If You Could See Me Now

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Summary

New York City is bracing itself for the worst hurricane to hit in over thirty years, and the kid isn't back yet. Written for the 2019 IronDadBigBang.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
It's the worst hurricane that New York has seen in over thirty years, and the kid's not back yet. This was written for the 2019 IronDadBigBang.

Post-Avengers 4.

Rated T for language and graphic injuries.

2019

"Forecasters are saying that this is the strongest hurricane to threaten the island of Manhattan in nearly forty years. The National Weather Service has issued a hurricane warning for pretty much the entire New England seaboard, with Hurricane Terrance expected to make landfall around midnight tonight. Wind gusts in excess of eighty miles an hour are already being recorded in Manhattan and are only expected to increase as the storm moves closer to landfall. All New Yorkers who have not yet evacuated are encouraged to remain in their homes until the storm has passed. This is not something that you want to find yourself caught in outside."

"Did you hear that, Tony," asked Bruce as he looked up from the papers in his hand, jerking his head towards the television monitor hanging from the wall in Tony's lab. "Storm's getting closer."
"Yeah, I heard it," answered Tony. He glanced out one of the huge, floor-to-ceiling windows that made up this section of his lab, noticing that the clouds that had been building over the Tower for the better part of that day had gotten even more dense, now completely blocking the sun.

"So..." stammered Bruce. "Should we maybe move away from the windows? I'm actually having a pretty good day today, and you know, getting impaled by some flying glass might throw a wrench in there that I really wouldn't appreciate."

Tony shot him one of his patented side-eyes as his fingers trailed along his left forearm, over the four inch scar there that was thirty-plus years-old. "These windows are reinforced, ballistic-level glass, big guy," he said. "Certified for winds up to three hundred mph. Not even a hurricane can produce winds quite that high."

"Not yet, you mean," Bruce said, looking over the top of his glasses. "With all this climate change stuff going on, Tony, who knows in twenty years how fast those winds will get. I mean, just the fact that we're here bracing for a major hurricane this late in October should tell you something."

"Yeah, and if that ever happens, I'll upgrade again, big guy," said Tony. "It's what I do." Just like I did after Loki threw me through the damn window in the first place.

"Yeah, that is pretty much what you do," answered Bruce. "So, when's the kid supposed to get here?"

Tony glanced at the clock, noting that it was already past the time that Peter had said he'd be back. "Should be here soon. He said he wanted to patrol for a couple hours, make sure people were secure in front of the storm, things like that. He probably just lost track of time, teenagers are always late anyway."

With May Parker considered an essential personnel and therefore called in to work at the hospital ahead of the storm, she had asked Tony if Peter could stay with him at the Tower instead of having him be alone in the Queens apartment. Tony of course had agreed, he always felt better when Peter stayed at the Tower or Compound anyway so he could keep a closer eye on him. Ever since... well... ever since that, he had just felt better knowing the kid was close by. As such, Peter not only had his own room in both the Tower and the Compound, but he also had plenty of clothes, shoes, duplicates of his school textbooks, and his very own corner in Tony's labs, complete with a chemistry set-up that would have made most universities jealous.

"Are ya sure?" asked Bruce, his eyebrows knitting together as he glanced out the window. "Those gusts are getting pretty strong already."

When Hurricane Terrance was first announced, Tony had immediately decided that he would pack Pepper up and send her up to the Compound with Happy, Rhodey, and the rest of the team since the Compound was located upstate and much further inland than Manhattan. It had taken some convincing to get Pepper to agree, as she was hoping to get as much work done as possible before she started her third trimester of pregnancy, but in the end she had relented, and had left with Rhodey and Happy for the Compound the previous day.

So, at least for the time being, Tony only had one of his kids to worry about.

Pursing his lips, Tony set down the new web shooter he was designing and huffed out a sharp breath. Despite what he'd said to Bruce, Tony was starting to get worried. It was getting late, and the winds were getting stronger. The kid definitely should've been back by now.

"FRIDAY, check with Karen and see where the kid is," Tony said, trying to not sound too worried.
"Sure thing, boss," answered FRIDAY.

1982

"Forecasters are saying that this is the... hurricane to threaten the... of Manhattan in nearly... years. The National... Service has issued a hurricane warning for... entire New England seaboard, with Hurricane Simone expected to... landfall around... tonight. Wind gusts in excess of... miles an hour are... being recorded in Manhattan and are... expected to increase as the storm... to landfall. All New Yorkers who have not... evacuated are... to remain in their homes until the storm has passed. This is not... you want to find yourself... in outside."

Tony cringed as the television station once again lapsed into its static-y snow, wanting very much to switch it off to make the offensive noise go away but knowing that if his father came back in and saw it turned off that there would be hell to pay. Howard Stark was already upset that the storm had forced the delay of yet another one of his Arctic expeditions, and as such was already in a bad enough mood that Tony didn't really feel like making it worse. There weren't many things that made Tony back down from challenging his father, but a major hurricane was one of them. Howard just wasn't that big a fan of strong winds, and when any kind of storm was raging outside, Tony knew from experience that the best thing for him to do was to try and stay away from Howard.

It had been unlucky enough that Tony had been on a break from school when the weather people first realized that the storm was not going to hit near Washington D.C., as they had initially predicted, but instead was aiming straight for New York. Howard Stark had immediately thrown a fit, ranting about the inconvenience it was causing due to the delay of his trip, and telling anyone who would listen—or not—how his own father had been forced to rebuild his entire fruit-selling business when it had been blown away in a hurricane back when Howard was a boy.

Like that would even happen now, Tony thought bitterly, not looking up from the schematic he was sketching of a new rocket-like missile that Obadiah Stane, Howard's business partner, had already said could revolutionise the weapons industry if it ever came to fruition. Tony liked Obadiah. Unlike Howard, Obadiah, or Obie, as he had told Tony to call him, seemed to appreciate what Tony could contribute, even if he was only twelve years old. It's not like Howard's out there on the street, selling fruit like his old man.

Oh no. Howard Stark had definitely grown beyond selling fruit on a street on the Lower East Side. From the co-creator of Captain fucking America, who Tony had already heard enough about in his nearly twelve-and-a-half years to fill three lifetimes, to one of the founders of SHIELD—which Tony had always found odd since SHIELD seemed like the very same type of government organisation that had forced Howard to have to flee the U.S. towards the end of the war, when some of his inventions were stolen—there was no doubt that Howard Stark was a Big Deal. The fact that his company was one of the leading weapons contractors to the U.S. Military was only icing on that particular cake.

But, as Howard liked to say, it was the icing that paid for the cake. Those military weapons contracts were quite lucrative, and literally "paid for the parties," something that which Howard never failed to remind Tony during one of their frequent arguments.

"Ah, Master Tony," Edwin Jarvis said in his clipped British accent as he entered the living room. "I have prepared a light dinner, if you are hungry."

"Oh. Um... no, thank you, Jarvis," answered Tony. "I'm not really all that hungry."

"Ah, I see," Jarvis said as he stepped further into the room, looking over Tony's shoulder at the schematic in his hand. "Designing more rockets, I see, Master Tony?"
Tony shrugged. "Yeah. Obie said the last one was pretty good, so I thought I work on it some more."

Jarvis clicked his tongue. "And when, may I ask, is the last time that you ate anything, young man?"

"Um…" Tony stammered, just as his stomach let out a traitorous growl. It had been at least several hours ago. Tony had a particularly bad tendency to become lost in his work and forget to eat, sometimes to the point of passing out. "Ahh…"

"Mmmhmm, that's what I thought," Jarvis said. He tapped Tony on the shoulder. "Come now and eat, Master Tony. The storm will be here soon, and if we happen to lose our electricity I am not sure when I'll be able to cook again."

"Mmm, fine!" snapped Tony, wincing when Jarvis quirked an eyebrow at him. Tony had never, ever heard Edwin Jarvis raise his voice, not one single time, but somehow he was still able to get Tony to fall into line with only a simple facial expression. It was times like these where Tony very much missed his mother. Maria Stark had left for yet another one of her many overseas trips about two weeks ago, and Tony wasn't even sure what country she was in at the moment. He'd received a postcard from her two days ago that was postmarked from Vienna, Austria, and had spoken to her on the phone the day before that, but what he wouldn't give to hear some of her calming piano music right about now. Tony could play the piano too, and had become quite good at it, but he still preferred listening to his mother play over playing himself.

Pushing himself up from the floor, Tony closed his sketchbook, setting it on the coffee table as Jarvis patted him on the shoulder. As they passed the large picture windows on the way to the kitchen, Tony could see the trees in the distance already starting to bend in response to the increasing winds, already hear the roar of the gusts as they blew past the New York Mansion. Howard had insisted that his household didn't need to worry about "hunkering down", as he'd put it, since the mansion had been built with the finest materials available at the time and was supposed to be completely storm-proof.

But as Tony sat down at the large kitchen table—by himself, as per usual—and Jarvis placed an exceptionally large plate of his homemade lasagna and garlic bread in front of him, Tony couldn't help but let out a shiver at the sound. It wasn't the kind of light, gentle breeze that often blew through the trees surrounding the mansion and caused Ana Jarvis's old wind chimes to tinkle, a sound that Tony actually found rather calming at night. No, these squalls sounded angry, as if the very Earth they were now pounding with their great force had somehow offended them. And while Tony was used to dealing with anger—being Howard Stark's son, anger was something he had gotten accustomed to at a very young age—this was something that seemed even scarier.

"Do not fret, Master Tony," Jarvis said, winking as Tony looked out the kitchen window, a big bite of lasagna wiggling on his raised fork. "Mr Stark has assured me that the house is quite safe."

"Oh, sure," whispered Tony with a quick nod. He shoved the lasagna into his mouth, embarrassed that he had allowed even Jarvis to see his brief moment of weakness.

Because Stark men could never allow themselves to show weakness, and fear was one of the worst possible forms of weakness. Fear gave your opponent an edge that he could use to exploit you, and no Stark man worth his name would ever, ever, allow that to happen.

Stark men were made of iron, after all, and iron wasn't afraid of anything. Iron was strong, nearly indestructible, and it never, ever, yielded.

Not even to wind.
"Karen reports that Young Peter is about ten miles away from the Tower, boss," FRIDAY said a few seconds later. "She says he has one final stop to make and will be here as soon as possible."

"Yeah, okay," Tony muttered, his brow furrowing in nervousness. "Thanks, FRI."

"Um, who's Karen?" asked Bruce, scratching his head. "And why would she know where Peter is? I thought his aunt's name was May?"

"It is," answered Tony. He leaned forward, tapping his glasses to magnify the web shooter part he was working on. "Karen is the AI for Peter's suit."

Bruce's eyes went wide. "The kid has his own AI?"

"Well, yeah," Tony said with a shrug. "Why wouldn't he? I mean, he wasn't technically supposed to have access to her yet, but then his buddy managed to hack into the suit and activate her, and then the kid ended up naming her Karen."

"Why—?"

"Why'd he name her Karen?" asked Tony. "I have no idea."

"No, I meant—, oh, nevermind," said Bruce with a shake of his head. "I'm still trying to wrap my brain around the fact that there's someone out there who calls himself the Spider-Man." He let out a hard shudder. "Spiders are just… they're just creepy!"

"Yeah, can't say I'm the biggest fan of 'em either," Tony admitted. "But the kid got bit by a spider, and he can move like a spider, he even likes sitting up in high corners. Scares the shit outta me sometimes when I walk into a room and find him dangling upside-down from the ceiling, but I'm starting to get used to it. I guess to him it just made sense to call himself Spider-Man. Although he's actually more of a Spider-Boy, if you ask me. Kid still gets asked if he needs a kid's menu at restaurants most of the time."

"Ah, I see," said Bruce, just as the largest wind gust yet blew across the windows of the lab, causing both men to look towards them. "You're sure about those windows, Tony?"

"Absolutely," Tony said firmly. "Don't worry, big guy, they're gonna hold."

They were quiet for a few minutes, with Tony anxiously checking the clock even as he tried to keep on a brave face for Bruce. He had been so reluctant at first to allow Peter to resume his patrols after he'd come back that Tony had very nearly threatened to take Peter's suit away again. He could still remember the anguish he'd felt, stranded up on that desolate planet millions of miles from home, the palms of his hands stained with Peter's ashes, with the last words Peter had said to him before he'd faded away still reverberating around in his head like a hopped-up pinball.

"I'm sorry."

Tony could still remember waiting to fade away himself as well, even expecting it to happen. After all, wasn't he the one who really deserved to die? Wasn't he the one who'd caused this whole mess in the first place when he'd flown that missile directly into Thanos' fleet during the Battle of New York? So why was he one of the few people that were chosen to be spared? It wasn't because he was that lucky.

And then there were the horrible days that followed. The perilous journey back to Earth in a
spaceship held together by nothing more than spit and prayers while Tony unknowingly continued to worsen, the stab wound he'd taken at the hands of Thanos continuing to bleed underneath the superficial seal of the nanoparticles. And then, once he had gotten home and was treated, having to bring the news to Aunt May that Peter was gone. And then having to deal with the fact that instead of slapping him and screaming at him and pushing him out of her apartment—like he had expected and even had hoped for, because he deserved it, after all—May had instead collapsed into Tony's arms and clung to him, not too unlike how Peter had clung to Tony during those last terrified seconds before he'd faded.

And then, later that night, once he'd made sure that May was safely tucked into her bed, Tony had been so distraught that he'd gone back to the Compound and pulled out one of his hidden bottles of Scotch, something he hadn't done in so long that he had to ask FRIDAY to remind him where he'd stored the highball glasses.

And then, once he'd managed to find the damn glasses and pour his drink with shaking hands, Tony had stumbled into Peter's section of the lab and proceeded to crumple to the floor in a heap, sobbing like he'd never sobbed before in his life, the untouched, double-shot of Scotch pooling into an amber-colored puddle on the floor next to him.

Rhodey and Steve had found Tony there the next morning, still curled into a tight ball on the lab floor, with the prototype for Peter's newest web shooter clutched in his hands. It was the first time Tony had laid eyes on Steve in over two years.

"All right, I'm done waiting," Tony said impatiently, clearing his throat as he set down the web shooter and ripped the glasses from his face. "FRIDAY, where's the kid now?"

1982

Under Jarvis's watchful eye, Tony managed to finish both his lasagna and the garlic bread, even as most of it sat like a lead weight in his stomach. The wind gusts had gotten even stronger as he ate, at times even causing the kitchen windows to rattle in their panes. Tony couldn't be absolutely sure, because as a formal British butler, Jarvis always maintained a very stiff upper lip, but he could've sworn that he saw a flash of fear pass across Jarvis's eyes at one point. It was only a flash, lasting for less than a second, but it was enough to cause Tony to wish that he hadn't eaten all of that lasagna.

"Care for some more, Master Tony?" asked Jarvis. "I have prepared an entire pan."

"No thanks, Jarvis," Tony whispered, gulping. "I think I'm gonna go to my room now."

"As you wish," replied Jarvis. "If you decide later on that you would prefer some company, you may of course come and find me."

"Thanks," Tony murmured. He slid from his chair, glancing out the kitchen window one final time as headed for the hallway that led to his room. He let out a heavy sigh once he arrived, realising that he'd left his sketchbook on the coffee table in the living room. Deciding against going out to retrieve it, Tony instead sprawled out on his bed on his stomach, reaching for one of his beloved engineering books instead and flipping it open.

Tony had only read about five pages when the lights began to flicker just as the first few cracks of lightning lit up the dark sky, raindrops as big as quarters pelting the windows and roof like marbles rolling from a table onto the floor. Tony let out a hard shiver; he'd never been a big fan of the dark, and even less so when he was suddenly plunged into darkness. Being in the dark made him feel out of control, and Tony hated not being in control.
Swallowing hard, Tony turned back to his book, fascinated by the work of someone by the name of Steve Jobs and what he was doing to revolutionise the home computer industry. It wouldn't be too much longer before every person could own their own computer if they so wanted. Tony had built one of his own, of course, using parts he'd found in his father's workshop, and it worked just fine. But he couldn't help but be intrigued by someone who was using their intellect and talents to build something that would help make people's lives better, instead of the huge weapons that his own father built, which were designed to only take lives.

But not even three sentences later the lights flickered again, once, twice, three times before cutting out completely. Tony dropped his head down onto his book, his hands fisting into his bedspread as he tried to remind himself to stay calm.

"It's only a storm," he murmured into the darkness. "It's just a storm. It'll pass."

A few minutes later, once his eyes had adjusted a bit, Tony lifted his head, his gaze drawn over to his bedroom windows that faced the backyard of the mansion. The wind was blowing so strongly now that the trees in the yard were nearly bent over sideways, the rain hitting the glass with such force that Tony gulped, not at all convinced that it was going to hold against the strong push and pull of the wind gusts. He leaned over the side of his bed, feeling around until he found his bedside drawer and pulled out his flashlight, activating the bright beam. With the light trained on the window, Tony walked over, pressing his nose against the glass, watching as the trees struggled to stay rooted down against the harshness of the squalls outside. Tony became so fascinated by their struggles, and by the lightning bolts shooting down from the heavy, dark grey clouds that he didn't even realise that his flashlight was pressing hard against the pane of the window until the next gust snapped one of the tree branches completely off, sending it careening towards the house, straight for Tony's window.

2019

"Karen reports that Young Peter is currently only three blocks away, boss," FRIDAY answered. "He should be here in a few minutes."

"Yeah, yeah, okay," muttered Tony. "Tell him to just come to the lab entrance, I'll let him in from here. And tell him that this is the last time I'm letting him go on patrol during a hurricane."

"Yes, boss."

"So, he seems pretty incorrigible," Bruce remarked, the barest hint of a smirk playing on his lips. "And why don't you just talk to Karen yourself?"

Tony rolled his eyes. "You have no idea," he said, picking up the web shooter and placing it right back down again as another blustery gust blew past the windows, followed on its heels by a smattering of raindrops so large they sounded like falling marbles. "No matter how many times I've told him to keep track of the time, he still—"

"Pardon me, boss!" FRIDAY exclaimed. "But there's been an accident! Young Peter—"

"What's happened, FRI?" Tony asked frantically as his heart began to thud against his ribcage. He should have known, should've told Peter no, should've stopped him. Why didn't he stop him?

"Young Peter has been blown through a window on the tenth story of the MetLife building, boss!" FRIDAY cried. "He's unconscious, and—"

But Tony had already tapped the storage compartment attached to his chest, the enclosed nanoparticles already sliding their way across his trunk and down his arms and legs. "I'm on my way,
"Tony, are you nuts?" Bruce exclaimed. "Those gusts have gotta be up over a hundred miles an hour by now! Even you won't be able to fly straight through there! The first responders—!"

"First responders aren't going to respond at all in this kind of weather!" Tony barked as he hurried over to the exit that led to the Quinjet landing pad. "I just got him back, Bruce, and I'm not gonna lose him again!"

Gripping the handle of the exit door firmly in his armoured hand, Tony inhaled a deep breath, bracing himself for the blast of the wind as he unsealed the door. He let out a hard shudder as the door opened just enough for him to slip through and he stepped onto the landing platform, the roaring and howling sounds of the squalls causing old memories to resurface that Tony had long since thought were buried.

"FRIDAY," Tony stammered through the knot in his throat, blinking as his HUD took inventory of his surroundings. "Plot a course to Pete's location."

"Already done, boss," FRIDAY replied, displaying the location roughly two blocks away. Tony immediately took off, trying to stay low enough to avoid the worst of the wind gusts but high enough to not hit anything.

"Shit," he muttered as a particularly strong burst seemed to smack him straight on, nearly blowing him directly into another skyscraper. Why didn't I insist that he take the nanotech suit? Or why didn't I just tell him no?

Tony had suggested that Peter use the brand-new nano suit that he'd recently constructed, since it offered more protection from potential flying objects than his regular Spider Suit. But Peter was still hesitant to step into anything resembling a nano suit, and Tony really couldn't blame him. Peter had been wearing the Iron Spider Suit when he faded, and… to be honest, Tony wasn't really all that excited to see the kid wearing one of them again quite yet either. It was all still a little too fresh in his mind.

"Oh my God!" Tony gasped as he rounded a corner and his HUD zoomed in on what appeared to be Peter's limp body, dangling precariously from one of the tenth-story plate-glass windows. "FRIDAY, is he—?"

"He's still alive, boss," FRIDAY said gently. "But I'm afraid that there's a measure of glass stuck deep in his abdomen that's quite large, and—"

"Pete?" rasped Tony as he flew up next to the boy, his feet and shoulder repulsors barely able to keep him steady against the driving force of the wind. He ripped the mask from Peter's face, his armoured fingers cupping Peter's cheek, which was nearly as white as snow. "Pete? Talk to me, kid!"

"M-Mr Stark?" Peter moaned, his long eyelashes fluttering as he attempted to open his eyes. "Mr Stark, what're you doing—?"

"Don't try to talk right now, kid," Tony said, his HUD scanning Peter and taking inventory of his injuries. Bruised sternum, bruised ribs, both of those would heal in a matter of days with the kid's enhanced healing. But the worst one, the injury that caused tears to spring to Tony's eyes and his blood to run cold, was the ten-inch piece of glass wedged into the upper right-hand side of Peter's abdomen, directly into his liver. The glass itself was currently sealing the wound, at least partially, which along with Peter's enhanced blood clotting had prevented him from bleeding out right away. But if the glass were to somehow become dislodged or removed before proper surgical intervention could be taken, Peter could still bleed out. And there were no hospitals close enough to their position
that Tony felt comfortable flying to in winds that were now topping off at over one hundred miles an hour. Not to mention the fact that if Tony did bring Peter to a hospital Peter's secret identity would likely be blown, which would not go over well with anyone, especially Aunt May.

But the alternative was not very appealing either. While Tony's nanoparticles worked rather well at sealing a superficial wound, they didn't do much to prevent continual internal bleeding. Tony had learned that the hard way on Titan. So even if Tony was able to transport Peter safely back to the Tower in the driving wind and rain, there still remained the question of what to do about the glass. And the last thing Tony needed was for that piece of glass wedged in the kid's belly to act like some kind of makeshift sail and either send them veering suddenly off course, or get blown completely out of him before Tony could get him back to the Tower.

"Mr Stark?" Peter muttered again, his voice thick and raspy. "I don't—, I don't feel so good. There's something… my stomach hurts, and—"

"I don't feel so good. Mr Stark, I don't—, I don't know what's happening…"

"You're all right, kid," Tony murmured, squeezing his eyes closed at how utterly stupid and empty it sounded, just like it had likely sounded back then, on that desolate rock of a planet.

Was it always an instinctive response to say that to a kid? Even if it was complete and utter bullshit? Tony was rapidly starting to think so.

"Boss? Boss!" came the voice of FRIDAY, barely breaking through the sound of blood rushing past Tony's ears that was as loud as the waves that used to crash against the rocks below his old Malibu house, the house Aldrich Killian had destroyed years ago. "Boss! Your heart rate is skyrocketing!"

Tony squeezed his eyes closed, his chest heaving as he struggled to inhale air that suddenly seemed burning hot and far too thin. "Gah!" he gasped. "Oh God, please, not now!"

"I don't feel so good. Mr Stark, I don't—, I don't know what's happening…"

"No, no no! Not him! Please, not him!"

"I'm deploying the Lavender Fields protocol, boss," stated FRIDAY. "Remember to breathe, deep calming breaths."

It was all Tony could do to comply as FRIDAY flooded the inside of his suit with the calming scent of lavender, something he had found through a lot of trial and error to help him calm down during his panic attacks. His lungs felt as though they'd been seared, with every labored breath being drawn through a straw. "FRIDAY, I don't—, I can't—, I can't lose him again! I can't—"

"M-Mr Stark?" gasped the boy cradled in Tony's arms. "What's happened to me? I don't—, m-my stomach really hurts!"

"Uhh," Tony rasped through his tight throat, his heart still beating a staccato rhythm against his ribcage. "You've—, well, you've been impaled, kid. You've got a goddamn window pane sticking right outta your abdomen, as a matter of fact."

"Oh," murmured Peter, the slightest hint of a smile playing on his pale, slightly bluish lips even as he started to shiver. "Well, you always did say that you could see right through me."

"Oh my God, Pete," groaned Tony. "Now's not really the time for one of your horrible puns!"
"Well, when else am I gonna get a chance to use that one?" Peter muttered through his chattering teeth, just as he coughed a huge mouthful of blood all over the front of Tony's helmet. It was definitely time to get moving.

"FRIDAY, plot a course back to the Tower," Tony said. He activated his hand laser, carefully slicing the piece of glass in half so as to hopefully reduce the chances of it being blown out of Peter before they could get back.

"Course plotted, boss," FRIDAY said. "But use extreme caution, those winds are pretty unpredictable, even for me."

"Damn Mother Nature thinking she's smarter than me," muttered Tony. He gathered Peter into his arms, careful to avoid putting any pressure on his abdomen. "All right, FRIDAY, take us home."

The course FRIDAY plotted did manage to avoid the worst of the wind gusts as they flew towards the Tower, but it also was extremely slow-going. Far too slow for Tony's taste, especially when Peter's shivering grew so violently that he nearly slipped from Tony's grasp.

"C'mon, FRIDAY!" Tony exclaimed, jerking sideways to avoid being hit by a large tree branch as it bent across the sidewalk. "The kid's gonna rattle right out of my hands if we don't get there soon!"

"I'm doing the best that I can, boss!" retorted FRIDAY.

"Yeah, I know," muttered Tony. "Contact Bruce while you're at it. Tell him to clear off one of the counters in the lab and get some towels and hot water ready. We're gonna have to work fast."

"I've already done so, boss," FRIDAY said.

"Oh, and see if you can get ahold of that Doctor Stephen Strange guy while you're at it. Tell him it's a medical emergency."

"Yes, boss."

After what seemed like an eternity, the Tower finally came into view. Veering up, Tony scaled the massively tall skyscraper as he flew up towards the top, his abdominal muscles screaming with the effort of trying to keep from being smashed right into the side of the building.

"FRIDAY, I'm gonna fly right through the door leading into the lab, so have it open on my mark."

"Gotcha, boss," FRIDAY answered.

"Okay…" Tony said, counting down the seconds. "Okay, FRIDAY, mark!"

With a loud, pressurised hiss, the door to Tony's lab slid open a split second before Tony would have crashed right into the windows. Skidding to a hard stop, his eyes quickly scanned the room, landing on the makeshift surgical area still being prepped by Bruce.

"Oh my God!" exclaimed Bruce as Tony hurried over to the side of the long counter, his eyes going wide at the sight of Peter, covered in blood and lying limp in Tony's arms. "What the hell happened to him?"

"Kid got blown right through a goddamn window," muttered Tony. "I knew I should've told him no, I should've never let him go out there, I should've—"

"Yeah, well, I don't think that makes too much of a difference right now, Tony," Bruce said firmly.
"Let's get him up on the table."

Peter yelped in pain as Tony laid him down on the counter, nearly cracking Tony's heart in two. "Mr Stark, I don't feel so—"

"I know, Pete!" Tony croaked as his heart started to race yet again, the nanoparticles already retrieving back inside their storage compartment. *God, not now! "I know! Just, try and keep your mouth shut while we figure this out, okay? Can ya do that for me?"

"Oh… sure… I can do that. I just… my stomach hurts, and—"

"Peter, hush!" demanded Tony. Donning his glasses, Tony grabbed a pair of medical scissors out of Bruce's hand and began cutting into Peter's Spider Suit, enlarging the impaled area so he could get a better look at the injury. Tony had never been more grateful to Rhodey for insisting that he take the Air Force field medic course than he was in that moment.

"Oh my God, Tony," Bruce gasped once Tony had cleared away the material. Partially hidden by Peter's suit, Tony hadn't realized just how large the chunk of glass was until now. Tony's heart sank as his eyes swept over the jagged piece, which was at least five inches in width.

"FRIDAY," Tony said, clearing his throat as he pointed his eyeline directly at the injury. "Scan underneath the skin, I need to know exactly where the glass stops and if there's any curve to it."

"Scanning, boss," replied FRIDAY as Tony fought against the nearly overwhelming urge to look away. Despite Peter's enhanced healing abilities, blood was still oozing from all around the edges of the jagged cut, the dark red color a stark contrast against Peter's greyishly pale skin. The fact that the kid was still bleeding could only mean that the glass had severed an artery or two, which also meant that time was definitely going to be working against Tony. He would likely only have a matter of seconds to repair the damaged arteries once the glass was removed, and while Tony had had plenty of practice with stitching up minor wounds over the years, this was not nearly the same as a superficial cut on the shoulder or leg. This was going to be something akin to a major trauma surgery.

"The glass has penetrated the uppermost lobe of Young Peter's liver about five centimeters, boss," said FRIDAY in a grim voice. "And it's about two centimeters below his diaphragm."

*Holy shit,* thought Tony, inhaling a shaky breath as his hands started to tremble. *I don't think—, I don't know if I can do this.*

"FRIDAY, where the hell is Strange!" Tony demanded.

"I'm right here," said the deep voice of Doctor Stephen Strange as he exited the sparkling, circular portal and stepped into the lab. "I don't like leaving the Sanctum unguarded, Stark, and especially not in this kind of weather, so I hope you have a good reason for—"

"Is this good enough?" barked Tony, jerking his head towards Peter's wound. "Kid got blown through a window, and the glass is imbedded deep inside his liver. I need your help here, doc. This is way outta my league."

Stephen stepped forward, inspecting the wound with the critical eye of a well-trained surgeon. Tony's heart dropped to his knees as he shook his head.

"I'm sorry, Tony," he said sadly. He held up his hands, criss-crossed with scars, and curled them into slow, shaky fists. "But I'm afraid I can't help you. My hands… it would be too dangerous. I'm sorry, but I can't."
"What do you mean, you can't?" yelled Tony, startling Peter and causing him to moan. Tony immediately placed his hand on Peter's shoulder, his thumb rubbing back and forth in what he hoped was a comforting manner. "What do you mean, you can't?" he asked again in a quieter voice. "The kid's gonna die here if we don't do something, and I can't let that happen! Not after—, not after—, surely there must be something, some spell you can cast that would make your hands steady!"

"I'm afraid that's not how it works, Tony," Stephen said. "Believe me, it would be far more dangerous for me to attempt this procedure than it would be for me to talk you through it."

"But FRIDAY said the glass cut through some of his arteries!" Tony cried. "I'm not a trained surgeon, I have no idea what I'm doing, and—"

"That's not quite true, Tony," Bruce said softly. He placed a hand on Tony's shoulder, squeezing it gently. "How many uniforms have you sewed for the team over the years, all by hand because you didn't trust a sewing machine to get it good enough? How many times have you stitched up your own lacerations, and even a couple of mine? How many times have you created something out of nothing? You can do this, Tony. And you have to. Peter's counting on you."

Tony's lower lip quivered as he looked over at Peter's face, his long eyelashes fluttering as he struggled to keep his eyes open, his cheeks the colour of cream gone bad and his lips a pale blue colour that had no business being associated with human skin. Outside, the wind was still howling, the rain splattering the windows like a thousand snare drums, the spooky noise causing the hair on the back of Tony's neck to stand straight up. The kid was going to die, right here in the middle of Tony's lab, if Tony didn't save him.

"Okay," Tony said, blinking back tears. "Okay, let's do this."

1982

It was only by sheer luck that Tony managed to duck his head down away from the window just in time to avoid being personally impaled by the flying tree branch. As it was, the branch ended up shattering the uppermost section of the pane, causing a spider-web effect that caused Tony's left arm, still holding the flashlight, to go right through the glass.

"Aahh!" Tony screamed as white-hot pain seared his arm, unlike anything he'd ever felt before. He instinctively jerked his arm back, pulling it from the window and cradling it against his chest, the flashlight dropping from his now-useless hand onto the floor with a loud clatter. "Oh my God!" He squeezed his eyes closed, whimpering from the pain, trying desperately to keep the tears from falling. *Stark men don't cry, Stark men don't cry, Stark men don't cry!*

Falling back against his bed, Tony leaned forward, trying to take deep breaths against the dizziness threatening to overtake him. A cold sweat broke out over his body, causing him to shiver, even as the rain continued to pour into the room through the broken window, soaking into the expensive carpet below.

Once the dizziness subsided a bit, Tony raised his head, trying to inspect the wound a little closer, which turned out to be quite difficult in the near-complete darkness. But as he shifted the arm ever-so-slightly, cringing against the horrible pain, what little moonlight could been seen through the dark clouds caught the edge of something shiny. Inhaling a deep, shaky breath, Tony twisted his arm again, his stomach swooping dangerously as he caught sight of the three-inch piece of glass sticking up out of his arm.

*I need help,* he thought, swallowing hard against the rising taste of bile in the back of his throat. Tony knew his father was going to be angry about the broken window, and Tony knew it would
only make things worse if he managed to throw up his entire dinner all over the carpet in his room, pouring rain notwithstanding. *I need—, I need—, I need help.*

Grasping his injured arm firmly in his other hand, Tony got to his feet, stumbling towards the door. His right hand, covered in blood, slipped on the doorknob three times before he was finally able to get the door to open into the darkened hallway. He paused for a moment, trying to get his bearings before his eyes focused in on another beam of light coming from his father's office.

2019

"I'm going to assume that you don't have any anesthetic drugs?" Stephen asked as Tony scrubbed his hands, taking extra care to get every last speck of dirt from under his fingernails.

"Not exactly," answered Tony. "Surgical supplies I can get, but the strongest thing I got here drug-wise are some aspirins and a couple tubes of over-the-counter lidocaine cream and antibiotic cream. The Board of Pharmacy wouldn't allow me to stock anything stronger without declaring myself a pharmacy, and—"

"Yes, yes, nevermind that," Stephen said dismissively. "Aspirin at this point would only make the bleeding worse and the boy's too young for it anyway, so that's out of the question. The lidocaine however might come in handy to help numb—"

"Actually, probably not," Tony interrupted, his shoulders sagging. "Kid's got a metabolism that's faster than a speeding bullet. There's no way anything from a drugstore shelf is gonna work on him."

Stephen pursed his lips, his brow furrowing. "Well, that is unfortunate—"

"There aren't any spells or anything you could put on him to knock him out?" Tony asked. "Cause I'll be honest with ya, doc, I'm not sure I'll be able to handle having to hear him whimper and squeak while I'm trying to fix him. Not to mention the fact that I'm gonna need him to be still, and the kid never sits still. Not even when he's sleeping."

"As I was attempting to say," Stephen grumbled. "There is one spell I can use that will act in a manner similar to that of a benzodiazepine."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning he won't likely remember what happened after the fact," explained Stephen. "But unfortunately it won't do anything to help relieve his pain during the procedure."

"Oh my God, so he's gonna be able to feel everything I do?" gasped Tony. "Holy shit, doc! Can you at least immobilise him for me?"

Stephen shook his head somberly. "I'm afraid not, Tony. I can put him into a sort of dissociative phase, but I will not immobilise him completely. Doing so could potentially scar his mind too much since he cannot be put under. I wish I could do more, but it's just not possible."

"Well, I guess anything's better than nothing at this point, doc," Tony said, trying to sound braver than he felt. Tony remembered how panicked he'd felt way back when Obadiah Stane had paralysed him in the Malibu house in order to steal the arc reactor from his chest, and goodness knows the kid already had enough mental scars as it was. Tony walked back over to the table, allowing Bruce to slide the sterile surgical gloves onto his hands as he looked down at Peter, his pale abdomen covered in warm, sterile towels.

"Okay, Pete, here's the deal. The doc here is gonna put you under some kind of spell that's gonna
make you a bit loopy so I can fix you up. But you're gonna have to stay as still as you can, okay? Otherwise I won't be able to do this."

Peter licked his blue-tinted lips, inhaling a breath that rattled both his lungs and Tony's already fraying nerves. "Uh, sure, Mr Stark. I can—, I can try to do that."

"You're gonna have to more than just try, Pete," Tony said firmly. "If I'm gonna be digging around in your belly here, I'm gonna need you to stay still. I don't wanna nick anything while I'm in there that shouldn't be nicked."

"Uh huh, Mr Stark. Okay."

Tony huffed out a sharp breath as he looked over at Bruce, who nodded. "All right," he said. "Then I guess we're ready."

1982

Howard Stark was sitting at his desk, a glass of Scotch near his right hand and a litany of swear words falling from his mouth as he ruffled through the many papers strewn across the top. Tony knew he'd been planning yet another one of his pointless expeditions to the Arctic, the search for Steve fucking Rogers still ongoing even though the man had been missing for almost forty years now.

When he was little, Tony used to think that Captain America was cool. He even had his own collection of Captain America comic books, and would often daydream about having his own huge shield made out of vibranium so he could go out there and fight against the Nazis. Or, Communists, as it was the case now. But it hadn't taken Tony too long to realise that the obsession that Howard Stark had for his dead friend was so profound that it left little to no room in his father's heart for his own son. Instead of talking about Tony's intellect or achievements to his friends at the many gatherings Howard hosted at the mansion, he would talk about Steve Rogers instead. Howard had even gone so far as to say that Steve Rogers was the best thing he'd ever created, which had nearly broken Tony's heart the first time he'd heard it.

And things only got worse whenever Howard was drunk.

Tony gulped as he entered the room, his bleeding arm throbbing with every racing beat of his heart. "Dad," he said, forcing the words past the huge knot in his throat. "I need—, I need some help."

"What the hell do you need help for?" Howard snapped, not even turning to face him.

"My—, my arm—, my arm's bleeding," Tony stammered. "The window broke in my room, and—"

"And just how in the hell did you manage to break your window?" demanded Howard. He swiveled around in his chair to face Tony, grabbing his glass of Scotch in the process. "What in the hell were you doing?"

"I wasn't doing anything!" exclaimed Tony. "The lights went out, and I was just trying to—"

Howard drained his glass, slamming it back onto the desk. "What, did you get afraid of the dark? Only a weak pansy would be afraid of the dark! What have I told you about fear?"

"Fear is a weakness," replied Tony automatically. "And—"

"And Stark men don't show weaknesses," finished Howard. "Stark men don't ever roll over and show their bellies, because Stark men aren't weak! Stark men are made of iron!"
"But, Dad!" Tony cried. "My arm, it's bleeding, and I don't—, I need help!"

Narrowing his eyes, Howard leaned forward in his chair, shining his flashlight beam directly into Tony's face. "Doesn't look that bad."

"What?" said Tony, shame flooding his body as his voice cracked. "There's a big piece of glass sticking out of my arm, Dad! I need help!"

"Go find Jarvis," Howard said, turning back to his papers.

"But—!"

Howard's hand slammed onto the top of the desk, so loudly that Tony jumped. "I said, go find Jarvis!"

Tony stood in place for a few more seconds, his lower lip quivering as he struggled desperately to keep his tears from falling.

"Okay," he finally said, so softly he doubted that Howard had even heard him over the sound of the rain and wind pounding against the house. "Okay."

And then Tony turned on his heel and marched right back out of the office to search for Jarvis, kicking himself for even trying.

_There's never any sense in trying. Why do I even bother?_

2019

With a grim nod at Stephen, Tony grasped the edge of the glass, preparing to remove it as Stephen tapped his forearms together, generating the dissociative spell. Peter's brown eyes immediately rolled back into his head, and Tony let out a high, frightened squeak until he remembered that that was supposed to happen.

"Okay, Tony," Stephen said a few seconds later, not taking his eyes off Peter's face. "You may begin. I would suggest you work swiftly though, this boy is quite strong."

"Pete?" Tony asked, sliding his fingers a millimeter or so down the glass. "How're you feeling?"

"Well, I can't feel my armpits, Mr Stark," Peter replied, his words slurred like he was drunk. "But other than that I think I'm okay. My belly still hurts though. And… when did you paint the ceiling hot pink? Was it recent? I like the pretty purple sparkles too."

"Yeah, I'm pretty sure he's ready, Tony," Stephen said firmly. "And I would strongly suggest that you begin."

"Yeah, okay," Tony whispered. He inhaled deeply through his nose, tightened his fingers on the glass, and pulled.

"Oh my God!" Bruce exclaimed as the glass came out, the gaping wound immediately filling with a pool of blood. Tony was right; the glass had been partially sealing the wound, with Peter's blood forming a network of clots around it. By pulling the glass out those clots were now disrupted, and there was no longer anything preventing the severed arteries from resuming their bleeding.

"Ow!" Peter yelped, his knees bending instinctively as his abdominal muscles tightened, forcing more blood to pool into the wound and making it impossible for Tony to see what he was doing.
"Hurts, Mr Stark! Feels like knives are swimming around in my belly!"

"Increase magnification, FRIDAY!" commanded Tony, desperately scanning the injured tissue for the severed vessels so he could seal them closed. "Bruce, mop that up and then hold down his legs, his wiggling is just making it worse!"

"I'm sterile, Tony!" Bruce shot back, gingerly dabbing the wound with a surgical sponge to soak up the blood. "I can't break the field if I'm gonna assist you, you know that!"

"Goddamnit!" Tony whispered, sweat pooling on his brow. "Pete, listen to me! You gotta try and stay still, okay? I'm going as fast as I can, but everytime you move it slows me down!"

"Okay, Mr Stark," Peter gasped, his boyish face screwed into a look of such anguish that Tony nearly choked. "I'll—, I'll try!"

If he'd have had more confidence in his ability to use the nanoparticles, Tony perhaps wouldn't have felt quite so panicked and rushed. But aside from his crude wound-sealing job on Titan, Tony hadn't yet taken the time to investigate their possible use during medical procedures, and he wasn't about to start experimenting now on Peter. Especially while Peter was trying to bleed out in the middle of his lab.

"Okay, I found one of 'em," Tony said grimly a few seconds later. He held out his bloody hand towards Bruce, not taking his eyes off the spot. "Gimme the thread."

Bruce handed Tony the surgical needle and thread as smoothly as if he'd been a surgical assistant all his life instead of only the last few minutes. Tony immediately returned his hand to the wound, poking the tiny curved needle through the damaged blood vessel and sealing it closed, adding three extra stitches in there for good measure.

"I still see two more vessels that need to be repaired, Tony," Stephen said through clenched teeth, tearing his eyes away from Peter's face just long enough to inspect Tony's work.

"Yeah, okay," muttered Tony. Handing the needle back to Bruce, he tilted his head, gingerly poking his finger against Peter's liver to try and spot the additional sources of bleeding.

"Right there, Tony!" Stephen exclaimed, just as Peter's belly clenched again and he cried out. "Partially under the lobe there. Do you see it?"

"Oh, Christ!" moaned Tony as he pressed on one particular spot, causing blood to shoot up from Peter's abdomen like a geyser just as an ear-splitting crack of thunder sounded across the lab, startling Peter so badly that he nearly shot up off the table.

"Hurts, Mr Stark!" Peter cried, the pathetic sound squeezing Tony's heart like a vise. "Oh God, it hurts!"

"Hold onto him, doc!" Tony yelled, holding out his hand to Bruce. "Don't let him start moving too much, I'm almost there!"

"Just go, Tony!" Stephen exclaimed. "I'm doing all I can!"

Grasping the needle, Tony immediately looped it through the severed ends of the vessel, tying it as fast as he could before repeating the process two more times. He held his breath as he checked the seal, breathing out a small sigh of relief when he realised that it was holding steady.

"Okay," Tony mumbled. "Just one left."
"Jarvis!

Tony cried as he stumbled down the hallway towards the butler's room. He bit down hard on his lower lip, still trying to keep his tears from flowing and quickly realising that he was fighting a losing battle. His immense fear of the raging storm outside combined with the increasing pain in his arm was proving to be a very worthy adversary for Tony Stark, made of iron or not.

"Jarvis!" he called again as a single tear rolled down his cheek. "Jarvis, please help me!"

A choked sob tore from Tony's throat as his eyes picked up the beam of a flashlight coming from the other end of the hall. "Master Tony?" Jarvis said as he rushed towards Tony and gathered him into his arms, gasping as he realised that Tony was covered in blood. "What in the world has happened to you?"

"I-I w-was j-just s-standing at m-my bed-bedroom w-window," Tony stammered. "And a tree c-came at it, and it br-broke, and the gl-glass went in-into my arm, and—"

"Oh yes, I see," Jarvis said as he gently took Tony's arm in his hands, inspecting the wound as he led Tony back to his room, seating him at Jarvis's writing table. "I'll bet that doesn't feel very nice, now does it? Very well, let's get you cleaned up a bit then, shall we?"

The sharp contrast between Jarvis's loving reaction to Tony's injury versus the cold and angry indifference of his own father was too much, and Tony finally broke down completely, his small, skinny body shaking with sobs.

"I'm sorry, J-Jarvis," he cried as he attempted to wipe the tears away, only managing to smear them all over his face. "I know we-we're not s-supposed to c-cry, b-but I j-just c-can't—, it just hurts, and —"

"Now, now," Jarvis said softly, patting Tony's head. "There is no law in either England or in the United States of America that says that young boys are not allowed to cry. Especially after they are injured by flying glass during a hurricane."

The knot in Tony's throat grew even larger, and he gulped as Jarvis extended his arm across the table, shining his flashlight directly on the wound as he inspected it with a critical eye.

"Not to worry, Master Tony," said Jarvis, even as yet another deafening crack of thunder shook the house, causing Tony to jump. "I don't believe the glass has severed anything of too much importance. I should be able to get you fixed up in no time."

"Y-you know how to st-stitch wounds?" Tony asked, biting his bottom lip so hard he tasted blood.

"Oh yes," replied Jarvis. "I learned in the Army, young man. Now then, let me just gather up some supplies and I'll be right back."

Tony sucked in a long shaky breath, swallowing hard. He would be okay now, Jarvis was here.

"Uh-uh huh."

2019

"There it is, Tony!" Stephen said, jerking his head towards the wound. "To the right about three millimeters!"

Tony's narrowed his eyes, focusing in just to the right of the vessel he'd just repaired. "Gotcha, you
tiny little bastard," he murmured, holding his hand out to Bruce. "Thought you'd try and hide from me, did ya?"

"Are you really talking to my belly right now, Mr Stark?" mumbled Peter. "I'm not so sure that's a good idea, it seems like it's pretty angry at the moment. Maybe you should tell it about your pretty ceiling up here, I think it'd like that."

"Yeah, well, I'm just as angry, kid, and I don't really think the ceiling colour is gonna help anything," Tony muttered as he looped the surgical thread through the damaged vessel and tied the knot, repeating it twice more before carefully checking the seal with his finger.

"Looks good, Tony," Stephen said with an approving nod. "I can't see anymore broken vessels in there, so I think he's at least out of danger of bleeding out. You should get him closed up as soon as possible to lower the risk of infection, though."

"I'm already on it," replied Tony as Bruce handed him another set of sutures. Stitching up the various layers of Peter's skin took only a few minutes, and once he was finished and had bandaged up the wound, Tony immediately removed his gloves and stumbled over to another corner of the lab, collapsing into a chair. He squeezed his eyes closed, wrapping his arms around his front as the massive amount of adrenaline that had been flowing through his body during the surgery began to seep out of him in droves, causing him to shiver.

"How close did I come to losing him again? Oh God, how am I ever going to handle having my own kid if I practically lose my mind every time this one gets hurt?"

"The kid's gonna be all right, Tony," Bruce said quietly as he approached a few minutes later, placing his hand gently on Tony's shoulder. The torrential rain was still pounding against the windows, but now that Tony knew Peter was going to be all right it almost sounded soothing to him rather than ominous. "Stephen says his colour's starting to come back, and with his enhanced healing he should be good to go in just a few days. You saved him."

"I know," whispered Tony, desperately trying to keep the tears from leaking from his eyes. Even all these years later, it was still difficult for him to remember that it really was okay to cry from time to time. That even though he was Iron Man, showing his emotions didn't mean that he was weak.

Sometimes, they could be a sign of strength instead.

"He's asking for you, Tony," added Bruce. "Stephen tried to tell him to get some sleep, but he wants to see you first."

Tony swiped at his eyes, nodding as he pushed himself up from the chair. "Yeah, okay."

"'M sorry, Mr Stark," Peter mumbled as soon as Tony arrived back at his side, relieved that Bruce had thought to clean up the bloody sponges and gauze and cover him with a blanket. "I know you told me that I shouldn't go out during the storm, but I never thought that—"

"Shh, Pete, it's all right," Tony whispered. He took Peter's hand, gently cradling it between his own. "You're gonna be fine now, that doesn't matter anymore."

"Mmm. My belly still hurts quite a bit, and my chest hurts too, but Mr Doctor said that I should feel better after I sleep a little."

"Mr Doctor, hmm?" answered Tony, his lips curling into a slight smile despite himself. "Well, maybe you should listen to him then, yeah?"
"Uh huh," answered Peter. His brown eyes fluttered briefly shut, then snapped open again, narrowing as they studied Tony's face. "Will you stay with me, Mr Stark? The thunder and rain, it's still kinda loud, and I—, I don't really wanna be alone."

"Of course I will, Pete," Tony said, his lower lip shaking. He looked over at Bruce, who immediately went to fetch the chair Tony had left behind. "I'll stay with you as long as you like."

"Mmm, thank you," Peter murmured as he closed his eyes again, his hand still clinging tightly to Tony's as he drifted off. "Thank you…"

"Oh, kid," whispered Tony through his tears as he gently ruffled Peter's curly hair. "You don't need to thank me. You'll never need to thank me."

1982

"And there we are, young man. All better," Jarvis said as he finished applying a final layer of tape to the bandage covering Tony's wound. Once the blood had been washed away and the piece of glass removed, the cut itself hadn't turned out to be as bad as Tony feared, requiring only twelve stitches to close. And while the stitching process wasn't something that Tony was eager to repeat anytime soon, he couldn't help but have been fascinated by it.

"Thank you," Tony whispered as he gingerly clenched his left fist. The cut was still throbbing, but at least the sting from the glass itself was now gone. "I… um…"

"Try not to fret too much about Mr Stark, Master Tony," Jarvis said, as if he'd been reading Tony's thoughts. "Mr Stark is often harsh with his words, yes, but… fathers and sons, that particular relationship is often so difficult to maneuver, on both sides. And Mr Stark… well… life has been rather harsh with him at times, and as such… he is rather harsh at times."

Fresh tears filled Tony's eyes, spilling down his cheeks as he swiped at them impatiently. He knew Jarvis was just trying to help him feel better, but that still didn't change the fact that Howard Stark couldn't seem to stand his only son. "Okay, but… um… do I have to go back to my room now?" he asked. "The window's broken, and there's probably water everywhere, and I don't really wanna be alone, and—"

"Of course not," replied Jarvis, blinking as another bolt of lightning briefly illuminated the room. "You are more than welcome to spend the night here. The storm should be over by morning."

"Really?" Tony choked out. For some reason he'd been expecting Jarvis to set him up on the living room couch or something. "I can stay with you?"

Instead of answering, Jarvis held out his hand, guiding Tony over to his bed and drawing back the covers. Tony carefully climbed inside, leaning back against the pillow as Jarvis carefully propped up Tony's injured arm on a spare pillow and pulled the blankets up to his neck.

"Try and sleep now, Master Tony," he said softly. "Everything will be all right."

Once again tears started rolling down Tony's cheeks, and he hastily brushed them away.

"Thank you," he whispered.

Jarvis smiled as he reached over to ruffle Tony's hair. "There's no need to thank me, young man. No need at all."
"Mmm, okay," muttered Tony. "I do have one more question, though."

"Oh? And what is that?"

"Do you think you could teach me how to sew sometime?" Tony asked, nervously running his tongue across his dry lips. He knew that his Grandma Stark had worked for a sewing factory when she and his grandfather first came to the U.S., but he also knew that sewing was something that Howard Stark thought of as purely a girl's or woman's activity, and not something worthy for a boy to learn. But if Jarvis knew how to sew and was proud of it, then why couldn't Tony?

"Of course, Master Tony," Jarvis said proudly. "I would be happy to. Now, get some rest."

"Uh huh." Tony closed his eyes, breathing out a long, shaky breath as he felt his tense body melt into the soft mattress, the sound of the rain pelting against the windows finally lulling him to sleep.

2019

A light hand on his shoulder startled Tony awake, and he blinked, surprised at the brightness of the sunlight streaming in through the windows. The storm had finally let up about twelve or so hours ago, and once he and Bruce got Peter moved from the lab into his bedroom, Tony had stayed pretty much glued to Peter's side, helping him with sips of water and making sure he didn't spike any fevers, and groaning seemingly every three minutes at all of the puns the kid insisted on coming up with to describe his new "war wounds".

"You really had a window into my soul there for awhile, didn't you, Mr Stark?" he'd said at one point, only backing down after Tony had threatened to turn off the movie they were watching and order the kid to get some more sleep.

"What the hell?" Tony muttered as his eyes flicked around the cheery, Star Wars-themed room, finally landing on Pepper's smiling face. He huffed out a sharp breath at the sight of her, in all of her beautiful pregnant glory. "Oh, hey honey. When did you guys get back?"

"Just a few minutes ago," she whispered, leaning down to kiss his cheek. "How's the kid?"

"He's doing better," Tony replied as he looked over at Peter's sleeping form, leaning over to brush a stray curl from his forehead. Peter was still a bit paler than his usual self, but thankfully no longer that sickening greyish colour that he had been during the surgery, and his wound was already starting to heal. With any luck, he'd be almost back to normal by the time he had to return to Queens the following day.

At least Peter's patrols would be on hold for awhile until Tony could make him a new suit. That would at least give Tony a bit of peace before it all started again.

"You know how Pete is," Tony continued. "Bounces back quicker than a rubber band."

"Mmmhmm," Pepper said. "And... how're you doing?"

"Oh, I'm fine," Tony said automatically, pursing his lips when Pepper quirked an eyebrow. "All right, all right, I guess what I mean was that I'm getting there." He reached again for Peter's hand. "This was... this was damn scary, Pep. I know for an absolute fact that I never wanna see something like that ever again."

"I'm sure it was," Pepper answered. "But still, you made it through it and saved his life. From what Bruce told me, he would've died without you, Tony."
Tony's lower lip started to shake, and he caught it between his teeth. He didn't like thinking about what could've happened, it was just too awful to contemplate.

"Yeah. I guess he might've."

"Mmm," Pepper whispered as she slid onto his lap, placing his free hand against the graceful swell of her belly. "You're gonna be a good daddy, Tony."

"Oh God, Pep, I don't know," Tony choked out. He squeezed his eyes closed, his heart doing a flip as he felt their baby kick against his palm. "I don't know, this… I mean, I know this is what we wanted, but… I gotta admit, this is like the scariest thing that I've ever faced. I mean, what if I'm a horrible father?"

_I didn't exactly have the best of examples._

"Not possible," Pepper murmured as she covered his hand with her own.

"But… how can you know?" Tony asked. "Is there some cosmic, all-powerful window into the future that you know of that you're not telling me about?"

Pepper smiled again, her blue eyes sparkling as she over to whisper into his ear.

"'Cause you already are a wonderful daddy."

---

_I'm on tumblr at [geekymoviemom](http://geekymoviemom) and [geeky-writes](http://geeky-writes). Stop by and say hi!_

End Notes

I love reviews more than Peter loves chemistry! Please don't hesitate to leave me a comment! :)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](http://example.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!