detailing a few key subjects he knew the boy would find fascinating. So fascinating in fact that Peter started trying to read two of them at once, completely forgetting the task at hand.

“Oh my god, this— this chapter is perfect for what I’ve been working on..” Peter muttered to himself, suddenly oblivious to the adults listening in on his one sided conversation as he flicked through the pages of one journal; titled ‘the stabilisation if genes during radioactive processes.’

Oh dear. What on earth had the kid been doing? Maybe Tony shouldn’t have let Peter play by himself in the lab so much— biomedical sciences were dangerous, especially when radiation was involved; three out of their seven housemates were a testament to that, and that was a pretty large percentage. “What, the vent project?”

“You know nothing of the vents!” Peter hissed— suddenly transforming into Gollum from Lord Of The Rings as he held the ‘precious’ books close to his chest.
“Oh...Kay..whatever you say you little crackhead, it’s your birthday.” Tony shrugged though he silently vowed to raid Peter’s part of the lab later, exchanging a silent nod with Bruce. “Okay Nat, your turn-“

“No please! Please let it be my turn now!” Thor whined petulantly and made a dramatic fainting gesture, falling backwards and sliding off the couch.

“Go ahead yellowbeard.” Nat smirked when all the other men sighed disappointedly.

“Aww spoilsport.”

“Yeah Nat, we wanted to see if he’d cry this time.”

Thor let out a small whine like scream that was only halted when Peter took the package from his hand; he then very quickly perked up, his whines turning to excited squeals. “Yay!”

Of course everyone expected it to be some kind of weapon, or at least something vaguely inappropriate for the boy’s age- but everyone was pleasantly surprised; if not shocked and impressed also.

Peter ran his hands over the surface of the object. “Thor you..you made this?”

“Yes I did.” The god beamed proudly.

“How?” Tony asked incredulously.

“When did you even get the time to do this?” Nat chimed I’m shaking her head and looking over the object.

“Well he has a lot more free time now he’s not snake charm- ow!”

“Not today Clint.” Bruce said sternly.
“Yeah, by official decree of the birthday boy.” Peter nodded.

“Sorry sorry.” The archer held his hands up apologetically; nodding to Thor who didn’t seem the slightest bit phased by the remark.

“How does it work?” Peter asked clearly perplexed. He wasn’t even exactly sure what it was; it was a very large box at least he could tell that much, with intricate carvings lining it’s exterior- it’s was a beautiful box. All he could tell was, whatever wood it was made out of was definitely not of this planet. And if Peter didn’t know better he could swear there was a pulse coming from the object, as though the thing was breathing and leaning into his touch. Okay..well he didn’t exactly expect a macaroni necklace from a god but what the hell Thor? This better not be made of Groot or Peter would cry.

Thor took the box from the boy and gestured to four fingertip sized grooves carved in the back, placing his fingers precisely on each pad; as soon as Peter tapped in a certain rhythm- hidden from the rest of the room of course- the box opened revealing decent sized storage space and oh my fucking god. Thor just made him a lock box that only he can get into- that Tony couldn’t get into. Finally he had somewhere secret to hide his shit that his dad couldn’t access- YES! “A little bit of uh- well I’d say magic but your father may strangle me so let’s go with alien technology. Non radioactive of course! JARVIS assured me that it’s up to scratch with all of your safety requirements, Anthony.”

“Well I appreciate that. I’d appreciate it more if I could take it apart and have a look inside..” Tony said eagerly, peering intently over his son’s shoulder. He knew Thor didn’t understand electrics, despite his powers, so how the hell did that thing work...

“No you cannot!” Peter cried defensively, holding the object away from his father’s prying eyes. “If anyone gets to deconstruct this thing it’s me and that won’t be happening anytime soon. It’s amazing Thor I love it- this is so awesome, thank you!”

“I figured you needed a little privacy in some regard, little one.” An obligatory tackle style hug later and Bruce was gently nudging his girlfriend to step forward. When she adamantly refused and vigorously shook her head, Clint stepped in to ramp up the peer pressure.

“You’re up, Nat.” Clint said gesturing to the object the woman was holding behind her back.

“Fine.” She sighed and handed it over to Peter. She couldn’t exactly refuse now that she was in the
spotlight, though she did send threatening looks to her male counterparts not to draw extra attention
to her; so Steve took that as his que to start putting Peter’s cards on display and Bruce set about
clearing up the trash. Peter was pretty sure he’d never seen the woman look nervous before.

Nat’s was a small package with was felt like a small rectangular book inside. At first Peter was
scared there were more embarrassing photos inside but that’s not what he found. It was a stack of
handwritten notes with weird statements on them- wait a minute, not notes. Coupons.

They ranged from cute, family oriented stuff.

‘One free hug.’

‘One free pass to pick a movie on Nat’s night.’

To the slightly comedic, yet certainly useful.

‘One free punch aimed at any blond or brunette housemate, courtesy of Nat.’

‘One free pass to a slave of your choosing for an entire week (excluding Nat, duh).’

To one’s Peter hoped were in jest but honestly with Nat it..it was hard to tell.

‘One free corpse disposal- no questions asked.’

There were hundreds of them, clearly written over time if the variety of pens and shades of paper
were anything to go off of. Some of them were clearly written on the go, after specific incidents
that made Peter smile and others had been meticulously written out with little cartoon depictions of
each of the team said coupon related to drawn underneath. Nat had clearly put a lot of time and
effort into the booklet, as well as a lot of thought.

But the woman looked decidedly awkward and uncomfortable as the men in the room raised their
eyebrows and attempted to read over Peter’s shoulder. “I know it’s stupid- but I’m not as creative
as these shmucks and Tony made a huge deal about not spending money so I-“
“Tash I love it!” Peter said earnestly and the woman merely scoffed. “I’m serious, I’m gonna make such good use of these.” He grinned flipping through the book- oh *that one* was going to come in handy. Tony better be extra nice to him or he just might use it.

The terms and conditions in the front of the booklet had been signed by everyone too (though admittedly Nat could have adult forged those) so Peter had free reign to use them for a whole year on anyone he pleased. Oh this was gonna be fun.

“I could’ve given you an avocado and you’d be grateful.” She shook her head. She kicked herself for letting Thor go before her because there was zero way she couldn’t compete with *that.*

“Yes because I’d appreciate the fact you watched the vine compilations I sent you-” Peter grinned at the reference. “-but seriously, I love them. It’s really sweet.”

“Never call me sweet again.” She said dryly, though her eyes were distinctly warmer than usual and there was a small curl of a smile on her lips.

“Thoughtful then.” Peter corrected himself as not to offend the clearly insecure lady. “And you spent time to make me something- all you guys did and that..that means a lot.”

She rolled her eyes but accepted the boy’s hug of thanks, breathing a sigh of relief that her self-deemed mediocre gift was well received. It wasn’t exactly original but she’d spent a lot of time thinking of specific ‘coupons’ that would be applicable to their particular household. “Don’t get soppy, Steve’s already been an emotional wreck this morning.”

And Steve wasn’t the only one. Tony found himself bouncing between being happy and excited to finally share a big milestone with his kid to sad and depressed; at the notion that said kid was growing up far too quickly for his liking. Putting up the baby pictures on the wall that morning had really hit home, though he tried to brush it off and push that feeling down, it kept coming back up in waves; he’d literally feel the emotion roll through his body, catching in his throat and making his eyes prickle- but nope. He could hold it together and he would. Today was Peter’s day and by darn he was going to make it the best ever.

After all, you only turn sixteen once. Unless Tony figured out time travel and turned Peter into that cute chubby baby again so he could love those years with him; which honestly was very, very tempting.
After that Peter moved from his cross legged position on the floor, heading to retrieve his phone so he could tell Ned about what he’d revived; but he didn’t fail to notice Tony glaring at him. Not in a genuinely angry way, more like a pouting child and Peter shot him a questioning look in return.

“Well, aren’t you even gonna ask me?” Tony said irritably.

“What?”

“What I got you?”

“Uh?” Peter gestured around the whole room. “You kinda let me live here? Not to mention the whole, oh I don't know, multimillion dollar suit and and the internship of a lifetime thing?”

Tony let out a small noise of frustration, though he made a concerted effort not to snap at the boy. The boy truly couldn’t have expected him to have got him nothing. Then again this was Peter, who thanked Steve for every meal, always insisted on paying for things out of his wages and never once asked for anything that wasn’t a basic necessity - other than a pet or a sibling of course, and Tony wasn’t about to provide either of those. “That doesn’t count and you know it you little- ugh, just open this.”

Peter rolled his eyes slightly as he accepted the envelope; and what emerged was a provisional driving license and the teen’s face lit up for the seventh time that morning (god all this smiling was getting exhausting). “Oh cool! Really?! You’re gonna let me- wow! Thanks dad!”

Of course Peter sprang up and hugged him with enough force to suffocate a baby elephant. He’d been begging Tony to let him learn to drive for ages and Tony knew that it would be a valuable skill to have under his belt - considering the kid had already had a stunt at it unsupervised and that the need to make a quick getaway was likely to occur again in the future. Plus it would be the perfect opportunity to spend some more one on one time with his favourite person. “I’m gonna teach you, figured it would be a bonding experience-“

“You really do listen to me huh?” Peter said quietly, his voice sounding dangerously thick as he got a little choked up and Tony couldn’t deal with it - that wasn’t even the kids real gift. God, if Peter was going to get emotional over that, Tony wasn’t sure he’d be able to handle going through with the plans he’d made to presume the boy with his actual present. But was thankful he’d have back-up for that and May has already told him countless times that he wouldn’t let him back out of it.
“Of course I do, otherwise I would’ve spent a shit ton of money.” Tony said neutrally, not trusting his voice not to waver on him if he gave a more emotive response than that. He ruffled the boy’s hair affectionately as Peter skipped over to show the picture Tony used to Nat; who immediately started laughing at his scared expression in said photo- the one in the boy’s passport.

“You didn’t already have a license?” Clint asked ignoring when Tony rolled his eyes at the obvious question.

“Uh uh, there was never any reason to get one. We live in the city and running a car is expensive so.” Peter shrugged. “Besides I never needed to.”

“Except when you stole that car.” Tony chuckled.

“That was for a good reason-“

“You did what?!” Steve exclaimed, his eyes flaming alarmingly which made Peter give out a sheepish chuckle as he ducked behind Thor.

“No yelling on his birthday, save it for tomorrow- I figured it was time for some proper lessons so you know what you’re doing next time.” Of course there was the worry for Tony that Peter would lose dependency on him but he’d still have Happy drive him all the time; and he really did need to know how to drive in case of emergencies. Besides, he didn’t have to worry for a while yet, he hadn’t even seen how good of a driver the kid. Knowing what an anxious perfectionist Peter was it could be a while before he could even drive. “Plus once you get your citizens license we can work towards your agent one.”

“My agent one?” Peter asked questioningly, after he placed his newly gained precious items inside the box lovingly provided by Thor.

“Oh yeah, the real fun stuff. Obstacle courses and shit.”

“Oh my god that’s dope! Really?!” Peter said excitedly. He’d witnessed other agents training on such courses and it looked so freaking cool. And dangerous- but to a teenage boy with a love for action movies those emotions were one in the same thing. “Can’t we start with that-“
“No. But you’re a quick learner and I’m an amazing teacher, we’ll have you road ready in no time.”

“This is gonna be so fun.” Peter grinned and launched himself at Tony again before dealing out hugs to everyone else, even Nat; out of courtesy he went to use his hug coupon.

“Nah it’s your birthday, you get a freebie- come here Curly.”

“Can I get dressed yet?” Peter giggled when he realised he wasn’t the only one still in his night clothes.

“Nope. Food first.” Tony smiled, poking the boy in the side making him giggle more. God he would never tire of that laugh and he fully intended to get as many laughs out of the boy that day as possible- after the obligatory embarrassment fest was over, of course.

“Okay now can we feed the child?” Steve rolled his eyes and rolled up his sleeves preparing to cook should he be required to.

“Since it’s my birthday does that mean I get to pick?”

“Duh.” Tony rolled his eyes. He already had Happy on standby to get whatever ingredients or fast food the kid required.

“And I get a free pass to make it as unhealthy as I want, right Steve?” Peter asked sweetly, but there was just a hint of mischief hidden behind that angelic look.

The blonde squinted at him. “Just this one time.”

Peter nodded militantly already having a response. “Buddy’s spaghetti.”

“What does that even mean?”

“From Elf? Don’t tell me you’ve never seen elf.” Peter shook his head disappointedly when Steve
and Tony gave him blank stares; Nat moved to show them what the child was talking about, but Thor and Bruce looked more than excited at the promise of an insane sugar fix.

“Peter that’s disgusting-“

“Birthday! Free pass!” Peter cried triumphantly as the three sweet-tooth's moved around the kitchen; which made Tony grin. Of course the promise of sweets had finally brought Peter around to the idea of being fussed over- it’s not like his dad had been trying to persuade him for weeks that he was worth all the attention or anything. Nope. Just throw in the idea of causing himself to go into a coma when his body wouldn’t produce enough insulin- then he was on board.

Steve had a face like thunder the entire time as Peter made what could only be described as the most diabetes inducing mess he’d ever seen. The idea of pasta for breakfast alone was enough to make him near catatonic- but the addition of the pop tarts was the absolute last straw for him. “There is no way you guys are eating that.”

“Oh yes we are.” Bruce said fiercely as Peter giggled.

“You’ll die.” Steve gawked as Bruce took a shot of maple syrup. “I doubt even Thor is gonna survive this and I’ve seen the man eat fourteen bags of Starbursts-“

“It was seventeen actually Steven!” Thor corrected him.

“It’s okay Steveo, you only have to witness this once a year.” Clint laughed, patting the soldier on the shoulder, though he too steered well clear of the monstrosity the other men had made.

“Twice.” Bruce said through a mouthful of mini marshmallows. “So making this again on my birthday.”

“About that- I realised something.” Peter said thoughtfully, gaining everyone’s attention. “I’m not the youngest Avenger.”

“Peppers pregnant?!” Thor screamed making Clint almost choke.
“No!” Tony yelled back.

“Wait is she?!” Peter asked with way too much hope in his voice for Tony’s liking.

“She is not! And if even she was- which she is not - like I’d have another kid be a superhero- good god no- no more superbabies. One is enough-“

“I’m not a baby I’m sixteen-“ Peter started smugly but Tony shot him a look.

“Don’t even start with that.” Tony grumbled. He didn’t care if Peter was sixteen or sixty he reserved the right to refer to him as Spider-Baby and all the other variants of infantile nicknames for the rest of their respective lives; and no one, let alone Spider-Baby himself, was going to revoke that right.“Where were you going with this?”

“Oh!” Peter shook his head slightly remembering his original point. “I’m not the youngest- Hulk is.”

Bruce quirked an amuses eyebrow at that. “Peter I’m almost the same age as your dad.”

“Yeah, you are, but Hulk is only 13.” Peter nodded, gesticulating with his forkful of breakfast spaghetti.

“He’s made up of my biological mass so he’s the same age as me..”

“Physically. But mentally he’s only had consciousness for 13 years. And that explains why he was out of control for the first two years- terrible twos and why he’s been a little rebellious lately. He’s a teenager now.” Peter had never really come into contact with Hulk, all the adults had made sure of that, but he’d certainly been making more unprecedented appearances recently; and from what he heard the creature certainly had the mentality and temperament of a child.

Everyone looked kind of dumbfounded and bewildered by the kids observation; other than Bruce who looked as though he was having some sort of existential crisis.

Still they all quickly recovered. Once Peter was finished devouring his diabolical meal he asked
once again; “Am I allowed to put people clothes on now?”

“You probably should, everyone’s gonna be here in a minute.”

“...Everyone?”

“Hehehe.”

“Dad what did you do..”

“I didn’t do a damn diddly thing. Now go put people clothes on.”

To say Peter was, again, overwhelmed when he came back out of his room a while later was an understatement.

Everyone meant May, Ned and his parents, MJ, Pepper, Happy and Bucky- of course. But there were also several familiar faces that Peter had not been expecting in the slightest; the maximoff twins and Vision as well as Shuri, T’Challa and Scott. Wow Tony really must love him if he allowed Scott to enter his house; though of course he wasn’t allowed out of Tony’s sight and when he was, he wasn’t out of Happy's sight. Then they were joined by Sam and Rhodey later that afternoon; Sam almost giving Peter a heart attack when he yelled for the boy to stand to attention suddenly- taking Peter back to his training days as he followed orders immediately out of pure reflex, which the man found highly hilarious.

“Dad what happened to keeping this casual? You said no party.” Peter laughed, he wasn’t truly mad- how could he be? He was so ecstatic to see everybody, some of whom he hadn’t seen in months. The room was filled with people he once idolised (well he still did just in a different way) and they were all there to see him. He’d never felt so..so appreciated. He’d never had so many people care that he even existed let alone bother to turn up to wish him a happy birthday. It was surreal and heart warming and humbling and- and- well it was a lot, okay?

But did he cry? No he did not. Not yet anyway, there wouldn’t be any tears until much later in the evening, when he had a little more privacy.

And hey, he finally got to introduce Ned to Shuri..if you uh, catch my drift.
“Hey, the lights are on there’s no music and there’s no alcohol, I kept my promise.” Tony grinned, though Pepper had agreed to let him have one shot of Dutch courage later when he and May sat down to give Peter his main gift. “It’s not a party. It’s a gathering.”

Peter quickly acclimated to the somewhat nerve wracking environment, running around greeting everyone with equal enthusiasm—though of course he had to start with May. He practically lifted the woman off of the ground and he no doubt would have done had he not been so conscious of injuring the already fragile lady—who was up and walking unaided by the way. Already amounting to be the best birthday ever just for that very fact.

“Ooo- happy birthday, Cookie!” May beamed as she squished Peter tightly for all it was worth.

“You made it! And you’re walking- look at you go!” Peter grinned, taking a step back for May to show off her new recently relearned skill before launching another hug on her. “And oh my god— you guys, you dicks! You said you couldn’t- sorry Steve- you said you couldn’t see me today!”

Peter turned accusingly to his two best friends who smiled back at him. “Yeah and you fell for it you idiot, like we wouldn’t see you on your birthday.”

“Yeah idiot. And here’s your present- but you’re not allowed to open it until later, okay?” MJ said authoritatively and Peter nodded taking the package from her.

“Aw, hey you didn’t have to-“

“I know I didn’t, but I did so shut up.” She cut him off.

“Well you can open mine!” Ned announced, butting into the conversation in typical third wheel fashion that even Tony could admit was impressive.

After another round of gift giving (Peter feeling even more awkward and overwhelmed and just generally having a sense of ‘oh my god what is my life’) Tony pretty forcefully suggested that the teen introduced his friends to the rest of the agents currently habitating the room (who had all been made aware that Peter’s identity was still a secret to MJ, so Spidey talk was on the down low). Obviously May and the elder Leeds were able to mingle intermittently, as adults do, but it was very clear that Ned was about ready to piss his pants with excitement; so Peter took his dad’s advice and helped facilitate what was basically a meet and greet for the hyper teenager.
MJ was a lot more cool and reserved but Tony expected no less from the girl at that point—though he did notice his demeanor change when meeting one particular guest; and he certainly couldn’t say he was surprised.

“MJ Shuri, Shuri MJ.” Peter gestured somewhat awkwardly to both girls, who hugged each other hello and engaged in a bit of small talk before, once again, Ned burst into the conversation; allowing MJ and Peter to slip away and enjoy a moment of semi privacy in the busy room, as their overly confident friend made a minor fool of himself.

“So, that’s Shuri.” MJ hummed thoughtfully, glancing over to the other girl with an unreadable (at least to Peter) expression.

“Uh huh.” Peter was surprised she remembered the name he’d only ever mentioned her a few times; because he noticed (after like five times) that MJ’s mood always seemed to sour after he brought the other girl up. Though of course the oblivious boy still had no idea why.

“She’s pretty.” MJ said, her voice a little tighter and higher pitched than usual. But once again, the boy with super sensitive hearing failed to pick up on yet another sign from the girl. When Peter failed to respond she pressed on. “Don’t you think she’s pretty?”

Peter shrugged, having never given it too much thought. “I guess.”

In the background Tony was cringing trying to gesticulated to his clueless son as he overheard the exchange between the two teens. Pepper smiled fondly as Tony literally facepalmed. “That’s so not how you deal with girls Pete.”

Pepper looped an arm around her partner’s waist, pulling him close to her so he could hide his face in her shoulder; hoo boy the second hand embarrassment was strong. “He’ll get there eventually. I’m sure he’ll learn a few tips and tricks from his dad.”

“Whatever do you mean my dear?” Tony smiled turning her around so they were face to face and kissed her gently- to which Peter started dramatically gagging, as per due course.

“Get a room!” Scott called from the couch causing everyone to giggle.
“This is my house. They’re all my rooms I just happened to let you in for once.”

Everyone socialised for a while, mostly ogling and commenting on all of the photos printed on the walls. Peter could have died; May was acting as the curator to the embarrassing museum that was Peter’s early years, telling the room all of the stories that accompanied each photo. “May please-“

“Oh come on honey, this is tradition remember?”

“Oo speaking of which, you reminded me.” Tony smirked slyly and slipped out the room; the way he crept away made Peter’s heart race. God knows he couldn’t handle anymore surprises; his heart was beating overtime though that could be due to the fact that MJ just held his hand. Only for a few seconds whilst she dragged Peter over to one of his baby photos for a comparison, which she and Shuri has orchestrated (so MJ did like Shuri? Peter was getting mixed messages but maybe that’s because it was never about Shuri you dumbass-), but still.

Only what came next wasn’t a surprise at all, Peter had just hoped his father had forgotten about one tradition. Of course he hadn’t, the man had been itching to partake in this particular activity since that blasted box had come into his possession moths previously.

“Okay.” Tony stood up and clapped before rubbing his hands together excitedly. “Video time.”

Peter’s eyes immediately went wide and he shook his head adamantly. His dad had to be kidding. “Oh god no, Tony please-“

“Oh god yes Tony please.” Nat grinned.

“Video time?” MJ asked amusedly looking at Peter’s rapidly pinkening face.

“Ohh MJ doesn’t know?” Clint smirked. “You’re in for a treat.”

“Soooo much blackmail material.” May grinned as she wrapped an arm around Peter’s shoulders, practically dragging him towards the couch.

“May!” Peter stared at his aunt in betrayal.
Peter was absolutely horrified, this could not be happening. Oh but it was and no one was about to let him leave. Everyone lined up on the couch and those who couldn’t fit sat scattered on the floor in front of the mammoth television, that was about to project Peter’s entire life story up until his teen years. Please god someone kill him.

He couldn’t even get up. He had May seated to his left, Tony on her other side (though he intermittently got up and stood behind Peter around the other side of the couch), MJ on his right and Steve seated in front of him; who had promised to grab Peter should he try and make a run for it. MJ made it pretty obvious that she wasn’t going to let him make a break for it either because she held onto his arm, looping both of hers around his, locking him in place. Yes Peter, because that’s totally why she did that, no other reason at all. Despite her reasoning, Peter definitely noticed just how much it made his tummy flutter- though he tried to put that down to the anxiety of what was about to come.

There was no way his family were really going to do this to him. He wasn’t going to make it to seventeen because he was going to die from embarrassment. No like, literally die. Some of those videos should never see the light of day and here they were, about to watch them in front of literally nearly every person Peter cared about or respected. Yep. He was going to die.

“Everyone got their popcorn?”

There was a rousanding chorus of ‘yes!’ around the room and Tony grinned, winking at his son; who looked about ready to commit murder, or fling himself out of the window- either way Tony was loving the reaction he was getting. Ah, parenthood, you gotta get your kicks somewhere. “Over to you then, Mrs. P.”

With that May grinned, being the one in current possession of the remote. “So! It all started on August 10th, 2001-”

Chapter End Notes

Also if y'all have any specific requests or ideas for the baby videos- lemme know! I've got a few ideas written out already but this is a perfect opportunity to force some fluff or embarrassing stuff in there, lmao.
The Baby Tapes

The videos were mostly in chronological order, so of course the first one was in the hospital room just after Peter was born. The camera panned around to Peter's mom in the hospital bed holding a bundle and Peter’s dad (assumedly- it could have been Ben) sitting beside her.

“So how does it feel to be a dad?” Okay so it was Ben behind the camera.

“Oh Ben get outta here with that.” Peter’s mom laughed but she didn’t seem too upset about it.

“Lemme look at the little fella.” The camera moved around the bed, zooming in on the bundle; revealing the tiniest baby that Tony had ever seen outside of an incubator, with plumes of light brown hair sticking out from the blanket he was curled up in. But surprisingly the newborns eyes were wide open and he was staring intently at the camera being thrust in his face- with a pair of very familiar brown eyes. It was crazy, that baby was so obviously Peter- at least to Tony he was. Maybe that was some kind of fatherly instinct because no one looks like themselves when they’re first born; but Peter did, right down to the furrow-browed confused expression present on his little face. “Hi there bright eyes. Wow he’s awake ain’t he? Dude you were only born like, twenty minutes ago, why ain’t you sleepin’? I’m your Uncle Ben- I’m just like your daddy except waaay cooler and I’m gonna be your favourite person ever-“

“Okay now, don’t start with that. He was born less than an hour ago and you’re already trying to indoctrinate him.”

“Gotta get em while they’re young Richie.”

Peter’s dad rolled his eyes and stood up, holding his arms out to take the bundle away from his brothers line of vision. “Gimme my boy.”

Everyone else surveying the footage chuckled slightly but Tony felt...odd. That weird jealousy panged up in him again and good god- he didn’t understand it. It was illogical and irrational and irritating- but no matter what he told himself he wanted to be the one holding that baby. Never before in his life had Tony felt what was only referred to in mom coffee circles as ‘broody’ but he wanted to hold that baby so badly. It was an almost physical reaction, like he could feel the weight of the minuscule newborn in his arms and he so desperately wanted to. He wanted that baby to have been his from the start and it was jarring how much he reacted to the short clip. Peter was his boy despite that man on the video who got to hold him first. His.
He hated being so highly emotional in general but especially when he was sitting in a room full of close friends on a day when he was supposed to be happy. And he was happy, he was happy to be spending the day with everyone all for his son’s sake- and he was especially happy to be embarrassing said son- so why couldn’t he get over that stupid jealous streak?

It was just watching the tapes. Moments he’d never get to spend with his son that he felt he should have, that he wanted. And let’s face facts, he always got what he wanted. Other than from his own father Tony had rarely ever heard the word no. But all the money and power in the world couldn’t buy him anymore time, couldn’t buy those early years with Peter back; and couldn’t buy any more childhood. Tony had missed everything.

While Tony has his silent internal conflict the camera on screen panned around to see a young May sprinting down the hallway, running right past the correct hospital room only to have to run back. She burst through the doors, her hair a wild mess, looking as though she’d been dragged through a hedge backwards. Clearly she’d been at work when she got the call about Peter’s arrival and she looked completely frazzled. “Oh and here’s your auntie May.”

“I missed it!” She cried looking to be on the verge of tears when she looked over to blue blanket clad infant.

“Well, you are always late.” Her husband chuckled behind the camera and she shot him a look of disdain as she eagerly crossed the room to steal hold her new nephew.

“It’s not my fault he came early! I told you to cross your legs until I got here!” She pouted, directing that last part towards Peter’s mom who was trying her best not to laugh- likely from the pain from just well, you know, giving birth.

“That’s not how it works, May.” She laughed. “He didn’t give me much of a choice.”

“Yeah, he wasn’t waiting around, apparently someone was very excited to get here. Better early than late though, huh?” Peter’s dad chuckled handing the infant over.

“Well I would have preferred some more warning, I wouldn’t have minded him being a little late.” Peter’s mom grumbled from the bed. “It was a rather unannounced arrival. A month and a half early is a little excessive.”

“Oh my god you’re so tiny- why are you so tiny?!” May cooed, barely speaking above a whisper as
she held the tiny baby close to her chest.

“Yeah Peter, why are you so tiny?” Clint asked a present day Peter, who responded by kicking the archer in the back.

The adults on screen went to discuss some of the details surrounding Peter’s birthing story and the teenager cringed. “Okay, do we need to watch this part? I just ate.”

“Oh don’t be so immature, I wanna find out if you were breach or-“ Sam chimed in, relishing in the crimson blush that was rising to the boy’s face.

“Okay- May!” Peter huffed looking angrily towards his aunt.

“Fine, fine, fine.” She laughed, skipping forward to the next video. Fortunately for Peter, she really wasn’t the best at technology and skipped way too far, over several clips of a very young Peter—namely ones of him getting his first bath and other such private moments. “Oh shoot I went too far, how do I make this thing go back-“

“No no, here is fine.” Peter said quickly as the footage paused on what could be assumed to be a six month old Peter being fed in his high chair. Well, being fed was an overstatement because the baby was wearing more than what he was eating; it was all over his chubby cheeks, covered the entirety of his bib as well as being in his hair and splattered all across the table top of his high chair. And the baby couldn’t look more pleased with himself as he slapped designs into the sauce with his little hands.

The video depicted one of the Parker twins, looking incredibly frustrated as he attempted to spoon feed what looked to be spaghetti into the baby’s mouth. But every time the adult moved the plastic spoon towards the infants face, baby Peter ducked away, giggling, causing more food to go cascading over his clothes.

“No wonder he’s so small- do you think you could get some of the food into his mouth, Ben?” Came the voice of Peter’s dad behind the camera. Man, it was a good thing the brothers named each other frequently or May would’ve had to spend half the time pointing out who was who.

“I’m trying but he’s more interested in finger painting right now-“ Ben grumbled but he was cut off by a splat of spaghetti to the face that the baby threw. Ben froze as Peter and his dad immediately started giggling wildly, and the man turned deadpan to the baby. “Oh, you think that’s funny do
“Oh my poor Petey-Pie! What has nasty uncle Benny done to you?!” Peter’s mom rushed into frame, scooping the messy baby up, laughing hysterically at the state of the kitchen.

Teenager Peter froze when he felt his female friend turn to look at him.

“Petey-Pie?” MJ grinned cruelly, drawling out each syllable as she watched her friend’s face turn redder and redder. She whipped her phone out. “Definitely changing your contact to that.”

“Don’t you dare!” Peter cried indignantly, attempting to grab the phone away from her; but she was quick, tickling his exposed side, causing him to flinch away giggling (which Tony noted, sounded nearly identical to his infant self).

“Too late!” She grinned. “Petey-Pie. I love it- you sound like a My Little Pony character.”

“Uggghh- I hate youuu.” Peter whined pulling a couch cushion up over his face.

“No you don’t, you love me.” MJ said confidently, wrapping her arms around the boy’s neck and forcing him to hug her back. Tony watched the exchange, sharing glances with the other adults- seriously, his son was fucking hopeless. How couldn’t he take a hint? The teasing, the increased bodily contact, the slight possessiveness. It was adorable how clueless he was, but god his son was a fucking idiot. Though apparently he’d inherited that trust from his birth father, if what was going on on screen was anything to go by.

“Can you say DaDa? Petey look at me- can you say DaDa?” Peter’s dad was crouched beside the toddler, who looked slightly older now, probably closer to a year old, mouthing the word dramatically in an attempt to get the boy to copy him; however Peter was more content to continue blowing bubbles, babbling to himself and slamming the two wooden blocks he had together. “This boy has the attention span of a goldfish- Petey look, keys!”

As soon as the man started jingling the car keys the baby looked up at him and attempted to grab them; getting increasingly aggravated when they were pulled out of his reach, letting out little whines of frustration. “Yeah, that’s right, we like keys don’t we? You can have them if you say DaDa.”
“How’s that working out for you Richie?” Came a laugh from behind the camera which caused Peter’s dad to shoot a dirty look at his brother. “Bribing him already.”

“Shut up Ben.” Peter’s dad stuck his tongue out at his brother before turning his attention back to the toddler- who had already attempted to crawl away and play with something else. Obviously the boy’s parents hadn’t had Peter diagnosed with ADHD at such a young age but honestly, looking back at the footage it was obvious. He pulled baby Peter back by the seat of his onesie, which the toddler whined indignantly about, in an attempt to get him to keep his focus. “Why don’t we try Mama? Can you say Mama?”

The other brother joined in. “What about Ben? Can you say Ben, Pete? Ben is just one syllable- that’s totally easier than DaDa!”

“B-b-b-“ Baby Peter looked up and briefly looked as though he was trying to move his mouth. The two men held their breath but Peter soon gave up and started crawling towards the front door when the handle jiggled. The baby squealed excitedly when May appeared in the doorway.

“Hey men!” She called out, holding a couple bags of groceries. She set them on the table as she went to retrieve the baby crawling towards her.

“Hey May.” The twins called, though they certainly weren’t expecting a fourth voice to join in the conversation.

“May May!” Peter cried out and started making grabby hands up at his aunt when she rushed over to him.

“Did he just-“

“Did he-“

“Petey you did it!” Ben cried out, still behind the camera. “I got it on camera! His first words!”

Back in the living room Peter was cringing but smiling at the same time as May grinned proudly. She made a show of pinching the boy’s cheeks. “I’ve always been your favourite huh, cookie?”
“Ugh stop that!” He sighed but made no attempts to smack her hands away as he would with anyone else. After sixteen years he’d learned that May wouldn’t stop no matter how much he protested but that didn’t mean he had to enjoy it.

“He’s a May-May’s boy.” Tony grinned too, joining in on the torture as everyone chuckled at the boy’s expense.

“That is so adorable—“

“Shut up!” Peter huffed irritably. Everyone else took their turns teasing him, but the teens eyes were transfixed on the screen. He recognised the clip that was about to play and oh hell no. “Oh no, oh no- not this one May no!”

Peter attempt to launch himself at his aunt and retrieve the remote from her hands, but Tony grabbed it quickly as stood up, retreating behind the couch out of the boy’s reach. Peter then tried to hop over the back of the couch and adult hsi father instead by Steve, having happily waited on the sidelines, grabbed the boy’s ankles, forcing him to stay seated.

“Guys please this one is so-“

But Peter was cut off by the video playing despite his protests; as Richard Parker panned the camera around a doorway, leading into a small bathroom where a toddler was clearly in the midst of potty training. “How’s it going in here kiddo?”

“Out!” The two year old lipsed, waving the hook that he was ‘reading’ (it was upside down) angrily at his parents; clearly not happy about the interruption. “Pwivacy!”

“Oops! Sorry, I forgot!” His dad laughed along with Peter’s mom as they shut the door to allow the toddler more ‘pwivacy.’

Teenage Peter let out a strangled scream into his designated pillow as the room full of people all laughed at his younger self. “Why would you record that?!”

“To embarrass him on his sixteenth birthday.” Shuri laughed and MJ reached over to high five the other girl.
The next video wasn’t any better. It was a three year old Peter running stark naked around the living room, giggling wildly, as Ben attempted to chase the boy down after a bath. All current Peter could do was cover his bright red face with a pillow and cringe, muttering repeatedly; “I hate my life.” At some point during his attempts to get away from the shame he hid his face in MJ’s shoulder and now it was the girls turn to turn a nice shade of pink.

“For a life so short there’s a lot more footage where that came from, youngling.” Thor grinned, gesturing to the time stamp in the corner of the screen. The god was right, at this rate they’d be spending a majority of the afternoon mocking Peter- and it’s totally not like Tony planned for that to be the case or anything..hehehe.

“He still does this you know, but now we have Hulk to chase him down.” Tony smirked at the naked toddler streaking around the Parker’s small apartment.

“Tony shut up !”

Once again the video progressed to another shot; this time back in the Parker’s kitchen, where a playpen had been flipped upside down. On top of the pen were stacks of books, leaving the toddler inside of it trapped inside to form a mini prison.

This time it was Peter’s mom behind the camera. “Richard honey, care to tell me why our son is in a cage?”

“Well darling, your son is in babyjail because he was trying to give daddy a heart attack-“

“Well, nothing’s changed there then.” Tony mumbled tapping his arc and giving Peter the side eye; to which the teen gave him a sheepish, apologetic smile.

“-by climbing up the railings on the balcony!”

“Oh Pie, you just got off of parole! You’re lucky I have bail money.” Apparently bail translated to hissing the boy’s father- But surprisingly, Peter’s mom didn’t look the slightest bit concerned about that information and moved to free her child from ‘babyjail’. “He’s just adventurous! Aren’t you my little Spider Monkey?” She cooed bouncing him slightly and making the boy giggle.
Everyone, bar from MJ, snuck a glance at Peter then; oh if only Peter’s mom knew how right she was. And much like MJ, Tony was totally changing his phone contact to that.

“He’s a little shit.” Peter’s biodad murmured bitterly as he attached another baby gate, stacked on top of an existing one, to the back door that lead onto their balcony.

“Richie don’t swear!” Peter’s mom scolded, covering baby Peter’s ears.

“Oh come on, he only says May-May, Puppy and Book.” And if those three nouns didn’t sum Peter up Tony didn’t know what did.

But of course, just like the vindictive little bastard he grew up to be, Peter had to go and prove his father wrong. Truly, nothing had changed. And in the sweetest voice possible, the toddler cried out; “Shit!”

“Petey no! That’s a no-no word!” The boys mother looked horrified then furious as she turned back to her partner. “Look what you’ve done now!”

Peter’s dad ran his hand over his face. “Well, fuck.”

“Duck!” Baby Peter ‘repeated’.

“Richard!”

“Hey that one was fine he just said duck!”

“Peter you’ve always had a potty mouth huh?” Steve said, jokingly shaking his head with disapproval.

“Hey it’s not my fault, clearly I get it from my dad.” Peter laughed, as did the rest of the room..except Tony.

Tony only felt that familiar stab again, that one he felt that time Peter said ‘real dad’, that one he
felt whenever he thought about Peter rejecting what he and May had planned for later. He found himself gripping Pepper’s hand tightly, who began gently rubbing his back as he made a mental effort to control his breathing. He’d been a nervous wreck for days and luckily his partner was more than aware of it, so there was no need for him to voice his concerns out loud. Fortunately, everyone else was too distracted to notice his odd behaviour.

“Are you ready for your first day of school?” Ben asked cheerfully as he panned the camera around to a sobbing four year old Peter.

“N-n-no.” The small child sobbed clinging to his aunt’s leg. He looked absolutely pitiful, and absolutely identical to his teenage counterpart; seriously, in recent months Tony had convinced himself that his son was growing up far too quickly and had changed tremendously in the short time he’d known him, but Peter looked exactly the same. The only thing that had truly changed was his height and the addition of two front teeth.

“Come on buddy! It will be fun! You’ll get to learn lots of stuff!”

“I can learn stuff heeeeeeere!” The child whined, attempting to duck further behind his aunt. “I can read books- I don’t needta go to school!”

“You’ll make lots of friends.” May supplied hoping to sweeten the deal and wrangle the small child out of the door- but he wasn’t having it.

“No I won’t!” Both current and 2006 Peter said at the same time. “I don’t want friends, I wanna stay here!”

The footage jumped slightly until after Peter’s tantrum, though he still looked decidedly teary and everyone watching the screen cooed when the little boy rubbed his eyes and tried to smile for May to take a photo of him in his school uniform. The small family went to make their way out of the apartment and it was obvious from the POV way Ben was filming he’d forgotten to turn the camera off before their departure. Just as Ben went to follow May and Peter out of the door the woman called back- “Don’t forget his bear!”

“Oh yeah.” Ben hummed and walked into the little boy’s room, grabbing the familiar bear off of the boy’s bed. “Can’t forget Natasha.”
“NO!” Teenager Peter screamed and jumped to grab the remote off of his dad who was laughing hysterically. It took a moment but he managed to steal it off of him- mostly because his dad was crying with laughter and had lost any ability to fight him off. “ALRIGHT MOVIE NIGHT’S OVER!”

Nat was just grinning at him. “Peter I must say I’m flattered—“

Peter was redder than Tony had seen him in a *long time*. “That’s it. I’m going to kill myself. Sixteen years, wow never thought I’d make it this far- it’s been a good run, for bye!”

As Peter attempted to leave the room, dodging around the bodies sitting on the floor, Nat reached out hugged his legs, preventing that. “You’re so cute.”

“She wasn’t named after you!” Peter cried shrilly trying to shrug her off without revealing his superstrength to MJ.

“Suuure—” T’Challa said sarcastically, smirking slyly at the teen and making a show of winking to his sister.

“She wasn’t! Nat wasn’t even famous back then! It’s a *coincidence!*” Peter growled, still covering his face with his hands. If only he had his birthday candles in front of him now he’d have wished for the earth to open up and swallow him whole.

“Natasha Bearmanoff.” Bucky muttered; he was mostly muttering it to Sam but of course everyone else overheard and that was enough for Peter to run out of the room.

“Thanks for stopping by everyone- I’ll see you later! Except I won’t because I’m gonna go drink some bleach- but thanks for coming!”

It took a while of coaxing (if coaxing means having Steve and Thor forcefully carry him) but Peter rejoined the group and they continued watching more embarrassing videos of the boy; including, but not exclusive to, the boy losing his first tooth, the various and many messes he made with a variety of household products (Tony’s personal favourite was the shaving cream incident) as well as the kid dancing and singing along to random television shows.

All of them were very adorable and very bittersweet for Tony, who after watching the clip of May
reading a very sleepy five year old to sleep, had to take a break. And by had to, he literally had to if he didn’t want the rest of the household seeing him blinking away tears. So he stood and retreated to the kitchen, acting as though he was fixing himself a cup of coffee though really he just wanted to face away from the rest of the group for a while. He was trying his best to keep it together, he really was but all he could think about was just how unfair it all was.

It wasn’t fair- he wanted to have that little boy for longer. Yes, okay, Peter was still fairly dependent on him and he still needed a lot of support and guidance and love- all of which Tony was more than happy to provide for as long as the boy needed. But the reality was, Peter wasn’t going to need him. Not for much longer anyway. He only really had two more years before Peter was a man and was gonna go off and do his own thing; which he wanted for him, of course Tony did. He couldn’t wait for Peter to go off an accomplish everything he ever wanted out of life, he was so proud of his boy and his potential- that kid was going to change the world, but if only Tony had met him sooner. If only Peter had been born his, so Tony could’ve been the one reading him stories and teaching him how to ride a bike, how to walk and talk, all of it.

Tony had never even considered being a parent before he met Peter almost two years ago and now Tony was wishing he’d been there for the whole hog. He wanted the sleepless nights and the diaper changes and the tantrums (okay in fairness he’d experienced all of those with teenage Peter but that wasn’t the point-), all of it. It almost hurt to watch those videos, all the moments he missed out on and he felt sickened by himself; how could he be so possessive? How could he claim to love Peter if he was resentful of the boy’s happy upbringing just because it happened without him? Why did he always have to make everything about himself? It was Peter’s day, not his- Tony this is not the time to make things about yourself-

Pepper, of course knowing her partner, could sense him spiralling. So she went over to comfort him and make sure Tony didn’t go trying to take his one shot of alcohol early, or worse. Slipping away into the kitchen to try and talk him down, Pepper wasn’t the only one who noticed Tony struggling, but May too. And of course both women had discussed keeping an eye on the man as they knew the kind of emotional rollercoaster they’d be going on that day; given the nature of their plans for later than evening also.

“Come on, the next video will make you feel better I promise.” May whispered with a large grin on her face as she and Pepper each grabbed one of Tony’s hands and lead him back into view of the tv.

Tony allowed himself to be pulled back over, noticing how his son was currently seated on the couch; MJ was half hugging him, leaning into his side with her arms around his chest and Tony bit back the urge to fist bump him. Oh yeah, the teen definitely needed a lot of guidance still- how could he not tell that she liked him and that he liked her. Thankfully Peter was totally oblivious to Tony’s mixed emotions and turned his head to smile brightly at his as dad walked back over. “You’re not allowed to make fun of me for this next one, a’ight?”
“Oh so I can make fun of the rest of them, Petey Pie? Good to know.” Tony smirked coolly, ruffling the boy’s hair as he leased over the back of the couch.

“Not what I meant.” Peter sighed but there was no bite in his tone.

The grainy footage panned around to Peter, looking a little older this time. His front teeth had grown in, leaving him with a cheeky snaggletoothed grin that he’d later get braces to correct (another thing Tony regretted was including a dental plan in the boy’s contract, the gappy smile was too cute). He still had his signature wild mop of hair and this time, he was covered in grime from ‘working.’ His uncle once again was the one filming and if the time stamp in the corner of the screen was anything to go off, it would likely be one of the last times. 2006, not long before the man would succumb to his illness, which made Tony feel even worse for the jealousy he’d been experiencing that morning..shaking it off he tried to focus his attention on what was happening on screen as the man began talking. “So Peter, what do you wanna be when you grow up?”

“Tony Stark.” Peter said automatically without hesitation, making the room chuckle fondly. The answer shocked Tony slightly because he wasn’t even Iron Man at that point, he was just a run of the mill inventor. Okay, maybe not run of the mill, but most people wouldn’t expect a six year old to care about such things. Then again, this was Peter, he’d never exactly followed the crowd in what he was meant and not meant to do.

Tony found himself looking over to his son who was smiling back at him, even if he did look slightly embarrassed. Okay..May was right..finding out that he’d been such a huge part of his son’s life for that long, even before he met him, that really did make him feel better. Stupid ego.

“That’s a person not a profession buddy.”

The child rolled his eyes, or at least he attempted to; he hadn’t quite gotten the hang of it so he looked like a bad actor in a pantomime. “Then I wanna be like Tony Stark.”

“Not like your uncle Ben?” Ben chuckled as the six year old shook his head adamantly, curly hair bobbing side to side. “And why not? I’m an engineer too, ya know.”

“I don’t care about cars, I wanna build cool stuff.”

“Cars are cool!” The older man frowned when the child simply shrugged and continued to dig through his box of parts looking for something in particular. “Okay- What kind of cool stuff?”
“Like this!” Young Peter cried excitedly pulling out what looked like a rudimentary rendition of one of Tony’s proton blasters; which everyone assumed was purely decorative.

Then it sparked. Oh dear.

“...Peter what the f- heck is that?” Ben caught himself, his voice sounding sarcastically calm.

“It’s like what Tony Stark has! They showed’ed it on TV last year! Mine doesn’t make that laser thingy though..” For a moment the little boy looked disappointedly down at the creation he’d made before his face lit up again. “Mine makes fire!”

“Okay! ‘Nuff of that!” The adult said quickly, calm facade fading ever so slightly as he removed the glove from the child.

“Awww Ben please? It only makes a little bit!” The crazy curly haired six year old attempted to bargain.

“Let’s save the pyrotechnics for when you’re big enough to reach the fire extinguishers, eh? We’ve talked about this pipsqueak.” The man laughed and ruffled Peter’s curls; only leading the adults in the room to wonder just how often the boy had tried to play with fire for that conversation to have occurred more than once- and for his uncle not to be overly phased by the interaction. Peter had said his uncle died when he was six so what on earth had he been doing in kindergarten? “You know for a kid who’s anxious about everything you sure do like fire a lot.”

“It’s pretty!” The kid cried defensively as he attempted to reach the high shelf his fire hazard had been placed on.

“Yeah well so’s your aunt.” Ben commented as May walked into the room; the woman rolled her eyes at the camera and dodged around it to kiss her husband. Everyone awed slightly and Tony wrapped May in a one armed hug when she became slightly misty eyed at the interaction; once again feeling guilty. May must’ve been having an even more bittersweet time watching the tapes, he ought to have been more conscious of that.

“Ew! But she’s a girl!” The elementary schooler cried and began faux gagging in a way that was far too reminiscent of his teenage self.
“You don’t still think girls are ‘ew’ do you?” Now it was Peter’s turn to have an arm wrapped around him, as MJ snaked her arm around his shoulders, smiling slyly at him. The boy felt his mouth go dry and he began to stutter uncontrollably.

“Well no, I mean, I’m- im friends with you aren’t I- ha- I just, well, I don’t know.” Wow. Okay that was..that was bad even for Peter. When had his stutter gotten so bad?

“Smooth, P. Real smooth.” Ned hissed, giving his friend a sarcastic thumbs up. He then returned his focus back to the screen and perked up excitedly. “Oh! This one’s my favourite! Mostly because I’m in it.”

“Oh Christ- I hate this one May.” Peter turned giving his aunt a look of pointed disdain. “You said you deleted it!”

“I’ll skip over that part- but the bit where you give your little speech is so cute!”

“That is the part.” Peter hissed through gritted teeth trying to jog his aunt’s memory.

“No it isn’t, it’s- oh wait yeah you’re right.” She cringed a little bit and have Peter an apologetic smile.

Once again before Peter could fully intervene, the footage was already rolling; showing what looked to be a school play. Tony couldn’t recognise what on earth that play was meant to be but he certainly did recognise two little boys in the front row. Two little boys dressed like...trees? Or maybe they were meant to be little green goblins? Tony had no idea but all he did know was that they were adorable. If he could go back in time he’d certainly be adopting baby Ned too because look at this little chubby faces.

“Aww Ben look at him!” A young May cried from beside her husband, apparently jostling him in her excitement of the camera shaking was anything to go off of.

“May, those pants are way too big for him.” Ben clucked his tongue as he zoomed in on Peter pulling his pants up repeatedly.
“I think he might’ve swapped costumes with Ned.” She giggled. On stage Peter looked very clearly nervous as he peered around the crowd, his eyes darting back and forth and his little face impossibly pink under the bright lighting; and good god he was so cute. Tony wanted to run up and hug the kid, save him from his stage fright. What was even cuter was how the younger Ned held his hand and pointed out the boy’s family to him. As soon as Peter spotted his aunt and uncle in the crowd he smiled for the first time since he got on the stage and began waving wildly - which of course made May wave back. “Hi baby!”

After seeing his parents Peter looked a lot more relaxed for a while as the preschoolers began singing and dancing about something. The plot of the play was still very unclear, the only thing Tony noticed was that so far every child had a speaking role and was forced to be centre stage at one point. Which made sense, of course, plays designed for six year old weren’t known for their theatrical prowess and most students parents would want their little angels to have a main part; so levels of talent or ability went out of the window during casting. But who was Tony to be so critical of the production - look at his little green guy go. Rather than being resentful Tony was suddenly grateful that Peter’s uncle had the forethought to capture all the pivotal moments in the little boy’s life because that way he didn’t truly miss anything.

And he didn’t miss how younger Peter’s movements changed from just trying to keep his pants up to...something else.

“May does he look...alright to you?” Ben asked after another moment of younger Peter shifting around uncomfortably.

“Ben shh! His parts coming up soon.” May said excitedly, disregarding the man’s concerns.

She was right, Peter’s part was coming up, but unlike the other children he didn’t walk up to enter stage by himself. Instead he walked up with Ned, who seemed to be dragging his smaller, shyer friend behind him, and the pair spoke their lines together.

The pair weren’t synchronised at all, Peter being a beat behind and stuttering the entire time, but Ned didn’t falter and continued to encourage his friend to speak despite stumbling over his own tongue. Tony watched as the teenagers watching the footage shared their secret handshake and he was immensely happy that his son had found such a good friend to get him through his formative years. He certainly wished he had a friend like Ned around when he was growing up.

But still, he found himself concerned about just how much the little boy on screen was moving around. It wasn’t just nervous jitters, Tony could swear he recognised that little dance. Mostly because he saw it on a near daily basis and it hadn’t evolved much in ten years. Oh no.
The rest of the guests could tell what was happening too and started laughing as Peter pulled up his cushion shield again. “Guys shut up.”

Apparently a younger May had finally caught on to what was happening too. “Oh dear, I forgot to take him to the bathroom before he went up.”

“Yeah, you think? I’ll go get him.” Ben chuckled as May scrambled over his lap and started running up towards to stage to retrieve her nephew before he fully embarrassed himself. Obviously the other parents in the audience were clued in on the situation also, a few of them chuckling when Peter’s dance became even more obvious; and one little kid also on stage yelled out.

“Mrs. Archer! Peter’s gonna pee himself again!” It was another little boy..that Tony found he recognised too but he couldn’t quite put his finger on it.

Luckily (or unluckily for Peter) Ned helped Tony pinpoint exactly who the other child was. “Ugh Flash was always such a dick-“

“Edward, language.”

The boy bowed his head shyly. “Sorry, Momma.”

“That’s Flash?” MJ and Tony said in tandem, both with equally disgusted looks on their faces, making an already refaced Peter sink further into the couch.

“Yeah.” A few of the other people in the room asked who Flash was, and Peter was forced to kick Ned when he went to answer. “Just some kid at my school.”

“He looks like a little rat-“

“Mick, not today, okay? You know that-“ Peter then went in to whisper to his girlfriend and she nodded in agreement to whatever he was saying.

“Fine.” She sighed and leaned back into him.
Like Tony needed more of a reason to hate Eugene Thompson; the kid had been picking on his boy since they were practically babies. Oh Tony couldn’t wait for the time where he could intervene, he couldn’t fucking wait.

The last video was one that Tony could never had anticipated, and honestly left him feeling a little frazzled. It started off normal enough, Peter was considerably older than he had been in the previous videos and was wearing an Iron Man helmet he’d been wearing in the previous Halloween tape. And of course now May was the one recording as it was just them left.

It was hard to tell how old Peter was as the kid didn’t grow all that much, thank god for the timestamp and date in the corner. February 2011, so Peter would’ve been nine. Cute.

“You excited Petey?”

“Yes!” Came an echoey voice from inside the helmet.

“Where are we going?”

“To the e’spo!” Aww, the kids speech impediment came out again on the word expo- Wait, expo? What kind of expo would a nine year old be going to, especially wearing a-

That date..Tony recognised that date..and he recognised the outfit that little boy was wearing too.. “Holy shit.”

Everyone turned to him. “What?”

But Tony was too busy gawking at Peter. “That was..that was you?”

Peter just grinned at him and nodded, repeating their first interaction together back at the man. “‘Nice work, kid.’”

“You- you never told me that! Why wouldn’t you tell me?!” Tony was aghast. That little kid who
stood up against a droid ten times his size because he thought his toy proton blaster would save him- *holy fucking shit that little idiot was Peter.*

The teenager just shrugged. “Figured you’d find out eventually.”

Of course that was Peter- the only kid who’d be *crazy* enough, who’d be *brave* enough to do something that *stupid* - “You could’ve died!”

“I’m sorry what’s happening?” Clint asked looking around at the others who had equally confused expressions on their faces (except Rhodey and Happy).

“But I didn’t.” Peter shrugged. That had been a defining moment in his life for sure; the day he decided yep, he was gonna be a superhero. But honestly he hadn’t told Tony because he figured he wouldn’t remember him; after all, how many little kids had his dad met and potentially saved. Of course the moment had meant a lot to Peter but he assumed that for Tony it was merely a fleeting encounter. It was kinda nice to know that the actions of his stupid nine year old self were memorable enough for Tony Stark to remember him.

Had the room not been so densely packed with people, Tony would’ve hugged the kid but he decided to save that for later. It was a slight mindfuck to realise that he’d actually met Peter as a little kid, albeit very briefly; especially after spending the entire morning wishing he’d had the chance to..

There were still several videos to go through, mostly of Peter’s various academic award ceremonies and a montage of photographs; but there was significantly less footage of the boy’s later years as May was fairly inept at using the camera (thankfully in Peter’s mind). Once the videos were done it was pretty late in the afternoon so everyone decided it was time to eat and go back to conversing amongst themselves. Overall it was a very calm affair, just as Peter had wanted- though personally he could’ve done without the movie marathon. What he was enjoying though was how close he was currently sitting with MJ on the couch.

And he wasn’t the only one enjoying it either. Every time the two teens giggled amongst themselves Tony flinched, wondering when his son would finally make a move on her- it was the perfect opportunity after all. The rest of their housemates seemed to be watching over the teens shoulders as well; though Steve was clearly more against the advancing romance than the rest of them. There was a few times Bucky had to grab the shoulder and waltz him away before he could interrupt them.
“Cute ain’t they?” Ned laughed, appearing behind Tony and Pepper.

“Can’t you make them get it over with?” Tony chuckled. He hadn’t expected Ned to be so aware of the situation but for once he wasn’t as clueless as usual.

“Eh, they’ll do it when they’re ready. You know what Peter’s like.” Ned shrugged and Tony did know what his son was like; referring to how stubborn the boy was and how he refused to even entertain the thought that MJ might be interested in him.

“You just make sure he doesn’t get himself hurt, alright?” Tony said seriously, making his partner smile beside him as Ned saluted him.

“Oh Tony, I take my job as third wheel very seriously.” Ned illustrated his point by running over and jumping between his friends on the couch; inadvertently punching Peter in a spot no man should ever be punched.

“Ned! You fuc- ahh!” Peter whimpered, leaning forward and cupping himself protectively.

“Eh shut up you baby, why don’t you ask M to kiss it better- OW!” The pair quickly dissolved into fighting which ended when the hair pulling started and Bruce inserted himself in the middle of it. By that point Ned has already achieved his goal of making MJ move to the other side of the couch and he turned to give Tony the thumbs up.

Though Tony thought the scene was hilarious, he was filled with dread when May looked over to him. They’d been waiting for an opportunity for Peter to be separated from his friends so that they could talk to him about his actual birthday present.

“Go ahead Tony-“

“I uh, no.” Tony shook his head, trying to remain outwardly calm as he cleared his throat. “No, not yet. I don’t think it’s the right time.”

“It’s never going to be the right time.” Pepper said, jumping in to back May up but it was too late; Tony was already backing away slipping into Sam and Pietro’s conversation.
Tony did this several more times before eventually Pepper got sick of Tony trying to evade the situation. Peter was on his was back to the living room after using his bathroom and Pepper caught him before Tony could intervene. “Oh honey, Tony and May wanted to talk to you.”

Peter shrugged initially, not growing suspicious until he noticed May dragging his dad out of a group of people. “Uh, did I do something?”

“Not at all sweetie.” Pepper assured him, kissing him on the cheek briefly before she went to take Tony’s place.

Then it was just May, Tony and Peter standing in the hallway. “Uh..” May pushed Tony a little further forward, forcing him to speak. “Right. Come here kiddo.”

Peter ducked under his dad’s arm that was outstretched for him and looked up quizzically at him. Okay..he was definitely acting weird but he allowed himself to be led. “What’s happening..?”

“We still haven’t given you your birthday present yet.” May said cheerily, following closely behind.

“Yeah you did?” Peter said confusedly as he was led into Steve’s office (an interesting place to hold such an important conversation, admittedly, but it was the only private space currently).

“No, your main one honey, this one’s from both of us.” May smiled, coolly as anything as Tony was practically vibrating with anxiety.

“If you want it of course.” The man added which confused Peter greatly.

“Why wouldn’t I..this feels like some kinda intervention.” Peter chuckled but Tony still looked incredibly nervous. In fact, Peter had never seen the man look so flustered, the way he was shuffling with an envelope he had in his hand; he looked like Peter had when he was forced to read his report aloud to the class.

No sooner than Peter drew that comparison Tony turned to May, looking ready to bolt from the room. “May I don’t know if I can do this--“
But the woman grabbed his hand and pulled him (with more strength than her small frame would have you believe) back to a sitting position. “Tony just give it to him.”

“Okay kiddo but before you read it I just..” Tony cursed under his breath, hanging his head for a moment as he caught up with his shaky breathing. Once he had somewhat regained his composure he sat up straight again, sighed and gave Peter a weak, forced smile as he handed over the envelope. “I want you to know there’s no pressure. You don’t have to do anything it’s just..just an idea.”

Peter nodded slowly, both because he was confused and he was trying to settle the man’s nerves. Only once he opened the envelope and started reading the documents inside did he understand his father’s trepidation. Peter sat in silence for a few minutes, rereading the paper to make sure he wasn’t imagining things; and in that time Tony went from anxious to absolutely panicking. The man was bouncing his leg so violently that it was shaking the table and May put a hand on his knee to steady him.

Peter blinked a couple times and drew a shaky breath before raising his eyes off the paper in his hands to look at the two adults seated in front of him. “...you..you wanna adopt me?”

“Well, yeah but that doesn’t mean I don’t- look, you know I already see you as my son anyway but for legal purposes I thought-“

“You want to adopt me?” Peter repeated in the exact same tone, blinking slowly. The boy’s expression was blank and Tony truly felt like he was about to vomit.

“Yes. Yes, Peter I do.” Tony answered simply in response to the yes or no answer Peter clearly wanted. There was another moment of silence and Peter’s expression didn’t change. Tony glances to May who didn’t look nearly as concerned as he felt. He’d fucked it up. Hed rushed this, they asked Peter too soon and now the kid didn’t know how to say no- he’d made Peter feel uncomfortable and pressured and oh shit, Shit, SHIT- “Is..is that okay?”

Peter didn’t respond. Not verbally at least. He stood up and ran round the other side of the table, almost tacking Tony out of his seat with a bone crushing hug; and just like that, all of Tony’s fear melted away and- oh hell no he was not about to cry. “Okay so I take that as a good sign?”

“Y-Yeah- I mean- yes of course that’s okay I-“ Peter laughed shakily pulling away to face the man. That’s when he cut himself off to look at his aunt. “What about May, where will that leave you with the whole custody thing?”
“Well I’m your legal guardian but Tony can file for joint or sole custody as your parent once the legal proceedings go through.” May said calmly. She understood that Peter was simply asking logical questions and it was in no way a reflection of how he felt but oh boy, Tony did not see it in the same light.

Tony began rambling quickly again, worrying that the boy was starting to change his mind; he wanted to be absolutely clear that the kid could say no if he wanted to. “You don’t have to pick Peter. It’s not a one or the other kind of deal—“

“Nah I’m not worried about that I just wanna make sure I’m in both wills.” Peter grinned brightly which made Tony visibly sigh with relief.

“You’re such a brat.” The man shook his head though he found himself chuckling. Thank god he’d recently repaired his arc because his heart was about ready to burst out of his chest.

“Your brat. Soon to be your anyway.” Peter laughed shakily and started looking over the papers again. “You’re really serious?”

“Of course I am. I- we’ve been talking about it for a while now.”

“But like- this is serious, Dad, like what if you—“

“Don’t start. There aren’t any what ifs. Nothing that could ever happen would make me regret this decision.” Tony said seriously, his voice remaining strong and steady instead of wavering like it had been.

Okay now it was Peter’s turn to try and not cry; and he was doing a much worse job at it than his dad. “You really want me? Like, forever, not just until I’m eighteen?”

Tony’s voice wobbled uncharacteristically and despite ok of his attempts to remain calm on the surface he felt his eyes prickling with tears. “Of course I want you. And yes forever, that’s the biggest reason I wanted to make it legally official. That way even when you’re an adult you’re still tied to me and not just in a legal guardian way. I love you Peter, so much and I had to find a way to show you that I’m not going anywhere.”
“I don’t…I don’t wanna c-cry.” Was all Peter could think to say as he brain melted.

“Me either.” Tony laughed brokenly and gestured for the boy to come in for another hug. “Come here.”

There was a few minutes of silence as the two men embarrassed each other, that was only broken when May not-so-surreptitiously tried to sneak a photo of them; she only managed to capture the look they both gave her when she got caught. An identical look of disdain and she just smiled. “What, it’s a big moment I figured you’d wanna capture it.”

After having a long moment to compose himself Peter sniffled and wiped his face on his T-Shirt. “What about my name?”

“What about it?”

“Well, would I have to change it?”

“No you wouldn’t have to unless you wanted to.” It had never occurred to Tony until that moment. But he suddenly found he wanted the boy to take his name. He was his son, he wanted people to know that and view him as his son- emotionally he wanted that even though he knew that probably wasn’t practical, at least not yet. And he didn’t want to ask the boy to, it was his decision and he couldn’t sway that either way it wasn’t right. It was one thing asking to be his dad it was another to ask him to change his whole identity- his name- the one thing that was his and his alone. Maybe that’s what Tony was doing anyway? Laying claim to the boy- oh got this was getting existential-

“I probably shouldn’t right? I mean until I leave school or..well..”

“Well what?”

“Go public with it..?” Peter muttered apprehensively, not wanting to come across too strong.

Tony was aware that adoption papers are public, so now doubt as soon as they went through with legalising the documents, it was bound to get leaked into the press anyway. He totally understood the boy’s concerns though, but in a way Tony was hopeful that allowing his son to reach some form of celebrity, he’d be safer. After all, people such as the MV who found out about his secret identity, would be a lot less likely to fuck with Peter if the general public knew him to be Tony
Stark’s kid. But he was getting ahead of himself, he could discuss the fine print either Peter later, right now he was just trying to adjust the boy to the idea. “That’s a decision we can make together at a later date. You could always change your name later or leave it the same, either way it doesn’t matter to me.”

“May what do you think?” Peter said thoughtfully.

“I think it’s up to you sweetie.” She smirked; trust Peter to be more preoccupied with his name than the fact Tony was asking to become his legal father.

“I wanna..I wanna keep Parker- at least, for now, or like hyphenate it maybe?”

“Parker-Stark?”

“Okay maybe not, that does sound kinda dumb..”

“No it doesn’t.” Tony assured him. He didn’t want to hear his son doubt his gut on any part of this process.

“I could take Parker as a middle name maybe? Or Stark? I don’t know..”

“Peter you don’t need to worry about that now honey.” May giggled and turned to Tony. “And you were worried he’d freak out- he’s more concerned about his initials.”

That seemed to strike a chord in Peter who nodded with conviction. “Oh yeah- come to think of it I’d rather change my initials to PS.”

“What so we can’t call you PP anymore?” Tony smirked.

“That and all the various alliterative nicknames I have at school that are just oh so hilarious-“

“Okay okay, we’ll revisit that one at a later date, huh?” Tony laughed. “You don’t have to sign anything now but if it’s something you want you have the next twenty four months to think about
“I do want it.” Peter said firmly.

“Good.” Tony smiled; now he felt stupid for being worried in the first place. “I’m ready to be your dad officially.”

“You already are.”

“Well, like you said, I want you in my will.”

“No dying talk.” Peter said giving his father a serious look who instantly receded.

“Nope.”

“So how long have you two been conspiring about this huh?”

“Since you moved in.” May laughed even though was looking at here like ‘May, no’. “For him to have permanent legal guardianship anyway, instead of temporary- but once I noticed you calling him dad, well.” The woman shrugged.

“Kept that one quiet didn’t ya old man.” Peter laughed punching Tony lightly in the arm. “So you did know what to get me for my birthday!”

Now it was Tony’s turn to shrug coolly as Peter continued pacing excitedly around the room; flickering through every emotion possibly so quickly Tony was scared he’d make himself sick. “Can I tell Ned?”

“Duh. What don’t you tell Ned? He’s your sidekick.” Tony laughed, though that was cut off when Peter tackled him again, very nearly knocking him out of his chair and sending them both hurtling towards the ground.

“I really love you.” Peter whispered into the man's shoulder.
“I really love you too.”

“Clearly.” Peter smiled and ran off to tell Ned and Tony was happy he was finally able to offer his boy the security he needed. Maybe now Peter wouldn’t be so anxious about things changing or being temporary. He was his son and nothing was going to change that- and if all he needed was a piece of paper to prove it he’d print a thousand copies of that was enough to make Peter feel safe in that fact.

Ned stayed over that night, as did his family. Shuri and T’challa did also, obviously as it too far to travel home overnight; even though Peter was pretty certain they had a very comfortable jet to travel in he was more than excited to have the next morning to show Shuri around his lab.

MJ convinced her dad to let her stay out past her curfew after Tony had a brief text conversation him; but she wasn’t going to stay the entire night. Understandably her dad wasn’t thrilled with the idea as he hadn’t met Peter or Tony. Happy would be driving her home late that evening, possibly in the early hours of the morning. Tony was more than comfortable to have all the teenagers camp out in his living room (even though Steve nearly combusted and gave a fifteen minute long rant about how the girls were to stay on one sofa and the boy’s another- much to Peter’s embarrassment and Tony’s glee) though he was a little bit nervous about Peter’s nighttime problem rearing its head. But he was comforted by the fact that Ned was there and should anything happen he knew the boy’s best friend would help cover for him. Worst case scenario Tony wasn’t above pouring a bucket of water over both of the boy’s to hide any evidence, should he wake up before Peter noticed an issue.

Eventually the various adults departed, be that to their own rooms or their respective homes and the four youngest inhabitants were left to their own devices in the front room. Peter had been worried about it being awkward attempting to integrate Shuri into their small close knit group, especially with the odd animosity he’d felt between the girls that morning, but she more than fitted in. Hell she was already joining in roasting him from the moment she walked in and her and MJ were getting on like a house on fire; and gently bullying Peter seemed to be the glue that held their small circle together.

Shuri wasn’t as oblivious to Ned’s flirting as the other boy thought she was, but she entertained it and teased back; though of course not meanly. It was clear she wasn’t interested, namely because of the age difference but she was nice enough to keep the boys self esteem up.

Whilst Ned and Shuri were busy talking about something else, Peter snuck away to get changed for bed. As he was silently considering wearing..something under his Pajamas, you know, just in case- but his thoughts were interrupted when MJ appeared behind him. As soon as she cleared her throat to announce her presence he slammed his drawer shut and screamed. “Ahh!”
“Hi.” She smirked coolly.

“Hi.” Peter panted holding his chest. ‘Please tell me she didn’t see what was in the drawer, please please please-‘

“Here.” MJ held her hand out, holding the package she’d confiscated from him earlier that day. “I wanted to get you alone before you opened it. I’m not big on all that, you know, peopling stuff.”

“Me either.” Peter smiled. “You know Steve would have a fit if he found out you were in my room alone with me.”

“Well good thing Steve ain’t here huh?” She smirked and made herself comfortable, sitting on Peter’s bed. “Oh, Hey Natasha-“

“Don’t start. You leave her alone.” Peter huffed going to remove the old worn bear from her hands; but she held her back.

“Uh uh! I’m being nice! Besides, she wants to see you open it too.” MJ teased, though she was being gentle with the bear so Peter relented, sighing and sitting beside her on the bed.

“You really didn’t have to get me anything M, you know how I am with this stuff-“

“Yes, yes I know you’re awkward and don’t know how to accept nice things so just open it and get it over with already.” She grinned as Peter gave in, tearing at the paper (which was Avengers print and yes she did that on purpose).

Once Peter peeled back the paper he was gobsmacked. “Oh my god..”

“Is it the right one? I wasn’t sure I was just going off of what I remember you nerds saying.” MJ bit her lip nervously in a way that Peter found absolutely endearing- but he was too distracted by what he was holding in his hands to pay attention to the butterflies having a rave in his stomach.
“It’s- I- yes it’s the right one- Oh my god MJ, where did you find this?!”

“I have my sources.” She smirked slyly, but her attempts to act cool were thwarted by Peter hugging her. “Take it I did good?”

“You did- you did amazing!” He exclaimed, shaking his head; a first edition of the rare comic book he was missing from his collection. Him and Ned had been discussing it months ago and the girl had remembered; and she never remembered that kind of stuff. It didn’t interest her so she tended to block their conversations out or make fun of them for it. Not only had she remembered she’d spent the time and no doubt a crap ton of money to track it down- something the two super nerds had been unable to do. It wasn’t just touching it was impressive. “MJ thank you, seriously this is so- I can’t believe you remembered- I don’t- I don’t know what to say..”

“You’re welcome Curly.” She smiled, accepting the thankful hug that lasted just a little longer than all the others Peter had dealt out that day. “Oh, just so you know I touched all the pages I hope that doesn’t decrease its integrity.”

“You so did not.” Peter rolled his eyes. He could see that the sealed packet hadn’t been tampered with; so there was no way that she’d touched the pages. Not that Peter was that kind of collector anyway, he fully intended to read the comic and MJ knew that.

“I so did too. Did the ol’ lick and flick with my thumb.” She said miming the action of flipping the pages with her hand causing Peter to laugh.

“That sounded so wrong.” Peter snorted.

“Exactly.” She winked. “Who said I was just talking about the comic-“

“Oh for god- why are you like this?” Peter shook his head, covering his face.

And of course that was just the reaction the girl was hoping to illicit; she grinned and ruffled his hair before backing towards the door. “I’ll let you get changed.”

“Yeah.” Peter nodded as the girl slipped out and he changed into the least embarrassing pair of Pajamas he owed. But just as he was about to strip his door opened again.
“Oh and Pete?”

“What?”

“I’m surprised he didn’t show up today.”

“Huh? Who?”

“Him.” MJ smirked as she pointed over to the floor by Peter’s desk where Peter had Steve’s painting leaving against it. “Since you guys are such close buddies I figured he’d show.”

“Oh uhhh-” Crap. Where was Ned when he needed him? Peter couldn’t lie on the spot like this! “He uh, he did- b-but he left before you guys got here. H- he’s the one who gave it to me.”

“Little egotistical isn’t he this ‘Spider-Man’.” MJ snorted at the boy’s expression before her eyes flickered down to his waist band. “Nice underwear.”

“Ugh- get out!” Peter huffed, pulling his shirt back down to cover up where he’d just undone his jeans. Luckily she decided to leave him be as he continued to change for bed- though he chose to finish changing in his bathroom with the door locked. He elected to, forgo his last resort prevention method, as he figured he wouldn’t do much sleeping anyway. He was still hyped up on sugar from all the sweets he’d ingested, Shuri was still working on Wakanda time and Ned had a tradition of pulling all-nighters on their birthdays; so hopefully he’d be able to avoid the issue altogether.

All he did know was that when the time came, Peter really didn’t want MJ to leave. He didn’t make a show of it, of course, but saying goodbye just didn’t feel right for some reason. He wasn’t exactly sure why but as soon as she left he found himself feeling a little glum for the first time that day; at first he chalked it up to not feeling as though he’d thanked her enough for coming and for his gift- but he soon came to realise it wasn’t that.

He stayed up until gone three in the morning chattering with Ned and Shuri, but soon the pair fell asleep on him (for once he wasn’t the lightweight); and he found his mind wandering. Wandering to one thing in particular and he couldn’t get his mind off of it. He knew he ought to be thinking about the big news from his dad and May- and of course he was, but to an extent he’d expected it, at least subconsciously he had. But what he hadn’t expected was MJ to go above and beyond for him for his birthday.
She put so much thought and effort into it; and he could see on her face how nervous she was about getting it right. In fact he’d noticed she’d seemed a little nervous all day, the same way he felt whenever she was around. But now that he was thinking about it, allowing himself to really think about it, it was never a bad nervous. No it was always good. Even when his palms got all sweaty and his heart stuttered, it wasn’t like he wanted to run away.

And when she’d cuddled up to him on the sofa it felt so..comfortable. He wasn’t anxious at all, it felt right to be in such close proximity to her. He’d never felt that way around anyone before, not after such little time and not in..that way.

What way? She was just his friend, no different to Ned. Well, she- she was different to Ned, but it wasn’t because she was a girl or anything! It was just because he hadn’t known her for as long and-who was he kidding, it was because she was a girl but it wasn’t in that way. He didn’t look at her like an object, or like a piece of meat- nothing like the movies say a teenage boy should look at a girl he liked. Then again..Peter wasn’t like those boys anyway, he wasn’t into all that kind of stuff.

So that must mean he didn’t get crushes either right? Besides, he was friends with Shuri and he didn’t-

He didn’t get that way around her..Shit that didn’t support his theory at all. There was just something about MJ. There always had been. Peter had thought he had a crush on Liz but in reality he just liked her as a friend and being a boy and her being a girl- he’d assumed that’s just what it felt like. But now MJ came along and confused him- with all her laughing at his jokes and side glances, making him feel good about himself, holding his hand and..making him nervous and..making him laugh even when he didn’t want to..oh my god.

Despite it being almost four in the morning, Tony and Pepper were only just retiring to bed. They’d spent several hours up talking about the days events, mostly at how well the adoption conversation had gone; Tony was still wrapping his head around it and was giddy with excitement, so Pepper was tasked with trying to haul him into bed.

She turned to her partner just as she was getting out of the shower. “You know MJ?”

“Hmm, what about her?”

“Does she remind you of anyone?”
“Peter says she looks like some girl off of the Disney Channel.” Tony shrugged; that hadn’t been the question about the girl he’d been expecting.

“No, like someone we know.” Pepper shook her head, trying to think. “I can’t put my finger on it.”

Just as she was getting there they heard a knock at the door.

“Yeah?” Tony called out, expecting it to be anyone other than his son.

“Uh, it’s me.” Came a meek voice.

Huh, that was weird. Peter tended to ask JARVIS to ask for permission first (especially once Pepper started coming around again), then knock anyway- but tonight he seemed to want to be a little more personal.

This time it was Pepper who called out, drying her hair with a towel in the bathroom. “Was that Pete?”

“Uhm, Dad? Can-can I talk to you?” Peter called again, still through the door sounding anxious.

“Sure bubs, come in.” Tony said quickly, anticipating something bad; he assumed Peter had an accident or something of the like but when the boy came in he was happy to note he was wearing the same pajamas he’d seen earlier that night and they were bone dry. Then why did the boy look so anxious? It set his teeth on edge- was the boy starting to regret his decision after all? “Everything alright?”

“Yeah I just..uh..” Peter’s eyes flickered to Pepper briefly before they turned to the ground. He shuffled uncomfortably on his feet, his hands balling into fists momentarily as he squeezed his eyes shut like he was making a wish. Then he whispered; “Dad..I think I...I think like her..”

*Halle-fucking-lujah.*
Hi sorry for the break between updates (again, i know i suck im sorry) but I'm really glad you guys seemed to like the last chapter, it was so fun to write :)

But Tony didn’t quite react like that outwardly. He knew for Peter to be coming to him about it the boy must have been having some kind of internal conflict. “You think you like her?”

“Yes well, maybe, I-I’m not sure..”

Tony patted the bed beside him gesturing for Peter to sit down because his pacing was giving him secondhand anxiety. “Talk me through it.”

Tony knew Peter likely just needed to vent as opposed to actual advice on the subject; and he was right. Peter spent the next five minutes or so blabbering, trying to explain how he liked her- but didn’t like her, or he wasn’t sure he liked her in that way. “It just, I guess it doesn’t feel like it’s supposed to, you know? Like, like wouldn’t I know? It shouldn’t be this hard to tell, right?”

“What’s ‘supposed to’ got to do with anything? There’s no right or wrong way to like someone bud, you don’t exactly get a handbook on dating people.” Tony chuckled lightly as not to make Peter think he was laughing at him. It occurred to him that maybe he would end up having to write Peter a handbook, maybe that would make things easier on the socially awkward kid. “And I think you do know, you’re just having a hard time admitting it; or you wouldn’t be having this conversation with me.”

After his dad pointed that fact out Peter cringed. Tony was right, there was no way he would’ve busted into the man’s room in the early hours of the morning if he didn’t know, he just wanted someone to tell him he was wrong; that he didn’t like her, that it was just a phase, hell that he was too young- something. He didn’t want this, he had enough stuff for worry about with being a fucking superhero and school let alone worrying about liking his best friend. “I don’t..I don’t wanna have a crush on her dad.”

“Why not? She’s a lovely girl-“
“Exactly, too lovely. I’m just gonna get my heart broken.” Peter shook his head suddenly looking teary.

Tony frowned slightly. This conversation was heading south rather quickly and he was suspicious that it would end up with Peter talking badly about himself; after the emotional rollercoaster of a day they’d had he wasn’t sure that he’d be able to handle that. “Pete, don’t start with that.”

“Well she’d never like me back.”

“Says who?”

“Says me. She’s- she’s MJ. Have you seen her?” Peter scoffed.

“Stop that, you know it don’t like it when you put yourself down.”

“I know I just..she’s way out of my league dad. There’s no point me even thinking about it- just because I like someone doesn’t mean I have to do anything about to right? Like I can just have a crush on her from afar I don’t have to say anything.” Peter said, trying to convince himself more than he was trying to bargain with his dad. “I don’t have to say anything right?”

“No you don’t have to.” Tony watched his son visibly sigh in relief. “But-“

“Ugghh-“

“I think you should. Now that you’ve-“ Tony considered his choice of words carefully, not wanting to upset Peter by highlighting just how long it had taken him to draw his conclusion. “-come to terms with how you’re feeling, you know you’re going to start acting differently around her. She’s bound to notice, she’s pretty perceptive that one.”

“Oh god…” Peter groaned and out his head in his hands. “You’re right..But..but I can’t, Dad. I couldn’t take being rejected like that- that shit hurts.”

Tony stayed silent for a moment as thought about exactly what he wanted to say; and he knew he had to tread lightly if he wanted to avoid setting Peter off. “Okay think about it this way- what’s
the worst that could happen? She says ‘Sorry Pete, I don’t like you that way.’ Then you have your answer.”

“Exactly then it would be awkward and I won’t be able to talk to her anymore and I’ll have lost one of my best friends- you make it sound like it’s not a big deal!”

“You think MJ would let you stop talking to her purely because you’re embarrassed?” Tony quirked an eyebrow. Even Peter had to acknowledge that was highly unlikely; despite the girl being nearly constantly mean to him, he knew she valued their friendship more than anything.

“No..”

“And you think she’d be mean to you about it?”

Again Peter couldn’t fault Tony’s argument. “No..not really, I mean- she’d probably, like, make a joke out of it but she wouldn’t be m-mean..”

“Exactly. And let’s face it, now you’ve realised you like her you’re gonna act weird until it’s out in the open. You can’t keep your cool for shit.”

“Crap you’re right..”

“Look, it’s not something to worry about tonight kiddo. It’s totally your decision-“

“But you think I should?” Peter cut the man off, making eye contact for the first time since they started their conversation.

“Yes.”

Peter swallowed thickly before nodding. “Then I’m gonna.”

“What really?” Tony half spluttered. He had not expected it to be that easy.
“Really. I value your opinion or I wouldn’t have come to you. You know about girl stuff.” Peter said earnestly, making Tony’s heart swell with pride. He certainly needed to hear that after all of his self doubt that day.

They talked a little more about the logistics of it; exactly what Peter should say and what circumstances would be the most appropriate. Of course Tony repeatedly said it had to come from Peter, not him, and that he couldn’t give the boy all the answers- though he certainly gave him his opinion and wisdom on the matter, imparting as much guidance as he could. But it wasn’t long before Peter started yawning and Tony didn’t even attempt to coral to boy into his own room. He just transferred Peter from his bed to the futon on the other side of the room so there was enough room for his girlfriend to crawl into bed beside him.

And Pepper crept in not long after Peter started gently snoring; she’d retreated to the balcony whilst they had their private conversation, though Peter had asked for her input a few times. “Sleepover?” She giggled quietly as she watched her partner smooth his son’s hair away from his forehead.

“Yeah, I figured he wouldn’t sleep in the living room anyway.” Tony shrugged before yawning himself. He wasn’t too worried about Peter being self conscious about sharing the room with Pepper as well. The kid was getting better at unfamiliar sleeping arrangements since he’d gotten over sharing a room with Nat. And once again, should the need arise he wasn’t above waterboarding the kid to hide any evidence.

“I must say Mr. Stark I am very impressed.” Pepper smiled, wrapping her arms around her boyfriend’s neck and kissing him on the cheek as he sat on the edge of the bed. “That was some top class parenting you did there.”

“You think?” Tony asked, looking for reassurance. “I didn’t go too far?”

“Definitely not. You didn’t push him, you encroached him. And there’s most definitely a fine line, which you know from experience.” Pepper said sweetly, kissing him again; to which Tony just hummed in response. He knew she was referencing his father’s treatment of him and he was glad someone else could see how desperately he was trying not to be like his dad with Peter. In fact if Howard had taught Tony anything it was what not to do when raising a child. Still, in fairness, he’s taught him quite a lot in that department.

Tony still felt uneasy even though, if he was honest with himself, he had enjoyed the mature conversation he’d been able to lead his son in. “I just hope I gave him good advice..”
As it turns out Tony gave very good advice- at least by Peter’s standards; hence why the boy texted MJ the following Monday to meet up with her. It was perfect timing, Tony and the rest of the adults he cohabited with had a meeting that day that he wasn’t permitted to attend to, so he needed the distraction; and like his dad had said, he knew it was better to get it over and done with. And hey- if it went wrong, Peter still had time to transfer schools before the new semester started.

Tony had also been right about how Peter would act around the girl, knowing what he did about himself now. MJ could immediately tell something was off with her best friend purely by how jittery he was and how bad his stuttering was from the moment they met up. They elected to meet up somewhere for lunch then take a walk around one of the city parks, like they usually did; but they didn’t even make it to the restaurant before Peter stopped speaking abruptly.

“Hey so um...there...there is a reason I asked to hang out just, like, you and me. N-not that I don’t enjoy hanging out one on one anyway it’s just...well I wanted to talk to you about something without Ned being here.” Peter rambled awkwardly as they walked, sticking both of his hands in the pockets of his hoodie; which of course encouraged the girl to loop one of her arms through his.

It wasn’t an uncommon stance the pair took, in fact recently MJ had initiated the arm looping more often than not (usually Ned would get jealous and take Peter’s otherside before attempting to reenact the skipping scene from the Wizard of Oz- but that was another issue entirely); but now Peter had realised his feelings the butterflies in his stomach that usually appeared whenever the girl was within arm’s reach, were attempting to crawl their way out of his stomach and he was 84% sure he was about to throw up.

“It wasn’t an uncommon stance the pair took, in fact recently MJ had initiated the arm looping more often than not (usually Ned would get jealous and take Peter’s otherside before attempting to reenact the skipping scene from the Wizard of Oz- but that was another issue entirely); but now Peter had realised his feelings the butterflies in his stomach that usually appeared whenever the girl was within arm’s reach, were attempting to crawl their way out of his stomach and he was 84% sure he was about to throw up.

“Hey so um...god this is- okay.” Peter took a deep breath before he continued; trying to calm himself and remember all the things Tony and told him. “I um, wanna talk to you- I mean tell you something- b-but I don’t wanna make things weird because, you’re like, my best friend and it- god Uhm okay-“

“Okay so um...god this is- okay.” Peter took a deep breath before he continued; trying to calm himself and remember all the things Tony and told him. “I um, wanna talk to you- I mean tell you something- b-but I don’t wanna make things weird because, you’re like, my best friend and it- god Uhm okay-“

“Peter you look like you’re gonna pass out. Try taking a breath.” MJ said gently. For once the girl had forgone her usual uncaring facade and was finally letting her walls down enough to allow some genuine concern to show on her face. Oh god the big doe eyed look she was giving Peter was not helping-
Just say it.

Three little words.

No..no he couldn’t do this, he couldn’t-

‘You can do it Underoos.’

Fuck-

“I like you.” Peter said rushedly, making MJ visibly jump in shock; it wasn’t a huge reaction but it was enough to make Peter regret ever open his mouth. Well it’s too late to go back now, huh kid?
“I think I like- Uhm- like like you and I know it’s not reciprocated and that’s why I didn’t say anything because- it’s a crush but it’s like- my first one ever and it feels weird not telling you because I tell you everything- well almost everything- and I know I’ve been acting weird and I don’t wanna be weird so I just need to you tell me that you don’t like me back so I can get over it- I don’t wanna ruin what we’ve got going on-“

“How do you know?” MJ asked calmly, cutting Peter off. Her face was stoic but her voice and her eyes showed intrigue and amusement and Peter prayed to Thor’s dad that she wasn’t trying to hold back laughter because he would definitely be throwing himself off the Brooklyn bridge-

“I- huh?”

“How do you know it’s unreciprocated?” She asked again in the same tone, this time letting a small smile grace her face that softened her overall appearance considerably. It was a genuine smile, not a sarcastic or mean one that she usually gave.

“Because you’re- well you.” Peter spluttered shaking his head back and forth as though that was a reasonable answer.

“Meaning?” The girl tilted her head slightly, leaning against the wall and crossing her arms over her chest.
“Why would you like me? You’re I mean- you’re funny and smart and strong and you’re- you’re so like just, I mean- you can’t like me.”

“You’re telling me what I can and can’t do now?” She smirked, her usual personality shining through slightly as she chuckled at him.

“No no! I just mean you shouldn’t because I’m-“

“Good. Because you know I don’t like being told what I can and can’t do.” This time she grinned and let her arms fall to her sides. “And you’re wrong.”

“I’m- what.”

“I like like you too. I can’t believe it’s taken you this long to come to this conclusion and frankly I’m offended-“

But instead of feeling relief or happiness, Peter felt an unnerving sense of dread wash over him. “No, no M- please don’t do this.”

“Do what?”

“Lie to make me feel better.” Peter mumbled bitterly, casting his eyes back towards the ground.

“Why would I do that?”

“Because you’re nice.”

“I’m not nice. This is well established. You’re the nice one, I’m the bitch we balance each other out-“

“But you are nice. That’s why I like you. You make me feel better about myself and you always
know what to say and you’re— you’re just...you don’t have to say it back. I don’t want you to feel obligated to.”

“Peter when have you ever known me to do something I didn’t want to do out of obligation?”

“Never.” That was another reason why he liked her; she was just so strong willed. Something he needed more of.

“Exactly.” She smiled again, grabbing Peter’s hand and taking a step towards him, encouraging him to make eye contact once again. “So stop talking.”

“Sorry, I know I’m rambling I—“

“I said stop talking.”

And that’s when MJ did something highly unexpected but most definitely overdue. She kissed him.

It was brief but even the short contact was enough to make Peter’s knees buckle and for his brain to turn to mush.

As MJ pulled away Peter stared wide eyed back at her and it took a moment for his mouth to catch up with his thoughts. “Did you just— did we just- Uhm—“

“Was that too much?” MJ asked sheepishly and suddenly the tables had turned; she was the one who looked nervous. She knew how sensitive the boy is to anything remotely physical and she was terrified of having overstepped way too many boundaries with him.

But Peter managed to muster up the strength to shake his head. “No it- it was. Uhm. Wow.”

“If I’d known kissing you would make you stop talking I would’ve done it months ago.” MJ chuckled, feeling an overwhelming sense of relief that she hadn’t just fucked everything up. “Now do you believe me?”
Peter nodded slowly, swallowing thickly and blinking rapidly. “Wow.”

“You gonna day anything other than wow, Shakespeare?”

“Uhm..thank you.” Peter squeaked meekly.

“You’re welcome. That’ll be five dollars,” MJ laughed and this time Peter laughed with her as he started to recover from his shell shock. “So what do you wanna do now, Parker?”

“What do you mean?” Peter asked looking frightened; he didn’t think ‘call my dad and tell him I did it’ was an appropriate answer.

“About our mutual crush on one another.”

“I don’t..I don’t know. I really didn’t think I would ever get this far honestly.” Peter shrugged shakily.

“I was starting to feel the same way.” MJ laughed, thinking about the months of missed signals she’d sent the boy’s way. “We can take this as slow as you need.”

“Wow that hurt my ego a little. I know I’m hopeless and pathetic but damn-“

“Stop that.” MJ huffed, smacking the boy hard in the arm.

“Ow.” Peter winced. Okay, now he definitely regretted calling the girl nice. “You can’t kiss me than smack me- that’s sending mixed messages!”

“Oh honey trust me, it ain’t.” MJ smirked suggestively making Peter grimace slightly. “I’m saying we don’t have to define it. I don’t expect any of this ‘will you be my girlfriend’ shit- even if it would be cute to see you squirm and try and say it.” She grinned evilly as the boy blushed. “We can pace ourselves and do what comes naturally. I’m perfectly content with hand holding and the occasional kiss with everything else staying the same.”
“But I’m so awkward.” Peter groaned whinily. He wasn’t cut out for kissing and hand holding—okay maybe a little hand holding. And cuddling he could do that, he was a very good cuddler but he— he just felt too young to be doing— that kind of thing. As weird as it sounded— he was sixteen now, but he still felt way too immature to be doing such adult things as kissing. For once he agreed with Steve, he was too young to be dating, but at least MJ seemed to be happy to agree on that stance. There was no need for labels or anything heavy, it was supposed to be fun, right? Just enjoying each other’s company.

“Yes you are and I’m a little too forward so we balance each other out huh?” Once again MJ dropped into a softer version of herself, one Peter found it easier to open up to; proving that the girl did have a serious side. “You need someone to bring you out of your shell and I need someone to hold me back.”

The pair were silent for a moment, mostly whilst MJ allowed Peter to get his breathing back under control; but also because honestly, she still wasn’t sure she hadn’t pushed Peter too far by initiating the kiss. Even though he seemed to have reacted well to it, she was still conscious of how badly crossing that boundary without verbal consent could have gone.

“Is this actually happening or am I in another coma..?”

“No it was good I promise. I felt.. safe.” Peter said earnestly, once again making eye contact though this time he did so voluntarily. It felt nice that the girl was respecting his boundaries without mocking them, like so many other people in his life had before. MJ, despite her own personal likes, had never belittled Peter for his lack of interest in the more physical side of things. In fact they’d had several long and interesting conversations about it, so the fact that his sex repulsion hadn’t stopped her from developing feelings for him made him feel a lot better about things.

“Good. That's all I want. And if I go to far tell me- don’t ever worry about offending me, okay?” Peter nodded in response to her question but apparently that wasn’t acceptable. “I want a verbal answer Parker I’m serious. Promise me if I push you too far you’ll tell me.”

The boy chuckled slightly before holding up his little finger; which the girl raised her eyebrows at. “Pinky promises? Really?”
“They’re legally admissible in court.” Peter grinned.

“You’re such a dork. Come on, I’m hungry.” MJ laughed before grabbing Peter’s hand and pulling him out of the alley.

And she literally had to pull him the rest of the way to the restaurant because the kid was staggering like a zombie. A weight had been lifted off him so much so he felt unbalanced and he wasn’t entirely sure that he wasn’t dreaming; if the weird, lightheaded feeling was anything to go by he definitely was, but he decided he didn’t care. If this was a dream it was one of the very rare good ones and he was more than content to savour it before he woke up.

Once they sat down Peter gradually came back into himself and he managed to keep his freaking out internal, acting rather normal as they ate. Okay maybe the floaty feeling was partially down to low blood sugar because he felt much better once he ate, but also he felt..normal. It felt right, everything being out in the open and holy shit she liked him back -

‘Play it cool Parker, don’t mess this up by overreacting.’ The boy had to remain conscious and in check of himself because he really, really didn’t want to ruin what was essentially one of the best days of his life.

“Boy how do you manage to eat so much?” MJ laughed when Peter, who had long since finished his own meal, started to finish hers once she proclaimed she was stuffed.

“I’ve got a big stomach.” Peter laughed lightly; the lie made him realise that he’d essentially started dating someone without them knowing about his alter ego. Whilst part of him thought that was kind of cool, like he’d achieved full comic book superhero status, the other part of him started to panic slightly. He felt kind of..wrong for tricking the girl, he’d practically coerced her into a relationship under false pretences. What if-

No. Not going down that road. Not yet- we’ll have another talk with dad when we get home-

“Seriously, where do you put it all? I was gonna take the rest of that home in a doggy bag for my cat but-“

“Who I haven’t even gotten to meet yet!” Peter interjected, feigning offence. In fairness he had yet to even enter inside the girls apartment but he wasn’t one to be upset by that fact; considering the only reason she’d been to his house was that he’d almost died. It would be slightly hypocritical to
say the least.

MJ just rolled her eyes. “You haven’t met my dad either and trust me, neither experiences would be at all riveting. They’re both assholes.”

“Nooo- don’t call the cat an asshole.” Peter pouted but this time his upset was genuine.

“P, trust me, if you met this cat you’d understand that he *is* an asshole.”

“Then let me meet him, I can make that assessment for myself.” Peter said levelly as MJ merely scoffed. “You said your dad’s out of town right? Come on pleeeeeease? I’ll let you kiss me again-“

“You’ll *let* me? I don’t seem to remember you complaining Parker.” MJ smirked, though Peter felt her resolve weakening just a bit; she acted as though she was oh so impenetrable to Peter’s puppy dog eyes but she was already turning to putty in his hands with a little bit of whining.

“Come on Mickey pleaaaase?” Peter begged sweetly.

“It’s very impolite to continue asking once a lady has told you you can’t see her pus-“

“Don’t even finish that sentence! Don’t be gross, you know I don’t like it.” Peter huffed, crossing his arms and pouting.

“I was just kidding.”

And Peter knew that she was but he also felt self conscious; he never wanted to come across in that way ever. He could see how wanting to be invited back to the girls place when her father wasn’t there could be misconstrued as...something else and the thought made him feel unbelievably icky. “You know...you know I’m not like that.”

“Pete come on it was just a joke.” MJ said, lightly barging him but inside she felt awful. Usually her overly sexual comments earned her an eye roll or a gag from the boy at best, but she kicked herself for not being conscious of how sensitive Peter would be after- well, her kissing him. That dive into the realm of physical contact above a friendly level was already pushing the boy’s
boundaries so no wonder a mistimed comment like that made him uncomfortable. Despite her often catty and mean exterior that was the last thing on earth MJ wanted.

“Okay okay fine, I’m sorry.” She said quickly but the boy still refused to look at her. “Pete I’m sorry…”

Again Peter didn’t really respond and she was starting to feel sick. “Look if I say you can come meet my cat will that make up for i-“

“Yes! Yay!” Peter immediately brightened up, showing just how manipulative he could be when he wanted; Tony had taught him well.

“You brat. Ugh, come on then.” MJ rolled her eyes though admittedly she felt so much better knowing Peter hadn’t actually been put off by her teasing; even if he was a little prick for tricking her like that she couldn’t stay mad at him. Adorable little idiot.

As the pair walked back to MJ’s apartment conversation flowed freely, though Peter found himself feeling a bit nervous as they made their way up to her floor. He’d never been to her house before, so not only was the environment unfamiliar he also felt a little unsure about the etiquette of the situation. It seemed silly but he’d never really gone to other peoples places; bar from Ned’s (who really didn’t count since the first time he visited he was, like, five) Tony’s obviously, before Tony’s became his and that time he stayed with the Maximoff’s. All in all he wasn’t accustomed to new environments and god knows he’d never visited a girls how when her parents weren’t home; let alone a girl he’d just started ‘dating’. It was a mildly anxiety inducing moment.

“Come on, don’t be shy.” She laughed beckoning for the boy to come through the threshold as he hesitated once she opened the front door. Automatically Peter moved to take his sneakers off, not appreciating when the girl laughed at him. “You don’t have to take your shoes off.”

“It’s polite.” He shook his head. As he worked on untying his laces he peered around the room and it was massive. From the outside of the unassuming building, Peter had figured there were several apartments on each floor but it looked as though MJ and he dad had nearly the entire floor to themselves. Their modern open plan kitchen and dining area must’ve been comparable to his own back at the tower and that was saying something. “Jeez M, no wonder you get scared to be on your own in here this place is huge.”

“Coming from the boy living in Stark Tower.” She snorted before shrugging, looking mildly uncomfortable about being reminded of her somewhat childish fear. “It’s a little roomy for my liking.” She soon shook that look off though, her thoughts returning to why she’d let Peter into her
home in the first place. “Hence why we always lose that stupid cat, god I swear that thing takes
vacations or has a day job or something.”

Peter helped in search of the cat and it didn’t take long for him to spot a flicking, bright orange tail
sticking out from behind a bookshelf.

“I think I found him. Hi there~“ Peter whispered to the feline as he crouched down to be eye level
with it. The beast soon emerged from its hidey hole and started slowly stalking towards Peter,
revealing the rest of its ginger body along with bright yellow-green eyes; that stared at Peter with a
knowing, almost familiar glance. “Hey, you look just like Goose.”

Peter didn’t notice because he was too preoccupied beckoning the cat towards him, but MJ
immediately snapped her head around to stare at him. “What did you say?”

“Oh nothing he just looks like my bosses cat.” Peter hummed absentmindedly before he caught
sight of the cats tag. Sure enough the name tag reflected the same name he’d said not seconds
before. What the...okay that was...weird. Peter felt a pang of anxiety run through his stomach as the
hairs on the back of his neck tickled slightly; not in a ‘I’m in immediate danger’ kind of way but
enough to make him take notice of the strange, seeming to be coincidence he’d just encountered.

“Tony doesn’t have a cat?”

“Oh no uh, my uh, other boss..” Peter muttered quietly as the cat started to croon it’s neck,
encouraging Peter’s limp hand to pet its head. The boy shook himself off slightly and gave into the
cats demands, remembering why he was crouched down on the aloof in the first place; he wanted
kitty lovin’s. Any weird feelings he had were kind of thrown out the window when he started
petting the floof. He should have really been more cautious about strange animals after the whole
Loki thing but he didn’t intend on taking this one home with him...okay maybe he did, but he’d
have JARVIS scan him first and then a consultation with Thor.

“Huh. Weird. I guess Goose is a reference to some ginger cat show or something- fuck, Peter
careful I don’t want him to scratch you!” MJ cried worriedly as she turned around, her voice
wavering on sweet and concerned in a way that Peter had never heard before; and he found it made
his chest warm. Maybe now that they’d both opened up to each other MJ would let that wall down
and let more of her sweet soft side out. Either way, he wasn’t nearly as concerned as she was, as
the demon cat she’d described to him was currently purring and rubbing around Peter’s calves as
he crouched down to pet him. MJ was clearly dumbstruck. “What the hell? Since when do you like
people?”
She took a step forward to continue interrogating the feline but as soon as she moved towards Peter the cat hissed defensively; if he hadn’t known better Peter would’ve assumed the cat was guarding him from her. Once again Peter moved without thinking and scooped the cat up in his arms, cradling him like a baby and rocking him side to side— all while MJ looked at him like he was clinically insane. “Hey now, be nice to her she’s the one with the treats.” Peter gently scolded the cat who didn’t look the slightest bit phased.

Goose was immediately soothed as MJ backed away back towards the kitchen counter, purring in Peter’s arms happily. The girl however was vigorously shaking her head. “This is weird.”

“What can I say animals love me.” Peter shrugged. It was true he did have an affinity with them, especially after the bite. He figured they could sense he was a kindred spirit or something.

“No Peter this is like, really weird. I’ve only ever seen him sit on my dad’s lap before- and he doesn’t even like him. I’m pretty sure he just tolerates him because he’s the one who feeds him. That thing has hissed at me my entire life and now he’s jumping into your arms.”

Peter remembered Fury saying that the other goose didn’t like people much either and that Peter was lucky. Though it was another weird coincidence but he shrugged it off; he figured MJ’s hypothesis was right, that Goose was just a reference to some old show before their time and maybe the two cat’s temperament were just reflections of the character they were named after. “Then I guess I’ll have to take you home huh? You wanna come live with me? You’ll get on great with my boss, he doesn’t like people very much either but he’s got a soft spot for me too.”

As Peter continued to baby talk to what MJ had described as the spawn of satan, she was about to comment on how her dad wouldn’t like her rehoming his best friend very much; when it occurred to her that she should probably call him to ask when he was getting home. But as soon as she pulled her phone out her face fell immediately and it took Peter a moment to notice because he was too busy cooing over Goose’s ‘toe beans’.

“And I’ll give you all the Temptations you want yes I will, and you shall be one of those lazy fat contented house cats- hey, what’s the matter?” Peter asked concernedly looking over to his..friend. Yeah, we’ll..we’ll stick with friend for now. Let’s not over complicate things.

“Ugh dad’s staying late tonight again.” MJ mumbled, clearly upset and disappointed by the news. For a moment it looked as though inspiration took her, but as quickly as it came it dissipated again, making way for a sad frown. “Would you..nevermind.”

But Peter noticed and he wasn’t about to let it go. He deposited a very disgruntled Goose on the
back of the couch before walking over to her. “What is it?”

“Would you mind staying here? I just..after what happened last week I don’t..” MJ shuddered slightly, wrapping her arms around herself. “I know it’s stupid, the robbery was down the street but seeing all the lights go past when I was on my own was..a lot.”

Peter smiled sadly and put a hand on the girls shoulder. For her to be so forthcoming with that information must of meant it was really bothering her. Usually she acted so tough, so for her to be so open really upset Peter; but even though he wished more than anything that he could do something to make the girl feel better, he knew that staying the night would be out of the question, for more reasons than one. “M, I don’t think Tony would let me..be rarely lets me stay at Ned’s anymore..”

And MJ shook her head, agreeing with the sentiment. “I didn’t wanna make you uncomfortable by asking and I don’t mean stay the night like that-“

Peter blushed and shuffled awkwardly; he hadn’t even considered her question in that way because-well he wasn’t a perv and that kind of thing wasn’t on his radar. “No I know-“

“I’d never make you do anything you weren’t comfortable with Peter-“

“I know.” Peter said more firmly this time so the girl would understand there were no ill feelings about her intentions. God why did things always have to be so awkward? “It’s okay I know what you meant. Let me call him okay?”

MJ nodded before sitting down in the living room to give Peter some semblance of privacy; for what no doubt would be a somewhat difficult conversation.

Tony answered on the first ring, like he always did when Peter was out of the house; and his mouth was very clearly full which only highlighted his haste to answer the phone. “Hey bubs.”

“Hey- Tony.” Damn that was close, Peter very nearly said dad. “What’re you eating?”

A series of rushed lip smacking sounds and rustling ensued on the other end of the phone, like Tony was trying to hide the evidence. “..Nothing.”
“You’re eating Bruce’s donuts again aren’t you?”

“...Maybe.”

“You prick, he’s gonna go Hulk when he finds out.” Peter laughed as he could practically feel Tony scowling at him through the phone.

“Yeah yeah, well I’m out tonight so I don’t care.” Tony grumbled- he was out tonight? Great maybe then he would let Peter stay over after all. “What did you want? Or were you just calling to interrupt me? I’m very busy.”

“Yeah you’re so busy giving yourself diabetes when I’m not there.” Peter snorted. “Did you even eat any real food?”

Tony made a small huffing noise of discontentment making Peter laugh again; the whole exchange helped to settle his nerves slightly, but now it was clear his dad was waiting for him to actually address why he’d called in the first place. “Uhm, can I ask you something?”

“You just did.” Tony said automatically.

“Two more things?”

Tony smirked on the other end of the phone. “Sure, go ahead.”

“I know you’re probably gonna say no but, you know how I told you M’s dad goes outta town a lot?” Peter paused waiting as Tony made a noise of acknowledgement. “Well, he’s staying late again and she’s a lil’ spooked- I was just wondering if you’d let me stay over..”

Tony was skeptical for obvious reasons; especially after Peter coming to the realisation that he liked his friend as more than a friend. But maybe his boy was trying to buy more FaceTime with her to talk to her about it; he doubted Peter had the confidence to do so, so quickly after all, maybe his son was just trying to build up his courage.
That being said, Tony didn’t necessarily think that the girls house was the most _appropriate_ place to do so, especially if something went wrong. At least if Peter was out and about with the girl he could go straight home if he needed to, but abruptly leaving someone’s house- especially in the middle of the night- was messy business. He should know. “Pete you know how I feel about you staying out overnight.”

“I know, I know but I thought if you had someone camp out outside it would be okay, maybe.” Peter shyly tried to bargain. Whenever he stayed over at Ned’s Tony always had agent’s stationed outside (in fact they hung out outside all the time now, since Tony was paranoid about more people knowing Peter’s identity and potentially threatening the Leeds’ as a result).

Tony hesitated before answering. He didn’t want to outright say no, he hated saying no to Peter when the boy rarely asked anything of him- but having him sleep over at someone’s house that he’d never stayed at before (even for a kid without superpowers) sounded like trouble to him. “Why doesn’t she stay here?”

“Because her dad hasn’t met you yet.”

“Yeah and I haven’t met him either.” Tony sighed slightly. If anything he was the one who should be more concerned. Anyone would know their daughter would be safe in _Stark Tower_ with a houseful of superheroes, but Tony had never met MJ’s dad or even been to the girls house. Of course he trusted it was on the up and up and god knows Peter would be more than prepared to protect himself and MJ but- but Peter was his baby and he got anxious okay? They didn’t exactly have a good track record when it came to spending time apart.“I’d feel more comfortable if you two spent the night here, where I know you’re both safe.”

Peter lowered his voice slightly so MJ couldn’t overhear his pleading. “Dad I’m..I’m more worried about her being comfortable. I’m not just thinking about tonight, I want her to be less scared sleeping here alone in the future too. Like, you know I wouldn’t ask if I thought I’d be uncomfortable- I’d ask you to come up with an excuse for me like we talked about, remember?” Tony did remember. The code phrase the cake up with if Peter was ever stuck somewhere- both in a Spider-Man sense and an anxious teenager sense- and wanted to get home, he’d text Tony a particular set of words and the man would call him and say he had to come home immediately. “And besides- everyone home tonight, right?”

“I think Nat’s off somewhere but yeah, everyone else is here.”

“Nat is like, my biggest back up when Steve gets overbearing-“ it was true, despite her usually being the worst when it came to teasing she was also the first to jump to his defence whenever the other men in the house were being over protective, Tony included. “-do you really wanna put me through that after what we talked about on Saturday..?”
Ah. Okay. That definitely solidified the notion in Tony’s mind that Peter had yet to reveal his crush to the girl. “Yeah you’re right..”

“What about if Ned comes over too? Would that make you feel a little better?” Peter looked over to MJ asking for her approval too and she nods happily. “I still have to get him to finish his half of our literature review because I know he hasn’t done it- even though he’s had all summer.”

Tony sighed, biting his lip and weighing his options. God, he was going to regret this, he could feel it- “That sounds like a good plan bubs. I’ll send Happy round to drop you some stuff off- Ned is included in said stuff. And I’m sending your suit for emergencies, okay?”

“Thanks dad.” Peter said earnestly. “Uhm, could you pack my bag this time? A-and pick the least embarrassing PJ’s I own?”

“So you want the Sully onesie, yeah?”

“Dad-“

“You’re right, you’re right, it’s too warm for that. I’ll pick you out cool pajamas if you keep your mouth shut about Bruce’s Krispy Kreme’s, deal?”

“Deal.” Peter agreed. “Oh and, there’s uh, there’s something else I gotta tell you- b-but it can wait till I get home.”

“Peter.” Tony said warningly. That didn’t sound good and when Peter said ‘I have to tell you something’ as opposed to just saying it - it was almost always something bad or dangerous.

“No, no- it’s a good thing this time I promise! I just, I just wanna wait until I can, you know, tell you properly- anyway, I gotta go, I love you!”

“I love you too.”
Ned arrived with other stuff not long later; and Peter was happy to report when he checked his bag that his dad had indeed sent a long some of his more neutral night clothes. Though he didn’t even intend to sleep, which he knew wouldn’t be difficult since MJ didn’t sleep when her dad was gone anyway, he was still happy he wouldn’t have to spend the evening in his Monsters inc pajamas.

The teens settled in for an average evening- which mostly consisted of Peter ignoring his friends and playing with Goose. MJ spent a good half an hour or so filling Ned in on their conversation about her and Peter’s mutual crush on one another; as not to drive a wedge between the group. After all, it would be a little awkward not to keep him in the loop after everything else they’d been through together.

Luckily Ned seemed relatively unphased by the news as it didn’t come as a surprise to him; he’d been hearing about it from both sides, both MJ and Peter confiding in him. He’d just been waiting for them to get it over with. The only part that shocked him was the fact that Peter has said it first. “Cool so now I can be official third wheel? Finally. I can wear the t-shirt I had printed.”

“I’m not entirely convinced you’re joking so kindly shut the fuck up, Edward.” MJ said dryly after striking Ned in the arm.

Peter was still busy having a conversation with the cat; he didn’t really care to rehash what was already a difficult conversation for him to have with the girl but he did have matters to attend to with the feline. “I’m gonna have to call you Goose 2, buddy.”

“Reeeeeow.” The cat seemingly replied, which Peter thought was hilarious so he continued.

“Yeah I know, it’s not fair. For all I know you could be older than the other Goose, but since I met you second it makes sense.” Peter tried to explain. “I can’t cheat on other Goose like that.”

“Reeeeeeowrr.” The cat whined, seemingly more insistent that time.

“What about Goose B?”

“Reow.” Slightly less angry, more short and snappy.

“Uhhm, Goose J? J for Jones?”
“REOW—“ Apparently that suggestion was the most offensive, as though he had a different last name which he preferred.

“Okay okay, what about lil’ G? That can be your street name.” The cat purred and Peter laughed at the idea of the cat actually understanding him. “Well that settles it, lil’ G it is.”

“Stop renaming my cat.”

“I’m not renaming him it’s a nickname MJ.” Peter sassed, wielding the cat as he made his point making Goose do a series of ridiculous hand gestures. “Besides since when is he your cat? You’ve made it abundantly clear that lil’ G here is your dad’s cat.”

“Yeah yeah, potato tomato.” She rolled her eyes.

Not long after the trip ordered dinner and settle in for a movie night, MJ’s phone rang. The voice Peter overheated on the other end of the line (he didn’t mean to listen in, okay? It’s hard to control his superheating sometimes, or at least that was his excuse that time) sounded distinctly masculine. “Hey baby girl.”

“Hi daddy.” She picked up the knife she was currently holding to cut the pizza (“Why don’t you have a pizza cutter?” “Why don’t you shut up?”) and aimed it towards the two boys on the couch in a non verbal threat; she didn’t even turn around and she didn’t have to to know the boy’s had their mouths tightly closed.

“You alright? I’m sorry about tonight honey, I know you expected me home. Got caught up at work, one of the women I had working a case ran into some trouble—“

“It’s okay.” MJ cut him off, a little sharply. But Peter couldn’t blame her, he supposed she was used to her father's apologetic speeches by now and she didn’t need to know the man’s reasons. “I asked Peter and Ned to stay over so I wasn’t on my own.”

Both boys froze, expecting to hear angry bellowing on the other side of the phone but that’s not what they heard. “Oh that’s good sweetheart, tell them I said thanks for watching out for you. Have fun tonight—“
Peter relaxed which in turn made Ned relax too as he was counting on his friend with the superheating to gauge the father’s reaction; he luckily didn't seem upset by two boys being alone with his daughter thank god.

That wasn’t the only thing troubling Peter though. The man’s voice had a familiar lilt to it that he just couldn’t quite place. It was bugging him, as he knew he’d never met MJ’s dad before so there was no reason for him to recognise it. Another weird sense of déjà vu washed over him and it was starting to get annoying; only adding to the dreamlike feeling he’d been having since MJ kissed him. Maybe that was it, maybe his brain was just a little messed up after the day he’d had. It would make sense, so comforted by that idea Peter chalked up all the warning signs to that; even when Goose continued to stare at him, then glance between Peter and MJ’s phone. Silly cat.

After MJ got off the phone Peter shifted slightly, turning to the girl. “Uhh, h-hey Mick-“

“Bathrooms straight down the hall, Curly.”

“Thanks.” Peter blushed as he sped off in the direction she was pointing; thankful that she had elected not to tease him for once (man she was full of surprises that day). After relieving himself he started to make his way back to the living room, when he heard a noise behind one of the closed doors. It sounded like a book had been knocked over or something similar; and Peter noted he hadn’t seen Goose 2 since he left the living room even though the cat had followed him everywhere else. Though his instincts told him it was likely just the wind or the cat, he was still conscious of the break ins that had occurred in the girls building the week prior and the superhero in him told him it would be a good idea just to check.

He hadn’t intended to fully enter the room but once he opened the door, he had to admit he was a little intrigued.

First of all, her room was a mess which greatly distressed Peter. It wasn’t dirty, just cluttered, and he could see the remnants of several last minute outfit changes that had been strewn over the floor; which in the back of his mind thought was very cute. Resisting the urge to tidy up (which was very, very difficult) he found himself wandering around looking for the source of the noise that had drawn him to the room in the first place. He couldn’t tell if anything was out of place because, well, everything was; so instead he found his eyes wandering. And he found Goose, sitting on MJ’s desk, looking up at the wall above it. “There you are, lil’ G.”

But instead of turning around to even look at Peter, Goose continued to stare up at the wall, prompting Peter to follow the cat’s gaze. The entire wall was covered in photos, not unlike the living room had been on Peter’s Birthday, but they were mostly pictures the girl had taken for her photography class.
“What are you doing in here, sniffing my panties?” MJ smirked from the doorway, making Peter jump violently. Fuck, thanks a lot spidey senses for the warning.

He scowled at her, both for scaring him but also the crudeness of the joke. “If you don’t stop being gross I’m going home-“

“Okay, okay I’m sorry.” MJ said quickly, crossing the room to hug him from behind. Okay he couldn’t stay mad when she was hugging him, he quickly realised.

“I thought Goose was shut in here- Aww.” Peter was distracted when he saw pictures of him on the wall specifically the ones where he’d reenacted King Kong. “You printed those?!?”

“They were for a school project. I just kept the extra copies.” MJ shrugged trying to brush him off but it was obvious she’d gone through the time and effort to specifically print pictures of him; and Peter thought the way she blushed about it was very endearing.

“Uhh- I don’t think you used a Snapchat filter in your photography course work.” Peter smiled pointing to one he’d taken with the girl last Halloween, where he had allowed her to draw cat whiskers on him; and he was pulling some ridiculous expression to make her laugh, which she was unabashedly in a real genuine smile that Peter was practically addicted to.

“No I just like your face in that one.” MJ admitted with a coy shrug.

Peter smiled. “I like your face too.”

“Get a room!” Ned yelled out from the living room, chiming in on the obviously private conversation. The third wheel strikes again.

“We’re in my room!” MJ called back with a grin when they could hear and making dramatic gagging noises.

Peter then spotted a photo of MJ as a little girl; she couldn’t have been more than six, with her hair in bunches at what looked like a kids birthday party. And she was dressed up. Like a Disney Princess.
He was torn between laughing or cooing over it but he automatically went with the latter. “Oh my god you were so cute!”

“Oh shut up."

“Hey it’s only fair you literally saw all of my baby memoirs, I’m allowed to see a couple photos.” Peter laughed before his eyes moved over to the other figures sitting beside the little girl in the photo. “Is that your d-“

He didn’t actually get to finish that sentence. As his eyes wandered over the man, taking in his features, he found them all to be strikingly familiar- and his heart stopped, preventing him from speaking as he froze completely.

Surely not. It can’t be. But it was. *Fuck.*

“Yeah that’s my dad, grumpy old man. I think that’s the only photo I have of him actually smiling.” MJ sighed lightly, having not realised anything was wrong with he friend. That was until she glanced back over to him after he failed to respond further and noticed he was pale as a ghost- even more so than usual. “You okay?”

“Y-Yeah I uh- I g-g-g-” Peter tried to talk but the words got stuck in his mouth. Eventually he managed to struggle out the rest of the sentence, as he slowly and shakily backed out of the room. “Gotta pee."

“Well go on bozo, I thought you did that already.” MJ chuckled, mistaking Peter’s panic for his usual pee shyness.

Peter dashed back inside the bathroom and sat on the edge of the bathtub as his mind started racing. Surely he hadn’t seen what he’d just seen? He was imagining things- he must be imagining things- this couldn’t be happening *again.*

His mind was swimming so naturally he did the only thing he knew to do when he was in that state of panic.
Peter: Mr. Stark can you send someone to pick me up?

Mr. Stark: Happy’s outside, I’ll send someone else to watch the building. What’s wrong?


Of course back at home Tony had panicked the second he got the text from his son but he relaxed significantly when he was informed it wasn’t an emergency; of either the wet bed or superhero variety. Those were his two major concerns so now he just figured Peter was worried about the former occurring or was having some separation anxiety too. That little sick part of him almost hoped Peter was feeling anxious about sleeping away from home too but he pushed that down.

But in reality, Peter was worried about something far worse than that.

“I’m r-r-really sorry, M, I have to go.” Peter said rushedly when he reappeared out of the bathroom. He could feel himself sweating and he was mildly conscious of the fact that his friends would assume he was sick; based off his appearance and the extended fifteen minute period he’d just spent in the bathroom. Whilst that was mildly embarrassing, it also allowed him to make a hopefully less painful escape.

His hopes were dashed however when he saw how MJ’s face fell. “What? What’s wrong?”

“Nothing I just n-need to leave it’s uh- Uhm- ah-“ Fuck he’d always been so bad at lying on the spot. He’d just spent ten minutes thinking about what to say (as well as trying to remember how to breathe) why did he have to draw a blank now? And Ned- fuck Ned - he could see Peter was floundering and he didn’t jump into help like he usually did! He just sat back and surveyed the scene. Probably because he was confused and concerned too- okay maybe retract the fuck Ned statement- but still, he should’ve known by then to just lie when he needed it! Even if MJ could see through the lies it still would’ve helped!

“Did I do something?” MJ asked quietly, her voice teetering on confusion and sadness and it broke Peter’s heart; but he didn’t have time to console her fully. He had to get out of there now.

“No-no no I promise this isn’t about you I just- I’m sorry it’s- I’ve gotta go!” And with that Peter bolted out of the apartment, pausing only to give Goose a look of betrayal ‘why didn’t you tell me you little fuzzball?’
Wait shit...that’s what the cat had been doing the entire time! ‘Don’t be ridiculous Peter, he’s just a cat.’

Now Ned felt obligated to lie for Peter, now that he’d had time to process what was going on; he wasn’t exactly *good* at lying either but he’d had to learn the skill after befriending Peter. Also he could see just how upset and anxious MJ was now and he wanted to make her feel better.

“What was that about?” She asked with just a teensy bit of accusation in her tone like she assumed Ned knew something she didn’t; which in fairness was usually the case just not this time.

“I don’t know, man. I guess he just got nervous about sleeping over or something, you know how he gets.” Ned shrugged. MJ didn’t look comforted by that statement at all though so Ned felt obligated to impart just a little more information than what was necessary; and that he was sure Peter would strangle him for if he ever found out Ned told her. “Look don’t tell him I said anything but he..he still wets the bed sometimes. That’s why he’s only ever stayed over at my house. It’s only from like, nightmares and stuff, but it’s worse when he stressed and telling you he likes you was pretty stressful so..”

Unsurprisingly MJ showed very little reaction to the information on her face, bar from looking slightly relieved. “That makes sense.”

Ned felt relieved too knowing he’d just saved Peter’s ass. From what, he wasn’t certain but either he was right in what he’d just guess was going on or he’d helped keep Spider-Man underwraps, so either way he considered it a win. That was until MJ reminded him how he’d broken the bro code.

“He’s going to murder you when he finds out.”

“You’re not gonna tell him.” Ned stated darkly. “If you tell him I swear to god I’ll-“

“Never.” MJ agreed. “I wouldn’t do that to him, but you know he’ll find out.”

“Hey, he hasn’t found out you know Tony’s his dad.”

“True.” MJ shrugged levelly. That was actually rather impressive considering the two boys rarely could keep a secret from one another for five minutes. “But hey, now the lightweight is gone we can watch some scary movies.”
“Are you sure?”

“Yes! I’m pretty sure! How many super tall black guys with eye patches, who dress like someone out of the Matrix do you think live in New York City?!”

“I’d say more than one less than ten.” Tony said calmly. To be honest the question had never occurred to him and he’d never even assumed that Nick lived in the city. He thought Nick lived-well he never thought about it before. Huh. He ought to think about his colleagues on a more personal level.

“This isn’t a joke!”

“Pete what’s the big deal even if he is-“

“Dad you don’t get it I kissed her! I kissed Nick Fury’s daughter and now he’s going to kill me!” Peter screamed as he paced back and forth around the lab. He’d been a nervous wreck the entire ride over, and even once he entered the building he jumped at every shadow or noise and Tony was starting to become seriously concerned. Now he understood why.

“Wait hold on a second you kissed her? When did this happen?” Tony asked, finally showing some kind of reaction. He was torn between having a proud dad moment and being also slightly scared; the fact that he had kissed the girl changed everything. Two kids having a crush was one thing that he believed even Nick could understand but now they’d initiated a physical level and- wait a minute, fuck what Nick though Tony wasn’t even sure he was happy about this. Why hadn’t Peter told him?! And how did it go- oh god he hoped Peter hadn’t intended in hiding that from him because the mere idea broke his heart-

“T-today..well technically she kissed me but..I don’t know- that’s what I was gonna tell you.” Peter rambled sheepishly, pausing his pacing for a moment as he was distracted from his panic in order to have a pivotal moment with his dad.

“Were you okay with it?” Tony asked warily, voicing his main concern.

“Yeah- oh god yeah it was- I did what you said, I told her straight out and she said she liked me
back and the kiss was- I don’t know- it was nice but it kinda made me wanna throw up though.”

Tony allowed himself to smile at the innocent way his son was talking. “Yeah that’ll happen your first time.”

“We..we agreed not to you know make a thing of it though gonna take things slow. And she’s really good with like- how bad I am with- well you know. But she’s like, all about verbal consent and boundaries and stuff so there’s no pressure.”

“Good.” Tony breathes an audible sigh of relief that was also evident on his face. That was his biggest worry about the whole affair. “Aww Peter I’m so proud of you!”

“Thanks but- But it doesn’t matter because I’m dead- why didn’t you tell me he was her dad?!”

“I didn’t know! They must’ve protected it so no one knew who she was to keep her safe.” Tony said quickly holding his hands up. “If I’d known don’t you think I would- ‘well I wouldn’t have encouraged you to pursue a relationship in the first place’ ‘have told you? Remember when I tried to look up stuff about her dad and I couldn’t find anything?”

“You’re so high up in S.H.I.E.L.D- and you’ve worked with him for years dad!”

“He never even mentioned he had a daughter, Pete, we don’t..talk about stuff like that, none of us do.” Tony sighed and ran a hand I’ve his face stressedly. They really had to get better as a unit about talking about personal matters. Clint being secretive was one thing, his kids lived nowhere near New York so Peter was very unlikely to run into them; but come on Nick, Peter and MJ went to the same school for Christ’s sake. Tony knew that Nick must’ve known the entire time if he was anything like he was in how protective and knowledgeable he was about his daughter's social life- so why had he done this?

“But he must know I’m her friend.” Peter said aloud, mirroring his dads thought processes.

“Maybe that’s why he sent her to your school.”

“To be her boyfriend?” Peter made a weird face which made Tony huff a laugh.
“I was thinking more to protect her, Romeo.”

“Oh right yeah.” Peter blushed.

“And what happened to ‘we aren’t putting a label on it-‘“

But Tony’s teasing was cut off by another thought rushing into Peter’s head. “Wait, do you think she knows? About Spider- oh my god what if she-“

And then another voice came booming into the room, this time over the intercom which made both Tony and Peter's blood run cold. “She doesn’t. I’ll be over in fifteen minutes to talk to you gentlemen.”

The same voice Peter had heard on the phone, only now it had lost the light friendly lilt it had before; now it sounded more like the Fury Peter was used to. The cold, ominous stoic voice that Peter could now recognise as his ‘work voice’. Just like Tony did with Peter- and whilst one voice in his head was telling him how cute that fact was, the rest of his brain was screaming; “Oh god I’m dead.”

“You’re not dead, I won’t let him kill you.” Tony sighed. He wasn’t nearly as frightened as Peter was; he knew that Fury wouldn’t live up to his name by physically maiming Peter, but he had to admit he too was apprehensive. Up until ten minutes ago he had no idea Nick even had a kid, let alone did he know just how protective he was over her. Well, pretty damn protective if there were no records of her- fuck. Even Tony, through all of his experiences, had no idea what to expect. This was definitely a new one and it was nerve wracking to say the least. How the fuck was Nick going to react?

It didn’t take long for them to find out. Peter had insisted on changing into his suit under his clothes, just in case Nick shot him- and honestly Tony hadn’t even commented on how ridiculous that was because-

Well this was Nick Fury. And Peter had just kissed his daughter. Being bulletproof may not have been a bad idea.

As soon as Nick walked into the lab, calm smile on his face, Peter ducked behind Tony and literally hid.
“Evening Nick.” Tony said calmly, recognising the man’s demeanour as a casual one as opposed to a silently murderous one; there was a very fine line between the two but Tony was confident having known the man so long that it was the former. Then again, he didn’t even know the man had a kid—well, he hoped that it was the former and he’d feed into a more friendly atmosphere to reduce the risk of any gunfire.

“Evening Tony. Peter.” Nick nodded to the pair respectively, having to lean around Tony to greet the boy cowering behind him.

“I’m sorry.” Peter blurted suddenly before any more pleasantries could be exchanged; but Nick didn’t acknowledge him straight away which only sent Peter into panic mode even more.

But the man wasn’t ignoring him, he just chose to remove his jacket and sit down comfortably on the couch before he looked the boys way. “What for?”

Tony gently lead Peter to sit down as well but the kid couldn’t; he was stood rigid and shaking, side stepping every couple seconds like he was resisting the urge to get the hell out of dodge. So Tony sat instead and just steered the boy to stand beside him—within arm’s reach so he could grab him should need be. “Uhm, I don’t, I guess because, I- uh- just-“

Peter trailed off into a stuttery mess and Tony was finally able to drag him into a seated position. Luckily Nick didn’t want to prolong the torture.

“Let’s just get down to it. You wanna know why I didn’t tell you about her, Hm?” He started, continuing after Tony nodded for the both of them. “Because the less I talk about her the safer she is. I don’t want her anywhere near this shit, I’m sure you can’t both understand that.”

“Yes we can so why did you send MJ to the same school as him? Doesn’t that defeat the purpose of keeping her away?” Tony asked calmly, no accusation in his tone purely questioning.

“Honestly I sent her to your school so I could keep an eye on both of you at the same time, it just made my life a little easier. Admittedly that was a bad idea on my part, as you said Tony, if I wanted to keep the two worlds separate.” Nick sighed slightly. He made sure to speak to Peter directly even if the kid couldn’t bring his eyes off the ground to face him. “But especially just after the bite, before I even pushed Tony into hiring you, you were a secret. To everyone other than my small team of doctors and agents; you were even more under the radar than Michelle. I knew I had to keep you safe and my daughter is one of the most protected people on this planet. So it was.. economical to kill two birds with one stone. I never imagined you two would become friends because—well.”
“Watch it.” Tony jumped in defensively, anticipating some kind of comment on his kids social standing, but Nick ignored it and continued.

“But she’s always been a stickler for the quiet ones. You were quiet and nice, I’m pretty sure the first words she used to describe you were ‘innocent’ and ‘cute’.” Nick smirked which made Peter cringe; but the boy couldn’t help but feel a little flattered that MJ had mentioned him to her dad at all.

“But she’s friends with Ned too.” Tony chimed in with a laugh.

“True but we’ll consider him an outlier.” Nick grinned, confirming Tony’s suspicions that Nick was just as clued in on all of his daughters friends as he was with Peter’s.

“So you’re really not gonna kill me?” Peter asked quietly after a moment, the words catching in his throat.

“Nope. Unless you do something warrants a murder. But my baby girl can handle herself, I’d likely just help hide the body.” Nick shrugged levelly and chuckled when Peter fell back against the couch sighing dramatically; the boy had never looked so relieved it was almost comical, had Peter not genuinely believed he was about to die.

“Likewise, by the way, no offence Nick.” Tony nodded towards the other man.

“None taken. The dad speech is obligatory, I get that. But I don’t feel like it’ll be a problem with these two, do you?” Tony shook his head obviously. “Just make sure you take care of her. Buy her flowers, that kinda shit.”

Peter smirked slightly for the first time since the man entered the room. “MJ’s not really into all that Mr. Fury.”

“Well her daddy is.”

“I can buy you flowers if you like but I don’t know how that’ll help-“ Peter started but Tony flicked him; even though secretly he’s insanely proud of his sons quick wit.
Nick allowed himself to grace a small smile too. “I trust this won’t affect our working relationship, Mr. Parker?”

“No sir, no definitely not. I swear.” Peter nodded militantly. But that caused another burning question to be thrust to the forefront of his mind. “Does she know that I’m..”

“No.”

“Does she know who you are? Like job wise, really-“

“No, and she won’t be finding out. The less she knows the safer she is.”

“Right. Yes sir.” Peter nodded, agreeing entirely. He was more than happy to keep his identity a secret if he’d been ordered to by his boss; that way it eliminated any guilt factor he’d felt about lying. “Okay, well, that’s cool uhm..so..yeah, right.”

“You feeling alright?” Nick quirked an eyebrow. Now that the whole scary intimidating dad/boss thing was over he could allow himself to actually show some concern. Internally he was pretty proud of Peter. He’d expected the boy to take off running, either to his room or away entirely after he announced his arrival; but the kid stuck it out, tougher through the uncomfortable situation and the difference between that scared fourteen year old he’d met two years prior to the boy sitting in front of him now was stark. And very Stark-like.

“I uh, kinda feel like I’m gonna throw up. Or pass out. Maybe both.” Peter admitted in a slightly monotone voice. Clearly he’d spent his emotional allowance for the day and was starting to slip into robot mode. “I did kind of think you were going to murder me.”

“Not today.”

Tony took that as his cue to step in, ushering Peter up off the couch and towards the elevator. “Head upstairs kid, I’ll be up in a minute to say goodnight.”

Peter nodded and staggered off. His head is swimming and it was past his bedtime, sleep sounded great right about then.
“See you around Parker.”

“Bye Mr. Fur- Wait is your last name actually Jones or is MJ just-“ Peter started to ask, his curiosity being peaked, but the look Nick was giving him; that ‘you already know too much, if I told you I’d have to kill you’ look, soon shut him up. “Right. Never mind. Goodbye Mr. Fury.”

“Quite the little matchmaker you are Nick.” Tony clicked his tongue as soon as Peter was out of ear shot (well, as sure as he could’ve been anyway, superhearing and all that), to which Nick gave him a curious glance in return. “Well first you brought Peter into my life knowing how attached I’d get now he’s involved with your daughter.”

“Are you suggesting I pimped out a teenager.” Nick said dryly.

“Well I wouldn’t put it quite like that. A, because it’s gross and B, because that implies someone’s paying you.” Tony rolled his eyes. “I wouldn’t be mad if you had pushed them towards each other. She’s a great kid.”

“Likewise.” Nick replied curtly; though he did mean it. The thought had crossed his mind before should anyone be dating his daughter he was glad it was a kid like Peter.

“Now I know where she gets her attitude from.”

“Likewise.”
Chapter Summary

So long time no see! I apologise for neglecting this fic, but I expect updates will be a little scarce this month as I'm attempting to complete Omovember this year. But I'll still try to find the time to write for this too when I can- in the meantime feel free to give me any suggestions for future chapters and I'll get to writing them when November's over :) I apologise for the crappy chapter also I just wanted to get something down you know? The idea didn't come out how I wanted too and I intended for more to happen but bleurghhh better than not updating for another week and a half I guess..

“Come on.”

“I don’t wannaaaaa-“

“Well you gotta.”

“Why?! I hate the mall. I hate shopping.” Peter whined petulantly, flopping back down on the couch after Tony turned his back for a moment.

“I’m not the biggest fan either but you’ve had the same clothes as long as I’ve known you and all your jeans have holes in them.” Tony had been trying to buy Peter clothes for as long as he’d known him; which by this point was a long time and it was getting ridiculous. He’d bought the kid a bunch of clothes when he first moved it but a majority of them have been way too big and become pajamas or gone in the ‘he’ll grow into it’ pile...which kept getting bigger..unlike Peter..who had only grown an inch and a half in two years. Anyway- “No son of mine is gonna go around looking like a hobo.”

“But I like being a hobo!” The holes made the clothes comfy, why couldn’t Tony understand that?! And it wasn’t his fault jeans didn’t appreciate acrobatics, sometimes you just gotta do the splits, you know? All the quick changing in back alleys had definitely done a number on them.

“Forget it.”
“It’s not my fault Bruce dyed all our whites pink.” Peter huffed folding his arms across his chest.

“I never said it was.” Tony snapped. He’d had enough of an earful about that from Steve; and he’s had enough of an earful of whining from Peter. He was glad he went with his gut and didn’t tell the kid days in advance, or he was pretty sure the boy would’ve ran away.

“Then why are you punishing me?!” Peter whined again, making Tony sigh angrily. The man had been losing his patience ever since he let the boy know what their plans were for the day. “Why can’t I just shop online?”

“Because if they don’t fit it takes longer to send them back and school starts again on Monday.” Tony said for the fourth time that day already. It wasn’t even nine o’clock yet- good god.

“Not my fault you left it this late.” Peter sassed; though he ducked down on the couch to avoid the angry look he was receiving.

“I’ve been busy, now get your shoes on.” Tony growled through gritted teeth. He hadn’t meant to leave it this long either but it had been a very busy few months; near fatal accidents, missions and birthdays had definitely left very little wiggle room for back to school shopping. And in all honesty Tony had completely forgotten- which wasn’t his fault! Part of him had tried to pretend Peter wasn’t going back to school at all because the thought frightened him; both because he was going to have to readjust to the boy not being there during the day, peaking his separation anxiety since the shooting but also because now he knew where he was sending Peter back to. Back into the arms of his childhood tormentor and he was still devising a way to deal with that without upsetting anyone..And losing a lot of sleep over the issue too, which certainly wasn’t helping him to be any less snappy.

So excuse him for being a little short with his son- who was acting like a fucking five year old, might he add. No. Scratch that. He’d seen videos of Peter as a five year old and that child was angelic compared to the sixteen year old currently throwing a tantrum on his couch. “And if you weren’t so conscious of me spending money on you I could’ve sent your measurements to some tailors- you could’ve had a whole wardrobe made to your exact specifications, but oh no-“

“I don’t want any of that fancy stuff!” Peter hissed, flinching away when Tony attempted to manually put his shoes on for him.

“Exactly.” Tony deadpanned. “Then I suggested sending a personal stylist to get stuff for you ‘no way dad they won’t know what I like’- yes they would that’s literally their job . I could’ve sent them to go to the mall but now I have to spend a whole day traipsing after you- You made your bed,
“I don’ sound like that.” Peter pouted huffily at his dad’s interpretation of his voice. It was so not that squeaky anymore. “Can I bring Ned?”

Tony pinched the bridge of his nose before sighing. “Sure, so long as he’s ready in the next hour. I don’t intend to spend my entire day shopping.”

That considerably lightened Peter’s mood and he stopped fighting against Tony putting his shoes on; though he didn’t move to do it himself either. “Yay!”

Much to Peter’s delight Pepper elected to join them too and Tony drove them all as opposed to making Happy cart them around. At first he didn’t recognise the woman because she had adorned a brown wig to help mask her appearance. “I’m here to make sure he doesn’t turn you into a mini him.”

“What’s wrong with how I dress?” Tony- who now had on a fake, fuller beard and glasses, as well as a hat- chimed in grumpily.

“Nothing love, but you’re a middle aged man.” Pepper replied levelly, as not to darken the man’s mood more. Teasing could wait until after Tony had his third cup of coffee. “Peter’s got his own quirky sense of style and I intend for him to keep it.”

Peter grinned triumphantly at Tony in the rear view mirror and good god, he was so close to turning round and choking the kid- so close. If Peter was unconscious it would make shopping a lot easier- he wasn’t heavy Tony could have Ned prop the boy up while they guessed his size-

Tony’s day dream was interrupted when they actually had to start shopping; but trip started off well. At first. Peter stopped having a hissy fit when he realised Pepper was there (oh yeah, he was still his sweet little self around her and for once Tony was grateful for it) and he perked up when they picked Ned up too. Peter was also clearly pleased about having what could only be deemed a ‘normal’ family outing; as much as he despised clothes shopping with a deep burning passion, it felt nice to be doing it like a regular person. That was until they hit their first hurdle.

The very beginning of the excursion was okay, getting Peter some new shoes had been a breeze. Pants weren’t too bad either, even though the boy was slightly more particular; as in, no jeans with
more than one button, which even Tony agreed was a bad idea. Most of them would need to be altered slightly because, as Tony realised, Peter had pretty short legs (and oh boy would he tease him mercilessly when the time was right and he was sure it wouldn’t damage the boys self esteem) but that wasn’t too big of an issue- other than the fact they had to guess by Peter holding them up to himself because the kid out right refused to try any of them on. If Tony even so much as suggested Peter try the clothes on the boy started having a fit so he had to make do with Peter holding them against himself for comparison to what he was already wearing. But still, it was a manageable level of tension.

No, the problems came when it was time to pick out new shirts and jackets, items of clothing that actually had a discernible sense of style to them. That was when they started disagreeing. “What about this?”

“No.” Peter said flat out, barely glancing at what Tony was holding as he continued tearing angrily through the rack he was focused on.

“Why not? It’s just a band T?”

“Yeah, of a band I’ve never heard of?” Peter said as though it was the most obvious thing in the world.

Tony groaned, throwing his head back tiredly- drawing the attention of a few other stressed looking parents who chuckled sympathetically. Two hours and Peter had yet to agree to one item of clothing Tony had picked; he was starting to get insulted. He had an incredible sense of fashion, it wasn’t his fault the king of nerds didn’t have an appreciation of that. Seriously, for a kid who was content to walk around in rags and literal pajamas he was being very critical of all of Tony’s advice. “That doesn’t matter, but maybe you should give them a listen- it looks cool.”

“You saying I ain’t cool?” Peter squinted at the man, looking ready for an argument. In fairness Peter had seemed ready to pick a fight from the moment they got out of the car and now he was jumping on the opportunity. Tony watched as Ned slowly backed away behind Peter, retreating into a clothing rack (literally inside of it, his camouflage was actually rather impressive) and Pepper took the excuse to go and retrieve him; the woman giving Tony a very pointed look as she did so.

“I didn’t say that.” Tony said quickly in hopes of stopping the argument; but internally he found himself agreeing slightly. He hated himself for it, it wasn’t something he wanted to hear from his own brain but he couldn’t help it. He loved Peter for the little nerd he was, of course he did. He thought it was admirable that in a school full of people from middle class families with name brand clothing, he still maintained the desire to wear what he liked.
Admittedly, back when he’d first started getting serious with Pepper and she mentioned kids (when he ran away like she was chasing him with a needle, quite literally- but he was a different guy back then, okay? Anyway-) and he’d imagined himself having a son (which was very rare) he’d always imagined him being a certain way. Cool, popular- to be honest a little asshole like he’d been as a kid; and he much preferred Peter to all of the things he’d imagined. He knew none of those things meant anything now and he’d pick having a sweet, sensitive work driven kid any day of the week, it was so much better. Hell, everything about being a dad was better than he imagined. He loved Peter the way he was, even more so for the kids individuality- he didn’t care about fashion trends even now he could afford them, and Tony found that commendable. But he couldn’t help but..worry.

Not about himself, of course, that wasn’t part of it. No, even though he knew one day Peter would be in the public eye as his son, he couldn’t give a fuck about how that would impede on his portrayed image; even if the mysterious, stoic Tony Stark having a kid, let alone a cute nerdy one, would cause an insane media storm- couldn’t give a fuck. Couldn’t care less. What he did worry about was how his son’s ‘quirky,’ as Pepper had described it sense of clothing, combined with his quiet, polite personality left him even more open to bullying. Peter didn’t stand out by any means-okay maybe a bit. Teenagers don’t tend to wear collared shirts under sweatshirts on a daily basis, but Peter always looked smart. Tony thought he looked smart but he could only imagine how the other kids would pick on him for it. In a way Peter was just providing them more material to work with and no- he shouldn’t have to worry about that, but that’s the world they live in. He had to be conscious of the fact that the way his kid dressed could lead to a certain someone picking on him even more. And now that Tony seen pictures of that Flash kid he could just imagine the things that little fuck would say and Tony’s blood boiled every time..

“That’s what you mean, though isn’t it?” Peter muttered, jaw clenched and his eyes cast towards the floor; snapping Tony out of his head. The kid looked hurt. Ah fuck.

“No it..” Tony trying to influence Peter’s dress sense was no better than what the kids at school, he realised that now. Squashing out his individuality was what Flash had been trying to do for years and Peter had fought against it; who was Tony to try and undo the years of perseverance? Do what the bullies want, conformity will make it better- fuck no. Peter looked up to him a lot and that was not the kind of message he was meant to be portraying. Not to a kid with such little self confidence anyway- shit. Tony was just trying to look out for him and he’d gone and messed that up too. Why did everything have to be so fucking complicated- it was just clothes. “No it’s not, I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine, I know I’m a crappy dresser.” Peter sighed. Unbeknownst to Tony the teen knew exactly what was going through his dads head, and he wasn’t nearly as affected by his words as he made out to be. His aunt May had been trying to get Peter to wear more trendy clothing for years for the very same reason- he just didn’t care enough. He liked his geeky t-shirts and collars and hoodies. That wasn’t about to change for anyone, not even Tony- as much as he valued his dad’s opinion, he just didn’t value it as much as his t-shirt that said ‘I make terrible science puns but only periodically.’
But hey, if he played up the hurt factor he could totally get away with skipping the clothes shopping and going off to do something fun. He’d been eyeing up the comic book store for an hour now and pretending he was upset was a sure fire way to coerce Tony into letting him and Ned go off for a while.

“You’re not Peter.” Tony said, the guilt evident on his face. “I’m sorry I ever- look, whatever you pick up next I’m not gonna comment.”

A sly smirk came over the teenagers face causing Tony to instantly regret his decision.

“I like this.” Peter said seriously as he held up a Captain America sweatshirt and a red white and blue plaid collared shirt to go underneath it.

“Really?” Tony sighed exasperatedly as the teenager raised an eyebrow cockily. “Fine. Traitor.”

Eventually Peter picked out a few more shirts, the whole process being utterly exhausting as Tony realised just how insecure his son was. He’d always known Peter to be less than body confident but this was excessive. He refused to buy anything short sleeved or tight fitting. He didn’t like plain T-shirt’s because he felt they drew attention to parts of his body he’d rather not be on display. Every jacked either made him look too narrow or too broad and done even get the kid started on his height; everything made the boy look short in his opinion and Peter was very, very quickly losing what little patience he had for clothes shopping.

“I wanna go home.”

“I know, soon, let’s just try a dress shirt while we’re here.” Tony tried to bargain. He too was getting emotionally exhausted just watching Peter pick himself apart and he knew he couldn’t do it for much longer either. “Don’t look at me like that. We won’t buy you the cheap stuff but I want an idea of your size and we can go from there.”

“I don’t wanna try any clothes on Tony I’ve made that super clear.” Peter muttered stressedly through gritted teeth.

Peters getting fussy now mostly because he hates trying on clothes but also he’s hungry, thirsty and he was starting to need to pee- the trifecta of tantrums if you will. That combined with the terrible intrusive thoughts he was getting every time he looked at his body in relation to the clothes
he was picking out; he was not in the mood to play dress up. “Fine. But I’m not looking in the mirror.”

So Peter stormed off into the changing rooms with a white shirt Tony had grabbed for sizing—along with some dress pants the man had tactically handed to him at the last minute; knowing the boy wouldn’t pitch a fit and say no when there were other people around. Tony waited patiently for Peter to re-emerge but after a few minutes when the boy didn’t he started to get worried.

“Okay in there?”

“Yeah.” Peter snapped back quickly, making Tony back away from the curtained room. The boy had been struggling to get the buttons on his cuffs for ages and he was growing increasingly frustrated. Eventually he growled and threw back the curtain, demanding help before he ripped the whole thing off in anger. “Can you do these up please before I pull them off?”

Tony smirked because even when Peter was pissed off up to the eyeballs he was still polite enough to say please— but his smirk dropped quickly when he looked the boy over. Peter suddenly looked..really grown up. The adult clothing— not just the style but the fit of it; it was actually form fitting as opposed to the usual bagging clothing Peter wore that hid his frame, made him look almost taller. Where the kid had been stressing he’d slicked his hair back away from his face, also aging him somewhat and Tony..Tony hated it.

Peter didn’t look bad, not at all but he looked far too old for Tony to be comfortable. He felt himself welling up with emotion, similarly to how he had when he’d been reviewing the baby footage and he just- Nope. From now on he was happy for Peter to stick to his nerdy, childish, baggy clothing. The kid was growing up way too fast and Pepper was right; the kid had no need to be dressing up like a middle aged man.

“Why are you looking at me like that?” Peter asked, less angrily this time. The way his dad was staring at him made the already insecure teen even more uncomfortable as the man had just froze half way through helping him with the stupid buttons.

“Nothing kid.” Tony said quietly before clearing his throat, trying to rid it of all the accumulated emotion. He quickly regained his composure, after all he had plenty of practise. “You look good.”

“No I don’t.” Peter said automatically, deliberately forgetting his gaze away from the mirror Tony had just turned him to face. He looked like shit, he always looked like shit, this is why he hated shopping— and his dad knew that but insisted on dragging him out anyway.
“Yes you do. It fits you nice, now I can get this sent to a tailor for them to go off of.” Tony said, mostly to himself as he noticed Peter squirming slightly. He wasn’t sure if he was just uncomfortable with the attention on his appearance or if they needed to stop by the bathroom. Probably a combination of both, he surmised, both of which could be rectified shortly.

“Can I take it off now?” Peter practically begged pulling uncomfortably at the starched neck of the shirt.

“Sure kid. Get changed, we’ll go get some food.”

“You mean we’re done?!” Peter asked hopefully, already moving into the changing room and unbuttoning his shirt.

Tony sighed. He’d really been hoping to get the kid some more wintertime clothes but it had been a lot for one day. He wasn’t sure he could face forcing Peter to do anymore shopping- they could go out again later that year. Or rather someone else could because by god he couldn’t handle the whining more than once a year. “For now.”

“Yay!” Peter cheered and for the first time that day he sounded genuinely happy. “Can me and Ned go look at cool stuff now?”

“Sure so long as I don’t have to go with you.” Tony grumbled, feeling his own mood drop significantly after seeing Peter look all grown up. Besides, cool stuff to them meant stationary and comic books, two things Tony didn’t particularly care for. What he did care for was the coffee shop on the third floor which he intended to spend the remainder of his afternoon talking through his emotions with his fiancé. He was getting good at that, talking was starting to come more naturally to him- which was scary but ultimately better than his other coping mechanisms.

Of course after eating his body weight in Taco Bell Peter lost interest in everything else, including his dads company and begged the man to allow them to go off on their own for a while; which his dad luckily allowed. They had strict parameters they had to stick to as in how far they could go and for how long, for security reasons, which Peter had a slight issue with.

“Stay on this floor.”

“But GameStop is downstairs!” Peter whined. He’d seen an old N64 game he wanted to grab
before anyone else saw it; which he could’ve gotten online but it’s the thrill of the chase, you know?

“Not happening.” Tony said calmly, ignoring the puppy dog eyes by scrolling through his phone. He was also ignoring the disapproving look he was receiving from Pepper.

“P-please Mr. Stark?” Peter said sweetly, in a way that made Tony's heart skip a beat slightly. That little fucker . Peter had managed to muster up a perfect impression of how a fourteen year old baby faced Peter sounded, back when he used to be too nervous around Tony to speak above a whisper. That little shit knew how sentimental Tony was feeling lately- fuck. It was adorable and Peter knew it, using it to his advantage. Where had this kid learnt to be so manipulative- oh. Right.

Dammit.

“Fine. Go away.” Tony growled, staring angrily at his girlfriend who was smirking amusedly at just how quickly he’d caved. “But you stay where I can see you.” Tony added, tapping his glasses in a way Peter understood. Even if the boy went a few floors down, so long as he stayed in view of the open circle in the center of the mall Tony would be able to zoom in using the lenses to keep an eye on him.

“Yes sir.” Peter nodded and grinned before scurrying off, dragging Ned behind him.

As soon as the boys were out of earshot (or rather Peter was far away enough and distracted enough not to pay attention to what his guardians were saying) Pepper grabbed Tony’s hand and gave him that look. That fucking look that he hated because it said so much and he envied just how easy it was for her to express herself; how she could convey such complex emotions and thoughts with her eyes alone and how he fell for it like a sucker every time. He could swear she has some kind of super power.

“Talk, baby.” Pepper said knowingly, as a statement that left no room for argument. It want a request, but it wasn’t an order either- because everyone knew how badly Tony reacted to orders, especially Pepper. She was just saying what he wanted her to say, prompting him to do what he wanted to do but found oh so fucking difficult.

“I’m. Sad.” Tony said brokenly; ridiculously over simplifying it which made him cringe. He sounded stupid- god he always sounded stupid when he tried to open up- this is why he never bothered-
“Good. That’s a good place to start.” Pepper smiled. Though the words were patronising she delivered them with a sarcastic twang that made Tony relax; she was taking him seriously but not to the point that he’d be uncomfortable. It was so reassuring- how was she so good at this? Oh yeah, because she’d had to deal with him at rock bottom. Still, it was impressive and she was the only person in the known universe to possess that skill. “Keep going.”

“He’s. Growing up way too quick. It’s like..” Tony sighed and looked away; bouncing his leg as he tried to think of the right words, collect his thoughts to ensure he was converting them correctly. “It’s like what I told you about after his birthday but..different. I don’t know. I don’t like stressing him out like this. Makes me feel like the bad guy- and I know parenting is like that sometimes but...”

Tony knew what he was trying to say, he just didn’t know how to articulate it; which was incredibly frustrating to the affluent man who never ran out of things to say. For someone so quick witted he was fucking useless at verbalising the things that mattered. “He’s barely smiled all day. Everything I’ve said has been wrong, I keep making him more upset. It used to be I couldn’t do anything wrong I was- fucksake this sounds so egotistical and-“

“Stop it.” Pepper said, quickly breaking the cycle Tony was slipping into (not unlike he had to do with Peter, he noted). “You miss being his hero?”

“Not even being his hero- not in an Iron Man sense I mean. I miss..I miss when he used to look at me like I was the coolest guy in the world.” Wow. Saying it out loud sounded so lame. And it hurt to hear; making his insecurities real like that by verbalising was not an easy thing.

“He still does.”

“It’s not an ego thing..it’s just..I don’t know.” Tony trialed off sighing. That had been a lot for him and he wasn’t sure he was willing to make himself open up anymore. Not in such a public space. Letting that out had taken the edge off a little so he didn’t feel like he was spiralling anymore; but his own words had just raised more questions in his own head. He hadn’t realised quite what was going on before he said it. “I’m just worried about doing things right.”

“You’re insecure.” Pepper helped clarify, keeping her voice calm and level as not to scare Tony off with any high levels of emotion. But internally she was torn between thinking the man’s insecurities were sweet and a reflection of how far he’d come- from that man who didn’t give a fuck about anything to a father who cared if his teenager so much as disagreed with his fashion choices; or being heartbroken at just how difficult Tony was finding things.
She was leaning towards the former, as she knew where all of this was really coming even if Tony didn’t. She was pretty sure it was stemming from the man worrying about the boy going back to school without him handling the bullying issue; he was conflicted about his decision not to bring it up, so that conflict was leaking into every other decision he made, making him second guess everything. That and the whole adoption thing was weighing on him heavily- she knew he wasn’t regretting it at all but it was still scary for him.

“You don’t say.” He hummed sarcastically, his shortness not being directed at her and she understood that; having grown resistant to his lashing out over the years.

“It makes sense. I think most parents get that way when they have teenagers.”

“It’s not fair. I didn’t get as long as anyone else. I barely got two years and now he’s all grown up.”

Pepper allowed herself to smile sadly. “Honey, that’s not true.”

“I know, I know. He still needs me and he always will I get all that- it’s just..that’s how it feels.”

They went on to chat a little more, gradually shifting away from that topic of discussion as Pepper sensed it was better left to be talked about at home; but Tony already felt a bit better. As much as he hated to admit it, this whole talking about your feelings thing he constantly preached to his child actually did work. If only he’d gotten into the habit when he was Peter’s age- or rather he’d had someone to speak to then- maybe he wouldn’t be so fucked up now.

Tony had barely started on his second cup of coffee when Peter came running up to their table; nearly giving the man a heart attack before he realised the kid was smiling. “Hey d-ahem- Mr. S-

“Johnson.” Tony offered. He was in his, disguise the kid could’ve called him dad, no one would be the wiser; though he knew it was better for the kid to stick with Mr, in public, so he didn’t slip up later.

Peter gave Tony a small sour look for the reference but quickly moved on. “Mr. Johnson - do you have any change?”
Tony quirked an eyebrow; Peter was asking for money? The boy who insisted on living on his wages? Other than finding that fact odd Tony thought little of it. Just handing the boy his wallet. “Take whatever’s in there.”

“All you have is hundreds.” Peter pouted slightly and Tony just shrugged. “I meant coins. I wanted to break this twenty.”

“Why would I have coins?” Tony asked genuinely, causing Peter to give him an exasperated look. “Just change it up.”

Ned tried to interject feeling weird about accepting that much money, even though they didn’t intend to spend that much. “Sir this is too much.”

“You’re going to the arcade right?” The boys nodded. “Great, the more cash you have the longer you’re out of my hair. Bye bye.”

“Just be back here by three please boys.” Pepper called after them sweetly when they walked away looking slightly uncomfortable.

“Okay Miss~” The pair both said in unison though they cycled through a variety of names, going back and forth until they agreed on; “-Mrs. Johnson.”

Tony smirked. “Well would you look at that. That was a quick ceremony huh, babe?”

“Very. I’m glad to finally get it officiated.” She smirked back.

Ned and Peter came back by their allotted time slot; both red faced and jittering excitedly from the adrenaline rush of what was assumedly a good game session. Peter after ranting about some high score they’d beaten, attempted to give Tony a pile of notes and coins which wouldn’t even fit in the man’s hand. “What the hell is all this?”
“The rest of the money.”

“Huh?”

“The hundred. We only spent like ten dollars and I sent you the ten on my phone-“

“Kid. Keep the change.” Tony said dryly. Really? After two years and a stack of signed adoption papers the kid was still trying to pull this shit?

“But-“

“Put it in your jar.” The man said sternly, making it clear there was no room for argument; and reluctantly Peter backed away and started trying to split it with Ned.

Tony watched as the other boy reclined and his son elected to slip the cash in the boys bag the second his back was turned. It was a well established fact that Peter had a habit of doing that; like some kind of reverse tooth fairy he was constantly leaving money around the Leeds and Mays places. He also did it in the small corner stores he frequented; both as Peter and Spider-Man so a lot of the people who encountered the boy who he knew where having money troubles would find random piles of cash hidden everywhere. While he finds it admirable more than anything, Tony couldn’t help but find it a little ridiculous but he can’t stop him; besides he knew from experience how difficult some people could be about accepting financial help when they needed it- Peter being one of those people. And the kid didn’t value money he made that abundantly clear on multiple occasions.

After his little stint in the arcade Peter was in a much less snappy mood with his father and his mood only got better when his dad announced that they could go home. Silently Tony also decided that he was happy they’d never attempted shopping before because had their relationship not been as strong as it had been now, he most certainly would’ve left the kid with Ned at the Leeds.

Peter was in a way better mood by the time they got home. Thankful to be away from the crowds and the overstimulation; all the smells, sights and sounds- and most of all the giant full length mirrors that forced him to look at his own body. Gross.

But being back in his safe space made him reflect on his earlier behaviour and he felt guilty for giving his dad such a hard time. And the man hadn’t yelled at him once, even though he was being
a total brat. Tony definitely deserved some dad points for that.

So despite claiming he was going to take a nap, he rejoined Tony down in his lab after putting Pajamas on (he’d had enough of people clothes that day, okay? Who says you can't wear pjs at 4:30 in the afternoon?); he immediately ran up behind Tony and launched himself at him; tackling him in a hug. “You realise you’re the coolest guy ever, right?”

“Where did that come from?” The man laughed lightly, though inside his heart was swelling more than the Grinch on Christmas- and for once not in a medical emergency kind of way, which was a nice change of pace.

“I don’t know. I just love you.” Peter said casually; as much as he wanted to go into more depth he was drained and moving his mouth was effort. “I don’t feel like I tell you enough.”

Wow. Tony knew the kid was in touch with his emotions, being a little empath and all, but this was ridiculous. The sudden bout of affection after a difficult day, both with Peter’s attitude and Tony’s own headspace, was just what the man needed. But still, he had to remain cool because- well he had to. He had to stay on brand. Kids need consistency after all and Tony is consistently an asshole so he had to keep that up just a little bit.

“Pete you tell me that like twenty times a day.” He chuckled.

“Not enough.” Peter said as he squeezed the man tighter, ignoring his facade. He knew his dad was enjoying the hug just as much as he was.

“Can I have my bubble back?” Tony sighed, though he didn’t mean it.

“I don’t know what personal space is.” Peter shrugged, still clinging on tightly.

“Clearly.” Tony muttered as he pulled Peter down to sit beside him, as opposed to the boy clinging to his back like Yoda. Peter immediately made himself comfortable, resting his head on Tony’s shoulder asking questions as the man worked. The man secretly loved it when the kid did that and he felt himself relaxing, winding down after a tiring day. Not a bad day he decided, he was trying to see the good in things now, but a tiring one. A very tiring one apparently. Tony answered all of Peter various questions happily, then he asked a question back- but received no response. “What do you think, Kid? Kid? Oh, Petey.”
He looked down to see the teenager passed out, drooling on his shoulder.

“Gross. I love you too.” Tony sighed as he scooped the kid up, depositing him on the couch; which was an oddly nostalgic routine. Back in the early days, when he first moved in and the kid had found it ridiculously difficult to fall asleep, that was often what happened. Peter would watch Tony work until eventually he nodded off and the man would put him on the couch and watch over him until it was time for him to retire to bed himself.

Tony smiled at the memory. He hadn’t appreciated it fully at the time, mostly because it was an awful time but still- now he could look back on it and see all the good. Huh. A little epiphany there for you, Stark.

Either way, after tucking his son comfortably into his makeshift sofa bed, Tony had some time to himself to think; which admittedly was probably not great but he did need to think. He had to think about how he was going to tackle the Flash situation because he was running out of time to do so. He looked over at Peter, who looked so content and so calm, for once not twitching or having a nightmare, just sleeping peacefully; the though if anyone disturbing that peace was enough for Tony to turn homicidal but he couldn’t do that. He’d already discussed it in part with Nick and the man claimed there would be far too much paperwork. So Tony had to come up with a new plan; figuring he’d bring in the big guns on this one but how he wished he could use actual guns-

All he knew was, he was so not ready for his boy to go back to school.

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